



White Paper on the Need for a Journal of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Art History

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Summary

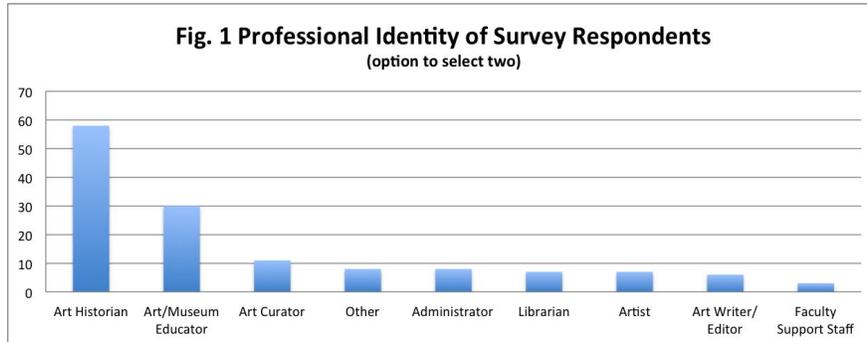
While art historians in higher education devote extensive amounts of time, effort, and energy to the job of teaching, the attitude persists that this role is separate, or even a distraction, from the primary responsibility to contribute as scholars in the field. Maintaining the duality of teaching and scholarly activity devalues the crucial relationship of pedagogical practice to art historical study, and precludes the potential for research in teaching and learning to have significant impact on the discipline itself. In order to realize this potential, the scholarship of teaching and learning in art history (SOTL-AH) must be acknowledged as a legitimate area of intellectual inquiry by the institutions and communities encompassing academic art history. A peer-reviewed journal devoted to SOTL-AH would facilitate this process by providing scholars a space to share research on pedagogical topics, and encourage further academic investigation and discourse around teaching and learning in art history.

This white paper identifies the need for SOTL-AH based on a recent survey of art historians in higher education and a review of current literature addressing pedagogical topics. It considers the impact an academic journal devoted to this topic would have on the art history and related fields that include study of visual and material culture. As a solution to the lack of SOTL-AH, ArtHistoryTeachingResources.org (AHTR) began *Art History Pedagogy and Practice (AHPP)*, a peer-reviewed e-journal, that will advance and disseminate academic research on art history's pedagogy. This initiative builds on the community and pedagogical inquiry AHTR has developed since its launch in 2011. *AHPP* will be housed on Academic Works, CUNY's Digital Commons repository as an open-access publication that will impose no subscription or contributor fees.

Pedagogical Interest Among Art Historians in Higher Education

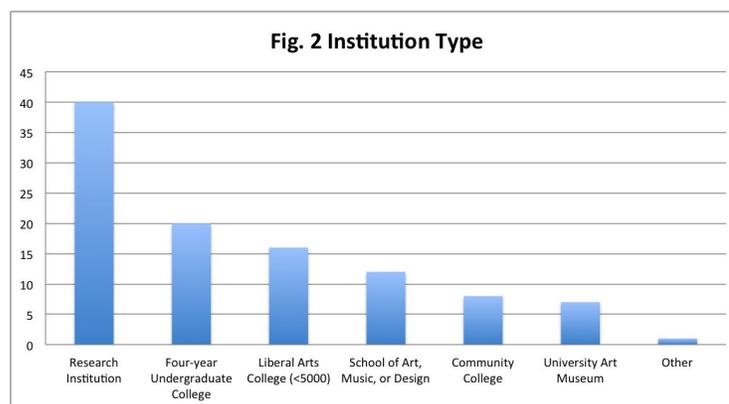
Working with the research firm of Randi Korn and Associates, ArtHistoryTeachingResources.org (AHTR) conducted a survey in July 2015 that examined how those in arts, education, and museum communities engage in art history's pedagogy and scholarship of teaching and learning. Supported

with funding from The Samuel H. Kress Foundation and distributed widely through social media and email blasts from CAA and other professional organizations, 1232 participants responded (Figure 1).



While multiple stakeholders were surveyed, this document highlights the subset of responses from art and architectural historians teaching in post-secondary institutions in order to demonstrate need within this community for discipline-specific scholarship of teaching and learning. The results show that art historians are indeed interested in pedagogy. They talk about it, seek it out, and conduct research and evaluation on their own teaching practice. However, a limited range of opportunities to share this information prevents its widespread transmission, reinforcing the anecdotal nature of pedagogical study and decreasing its value as a scholarly interest in the discipline. These conditions have also circumscribed SOTL-AH to focus on a few basic topics without the real advancements in pedagogy that would be possible with more evidence-based research and on-going academic discourse exploring the effectiveness of teaching methods on students’ understanding of art history.

