The ROLE OF THE LIBRARY in the RESEARCH-CREATION PROCESS of FINE ARTS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS at the UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

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Fine Arts at the University of Victoria

The University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, has a robust and flourishing Fine Arts faculty with four academic departments and one school: History in Art, Theatre, Visual Arts, Writing; and the School of Music. Consistently ranked as one of the top Fine Arts faculties in Canada, their vision is to support creative thinking, problem solving, decision making, collaboration and communication through critical discourse and evaluation.

Research-Creation

Fine Arts students produce works of creative research versus traditional academic papers: a process called research-creation. Defined as an approach to research practice that brings together creative processes with academic research techniques, research-creation (also called “arts based research” in the US) is an emerging research area that brings together the theoretical, technical, and creative aspects of research for the purpose of developing new knowledge, innovation, investigation, and experimentation.

The Role of the Library

As a research team specifically investigating the research behaviours of undergraduate Fine Arts students in Theatre, Visual Arts, Writing and Music, we wanted to know how and in what ways students use the library to support the process of research-creation, if at all. Although History in Art is part of the Fine Arts faculty, we designated them out-of-scope for our study because their research methods parallel the humanities.

Method

We designed and implemented a survey that was sent to 950 undergraduate students in the Departments of Theatre, Visual Arts, Writing and School of Music. We received 282 responses, yielding a 30% response rate. The survey focused on use of the physical library, services, resources and virtual access to the library. We also asked about student preference for print or online materials as well as how students seek inspiration for their creative projects. From the survey data, we generated more specific focus group questions that pertained to their understanding and process of research-creation and the role of the library.

Preliminary analysis of the data: the library has an important role in the research-creation of Fine Arts students. Access to high quality print collections is significant for the inspiration, development and generation of ideas, as well as the discovery of new materials through serendipity and browsing. Access to various formats is of benefit to all students.