Purpose of Document and Objectives

This document is to serve as a general set of guidelines and definitions for the basis of exploring the curation, creation, and deployment of digital exhibits within Special Collections and University Archives. This is a living, collaborative document prepared by the SCUA staff to describe what various aspects and terminology mean from a special collections/archives perspective. It is our intent that this serve as a starting point for conversations with other stakeholders within the library, or on campus, that are, or will be, involved with creating digital exhibits at UCR.

Outlines of Digital Exhibits and Examples

We have created five categories to help define the types of digital content or exhibits along with the general scale and scope of each type. Selected examples are provided for each defined group.

1. **Highlights and Announcements** (*1-2 weeks*)
   - Highlights and announcements are an important aspect of exhibitions since they can pique interest and simply make people aware of a new exhibition or important items from the collections. This aspect of exhibition design can be done simultaneously with other tasks and, in fact, may be easier to do at the end of the exhibition process. For instance, when selecting items to display, the curator could also at that time choose which of those items to highlight for social media posts. Similarly, selections from text labels, panel texts, or context statements can be used for the text of social media posts. The designated 1-2 week time frame may be different for different types of highlights/announcements. If the exhibition curator is creating all posts and has ready-to-go images, 1-2 weeks is feasible. However, if new digital content needs to be created (screen slides, videos, or high-quality photographs), this process may take longer, especially if other staff need to assist. Likewise, "no research or context" will work for library screens when simply displaying the exhibition title/object name and an image. However, social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms may require some context. Moreover, if the posts are being vetted or approved by someone else, a longer time frame may be necessary.
     - Examples:
       - Four to Explore – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yJyYJ6GZOBGeb9f319LijwHXSNRs0Fy7/view?usp=sharing
       - Eaton 50 X 50 – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zsHhu0gg7MyLl_8Y-o1Do0NR4xv6Msoy/view?usp=sharing
       - Mark Glassy & Frankenstein physical exhibition and donor reception – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oD1QrNqI18aKJHUZZkvaxeW5hQ30RI7b/view?usp=sharing

- Orange Roots: physical exhibition with donor reception – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uQ1HhK-ZJf_SIggWLZ5M6i0BcYwUYKiF/view?usp=sharing
- Collection highlights – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zogwAa0FKqzwM2Os3GEYTwrqBwVzANCU/view?usp=sharing
- NLM Traveling exhibition – https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ayQgO9ljCknZ7R4EmWYNqjwiA60QiGEq/view?usp=sharing

2. **Pop-up** *(1-2 months)*
   - Pop-up exhibitions are typically characterized by their temporary, small-scale, and collaborative nature, as well as their location, which is often based outside of the traditional library space. In this context, 'temporary' can range from just a few hours to several days. In some cases, pop-up exhibitions may be recorded or photographed and shared online for future reference. They can be event-driven and timely, meaning they are designed to correlate with on-campus, local, or global events. Pop-ups can be developed in physical and virtual spaces or a combination of the two by using apps or programs on phones and computers. Pop-up exhibitions also typically contain an interactive element that invites feedback from the audience; it has been described as a form of "collaborative storytelling." Research needs will depend on the pop-up context; whether it is a stand-alone project or part of a class/collaboration. Cost is usually on the low/medium side (depending on if new equipment is needed or perhaps a reception is planned). Since pop-ups are meant to be accessible and sometimes even transient, they are a very helpful tool for outreach to communities who don't frequent the library. Their small-scale and hands-on nature also makes them attractive projects for collaboration with community partners, faculty and especially students. Thus, pop-ups can be a useful way to democratize the process of curation, increase interest in archival materials, and also create stronger bonds between archives and the communities they serve.
     - Examples:
       - [Bowdoin Museum](#) - crowd-sourced pop-up of items that evoke memories of COVID-19
       - [Tampa Museum of Art](#) - pop-up exhibition for use in Animal Crossing video game
       - [Activists in the Archives](#) - a virtual record of a physical pop-up exhibition at Smith College

3. **Thematic** *(2-6 months)*
   - A Thematic Path is a narrative driven exhibit with a moderate number of visual resources and a minimum to moderate amount of interpretive content, as exemplified by the APS exhibits on Henry Howard Houston II or Britton Chance. The goal of a Thematic Path is to provide an introduction to a topic, theme, idea, person, organization or collection. Thematic Paths provide a point of departure for researchers and encourage further study by inviting viewers to pursue additional lines of inquiry on the given topic or collection. These types of exhibits can be a tool for aggregating content topically, similar to a LibGuide with an emphasis on visual content. If used in this way, Thematic Paths connect researchers with local

resources that pertain to their area of interest. An example of this type of Thematic Path is the Earth Archives exhibit at Penn State. Thematic Paths require a moderate amount of research and curation that can most likely be achieved by one or two staff members in 2-6 months.

