

Charleston Conference Fast Pitch Proposal

Design, Build, Experience: Visual Strategies for Infusing Next Generation Library Spaces with Next Generation Resources

Project Name and Description

What exactly is your project or venture and what makes innovative—that is, how is it better or different from what was either being done in the past or is currently being done by other providers or organizations?

Project Name: Design, Build, Experience: Visual Strategies for Infusing Next Generation Library Spaces with Next Generation Resources

Project Description: The Claremont Colleges Library will facilitate the design and construction of a student-created art installation that renders otherwise “invisible” electronic resources tangible. Recalling the visual strategies employed by a Daniel Goods, a visual strategist at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the “Design, Build, Experience” (DBE) art installation will help library users make the connection between the physical library building and the digital collections it supports. With a planned opening in fall 2017, the art installation will be a centerpiece of newly renovated second floor spaces also scheduled to be revealed to the public in the fall, and allow library visitors a means of experiencing electronic resources in real space. This project offers students hands-on opportunities to engage deeply with electronic resources and newly designed spaces, as well as to utilize a design-thinking approach to communicating library services while grappling with complex issues of information literacy in the digital age.

Current Status

Please describe the current status of your project or venture. Is it new and yet to be implemented, or has it been underway for a short time and in need of additional support? If you are describing a brand new venture, when would implementation occur?

The “Design, Build, Experience” (DBE) art installation project is a natural next step for the Claremont Colleges Library, which recently completed a grant-funded artist-in-residence program, is currently housing a Mellon-funded digital humanities studio, and recently opened its own Digital Tool Shed to support faculty and student digital scholarship. Preliminary plans for the DBE project have been incorporated into ongoing renovation plans for the library building, scheduled to open in 2017 and have been approved by the library’s Leadership Team. The “Design, Build, Experience” project would take place in 2017 in three phases; “design” during the spring semester, “build” over the summer, and “experience” in the fall.

Value Proposition

What is the problem and/or pain points you are addressing and what makes what you are providing truly unique?

Librarians are used to answering directional questions. Where are the books about American history? Where can I find the computer lab? It is a great deal more difficult to explain “where” a database is, or to conceptually connect that database to the rest of library services. We believe the DBE project is a unique and powerful means of addressing the conceptual disconnection between electronic resources and library spaces, as well as an effective way to raise awareness of information privilege.

It is easy to think of the physical invisibility of electronic resources as a problem of discoverability. If this were the case, promotion of electronic resources could be done through website redesign, social media promotion, and online marketing. Claremont Colleges Library’s recent building renovation projects help to demonstrate the value of the library by engaging users in new technology-rich spaces and by providing opportunities to collaborate and explore. We want to make sure there is a similarly clear connection between the library’s value and its digital collections.

Addressing these issues by way of art is certainly not standard operating procedure for an academic library, though there are some precedents. Our primary influence is NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which dedicates a full time staff member to creating art to communicate complex scientific principles to the public. In addition, the University of Southern California recently collaborated with its School of Architecture to hold its “Microlibraries in the Everywhere” project, in which student teams built conceptual “mini libraries” as a means of engaging with similar issues of space and the experience of information.

Target Audience and Opportunity

Please describe who this new initiative is intended to serve and what is the size of your target audience for this initiative?

Our target audience is the faculty, students, and staff of the Claremont Colleges, a consortium of high-ranking liberal arts institutions that include: Claremont Graduate University, Claremont McKenna College, Harvey Mudd College, Keck Graduate Institute, Pitzer College, Pomona College, and Scripps College. The total enrollment of the consortium is just over 7,000 students. The Claremont Colleges Library is a single library that serves each of the campuses, each with its own unique mission and set of programs. With the DBE project, we seek to engage not only those users who already hold the library in high regard and regularly use its resources, but those who may not be as regularly engaged, or who use resources without active awareness of library services.

Competitive Advantage

Who is your competition for this type of service and what makes your offering better than other alternatives?

Our primary competitors are ignorance and the open web. There is not always a strong association between the library and the electronic resources it provides, despite the fact that the research output of our faculty and staff fundamentally rely on the resources to which we facilitate access. Electronic resource usage shows high user engagement across the colleges in all disciplines, especially in STEM fields, and new proxy efforts are helping to reveal how many of our users start their search outside of the library with websites such as Google Scholar. With Google as a common entry-point, users are often unaware of the library's role in their research. The DBE project brings attention to the library's essential place in the information supply chain at the colleges, and specifically targets a cross-section of STEM (especially engineering) and art students. Colleges in the consortium, such as Harvey Mudd, actively engage students with design-thinking challenges and we hope to attract their direct involvement in our project, further raising awareness of information privilege and drawing connections between the library and electronic resources.

Organizational Support

How many people (full time and/or part time) are currently working on this project? What roles and responsibilities?

The primary coordinator for the project is Madelynn Dickerson, who serves the Claremont Colleges Library as the Information Resources Coordinator. Information resources outreach is fundamental to her job responsibilities, as is collection assessment, usage analysis, and collection development. She is also the co-facilitator for the library's Board of Student Stakeholders (BOSS). Key collaborators include our space redesign team, which is working on second floor renovations, where the art installation is planned to be located. This team includes Alex Chappell, Arts and Humanities Team Leader (with experience coordinating the recent artist-in-residence program); Sarah Pickle, Assessment Librarian; Micquel Little, Director of User Services; and Ashley Sanders, Digital Scholarship Coordinator. Oversight is provided by the library's Leadership Team. The DBE project would be folded into ongoing activities in each of these staff member's current areas of focus. We anticipate additional staff support from outside of the library, especially from the Rick and Susan Sontag Center for Collaborative Creativity (also known as "The Hive"), whose mission is to support creative, experiential learning opportunities for students, such as the one we are proposing here.

Scaling Innovation

Do you plan to scale your innovation? What are the key factors impacting future growth? What evidence, if any, do you have so far that indicates your innovation is scalable?

The DBE art installation is expected to be a one-time project with the possibility to serve as a model for future collaborations with “The Hive” and for other libraries to use as a starting point in designing similar projects. Students will be asked to document and archive the process from start to finish through a combination of media (including images, text, and video). With library assistance, the student team will upload this project archive to Scholarship@Claremont, our open access institutional repository, making it discoverable to any other libraries or researchers for future work. Key impact factors include our ability to draw attention from faculty and students across the colleges during the opening event, and our ability to share research and the story of our work through our institutional repository and professional engagement in presentations, conferences, articles, etc.

Anticipated Results

What measure(s) will you use to track results and determine whether your innovation is having an impact?

We intentionally avoid describing what the DBE art installation might ultimately look like, and we anticipate that our highly gifted and engaged students will conceive of an art installation that addresses the issues we have raised in a way unlike anything we could imagine. Having said that, we anticipate solidifying the library’s existing relationship with faculty and students already interested in design-thinking and digital scholarship, as well as effectively connecting our library space redesign projects to our electronic resource collections. We expect to monitor this by incorporating the project into planned assessment for the building redesign, which includes a combination of tracking event attendance, follow-up surveys, focus groups, and interviews. By archiving the project and adding it to the institutional repository, we will also be able to see the number of online engagements with the project through usage statistics, long after the art installation itself has been created. Finally, we will work with our Board of Student Stakeholders, which represents students from all seven campuses, to provide feedback on impact among students.

Award Use and Benefit

How will the seed money you might receive give you a boost and how would you use it? Have you received other funding for your new initiative?

Funding from the Charleston Fast Pitch Competition would go directly to materials and supplies essential for the construction of the art installation designed by the student team. With the backing of The Charleston Conference, we hope to encourage additional financial support from intercampus bodies, such as “The Hive.” We have the commitment of dedicated staff, the enthusiastic support of library leadership, and the engagement of highly motivated students. What we need now is a financial contribution from The Charleston Conference Fast Pitch Competition and The Goodall Family Charitable Foundation that will help the DBE art

installation project make the maximum impact for the Claremont Colleges Library, its users, and especially the student design team.