- Examples:
    - [Too Near Where History is Being Made: Henry Howard Houstin II in a Time of War](#) - interactive, thematic exhibit based developed with the centennial of World War I following one young man's experience
    - [Frontiers of Knowledge: Britton Chance and New Channels of Discovery](#) - digital exhibit designed to highlight various aspects of a large, significant collection. Publishing of exhibit coincided with completion of processing and publishing of finding aid.
    - [Earth Archives: Stories of Human Impact](#) - functions along the lines of a visual libguide, hosted by Penn State

4. **Fully Curated** *(6+ months)*
    - A fully curated exhibit is a narrative driven exhibit that contains a significant amount of both visual resources and interpretive text, and can be based on either an exploration of a single collection or resource in Special Collections, or a single thematic topic utilizing multiple collections and/or resources. This scale of exhibit should provide viewers with a broad exploration of the chosen topic, containing multiple sections addressing various aspects within the overall narrative frame. A digital exhibit of this kind could be an accompaniment to a fully curated physical exhibit or a standalone product, but in either case should be created with long term use in mind, with content, display, and storage all designed to be maintained and accessible for the foreseeable future. This type of exhibit requires a high level of research and curation, which can be accomplished by a single or co-curators, but will also likely involve the assistance of other staff members in selection, digitization, design, and metadata creation. IT staff may also need to be involved in the creation of this level of exhibit, as new display technologies may be required. Exhibits at this scale should also start with an exhibit plan, addressing the purpose and audience of the exhibit, any proposed design elements, technical concerns, copyright considerations, budget, publicity plans, proposed timelines, and any planned assessment of the final product. Due to the level of both curatorial and implementation work required, fully curated exhibits should be given at the very least 6 months but most likely will take around 9-12 months to complete.
        - Examples:
            - [Rose Marie Reid: Glamour by Design](#) - digital exhibit accompanying a large scale physical exhibit, highlighting multiple areas from a single collection along with a gallery of images
            - [Community and Commerce: Oral Histories of African American Businesses in Los Angeles County](#) - digital exhibit showcasing oral histories from a single series, using archival images and curatorial text to contextualize the interviews

- - The Life and Times of Lizzy Bennet - digital exhibit accompanying a physical exhibit, utilizing materials from multiple collections to show the historical context surrounding the works of Jane Austen
  - 1968: Global Revolutions - digital exhibit drawing on multiple collections within a repository to illustrate a single topic

5. **Large Scale and Expanded Scope** *(1-2 years)*
   - A fully curated exhibit is a long-term and broad endeavor with a specific and significant impact. It can be focused on a single, rich resource (be it an item or collection), as exhibited by the Greenwich Village Bookshop Door, a larger retrospective or survey of an institution, demonstrated by The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle, 1769-2018, or it even a multi-collection and/or multi-institution collaborative effort that draws together materials from multiple repositories (any examples of this?). Fully curated exhibits will require larger numbers of staff, significant time commitments (on the order of a year or more) by those leading or coordinating the exhibit efforts, and appropriate resource allocation from participating institutions. There should be an expectation of longevity for the digital presence and ensured access that will require a commitment from the institution and relevant supporting technology personnel. Projects of this scope and scale should be attractive to grant funding organization and grants should be actively sought out to supplement institutional resources. Significant buy-in from the hosting institution is necessary, promotion and marketing of the exhibit should cover any and all outlets available to the participating institutions
     - Examples:
       - Greenwich Village Bookshop Door - ultra-deep dive based on a single artifact, interactive with large web of inter-related information and references
       - The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition: A Chronicle - massive retrospective exhibit documenting the more than two hundred year history of physical exhibits at one institution. Includes a wealth of reference and indexed contextual information

Questions to be Answered

- *What are the priorities for SCUA and Library as a whole regarding digital exhibits? What kinds/levels of resources will be made available?*
- *What kinds of workflows need to be established between departments/groups? What library staff need to be involved?*
- *How much do we want/need to take accessibility (ADA compliance, disability friendly) into account as we design exhibits? What kind of training and resources do we need to do this?*
- *What options/resources do we have for non-English content?*
- *What kind of documentation do we still need?*

Key Terminology

- Digital Exhibit
  - A digital exhibit is a curated experience that selectively uses materials to tell a story, make an argument, or create contextual relationships between the items on display. The narrative and/or contextual elements are key factors differentiating a digital exhibit from a digital collection.
- Digital Collection
  - An organized grouping of scanned, digitized, or otherwise digital material that is publicly accessible. A digital collection lacks narrative or contextual content and serves more as a general, or self-navigated, display of materials.
- Fair Use
  - We believe that employing fair use criteria will be critical to the use of many materials held by SCUA, especially when drawing from legacy collections with little donation documentation or unknown copyright status.
  - Fair use doctrine (Section 107 of the Copyright Act) allows for the use and/or limited reproduction of copyrighted materials without having first obtained permission from the copyright holder. Four factors generally weighed when considering fair use cases are: 1) the purpose and character of the use, 2) the nature of the copyrighted work, 3) the amount and substantiality of the portion taken, and 4) the effect of the use on the potential market.

References

- Yale University Library. Online Exhibitions Best Practices and Resources: https://guides.library.yale.edu/onlineexhibitions/resourcesandbestpractices
  - Some basic definitional and workflow uses
- Yale University Library. Omeka Online Exhibition Proposal form: https://web.library.yale.edu/form/omeka-online-exhibition-proposal
  - Good model of documentation, even for internal use
- Fair Use resources:
  - https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html
  - https://copyright.universityofcalifornia.edu/use/teaching.html#:~:text=The%20%22fair%20use%22%20allows%20limited,107%20of%20US%20Copyright%20Law).
- For a larger list of digital exhibit examples, please see the following wiki page: Digital Exhibit Examples