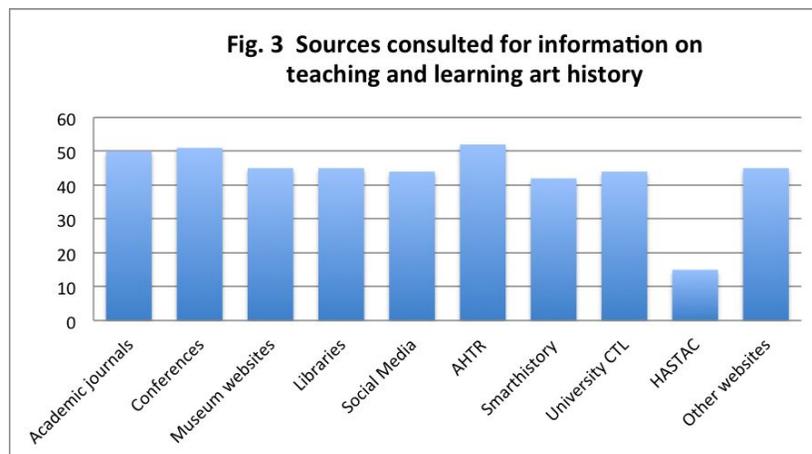
Among the survey participants, 58% identified themselves as art or architectural historians, of which 90% indicated a primary affiliation with a post-secondary educational institution (Figure 2). These respondents were evenly distributed across all academic rankings, and among tenure-track and contingent faculty with slightly fewer graduate students participating in the survey.



Although surveyed in July, well after the end of the spring semester, 91% indicated they had discussed teaching/learning methods in the past month, with 31% speaking on the topic more than 5 times during that period. 79% reported that they regularly perform some type of research or assessment around their own teaching methods. While much of this evaluation is based on standardized surveys and questionnaires, they also rely on qualitative methods including textual analysis, open-ended interviews, observation, focus groups, case studies, and reflective practices.

This research is usually shared locally, either informally with colleagues, at departmental meetings, or as part of institutional assessment requirements. Only 15% had presented their ideas at conferences, and to a lesser degree, disseminated them through Centers of Teaching and Learning (14%) and on social media (10%). Even fewer (4%) have published their ideas and findings in academic journals, and only 8 of the survey’s 1,232 respondents had written on pedagogical topics in *The Art Bulletin* or *Art Journal*, the major periodicals for art historical scholarship in the US.

While such statistics reveal a lack of discipline-specific scholarship available on teaching and learning, 61% responded they seek out information on pedagogy from a variety of sources (Figure 3).



Among academic art historians, arthistoryteachingresources.org was cited most frequently at 52% (compared to 45% of the total number of survey respondents).¹ Also ranking highly were conferences (51%) and academic journals (50%) with CAA’s annual meeting and publications specified more frequently than others.

¹ This statistic may reflect respondents already familiar with AHTR who learned about the survey through social media or posts on the website.

Although art historians rely heavily on CAA for information about discipline-specific pedagogy, topics related to teaching and learning remain significantly underrepresented at the annual meeting and in CAA publications. According to conference statistics since 2005, an average 4% of the 220 sessions scheduled each year have focused specifically on pedagogy.² Publication on the subject fares worse. *The Art Bulletin* and *Art Journal* published only 33 of the 93 sources included in AHTR's literature review discussed below. Of these, 29 appear in a single issue of *Art Journal* (October, 1995) devoted to questions of the art historical survey. The last time *The Art Bulletin* published on the topic (Cohen, et. al., *AB*, 79.2) was in 1997. Apart from the paucity of this literature, the treatment of pedagogical subjects in both *The Art Bulletin* and *Art Journal* typically comprises brief notes, personal reflections, or roundtable discussions, and not scholarly investigation into substantive problems of teaching and learning.

Literature Review of SOTL-AH

To better assess the current state of SOTL-AH, AHTR conducted a broad review of existing discipline-specific literature. The review looked at 93 academic publications culled from art history, art and museum education, visual and cultural studies, and digital humanities, as well as from international English-language sources.³

Although extensive pedagogical research exists in art education and museum education, it does not consider art history taught primarily in a classroom context, and K-12 instruction in the discipline is rarely addressed. AHTR did not examine studies assessing museum-school programs. Although these often involve an art historical component, they differ from academic courses in that art historical content is integrated as part of a broader curriculum that includes artmaking, gallery sessions, and activities usually aligned to K-12 learning objectives in art, social studies, language arts, and other subjects. While relevant publications do appear in museum education literature, the emphasis was on object-based learning and pedagogical strategies, applicable to all audiences, which could be adapted to art history courses.

In some cases, the literature discusses theoretical or disciplinary shifts that reflect current trends in academic discourse. For example, the introduction of Visual Culture into the field in the early 21st

² This number reflects the total number of pedagogical sessions given to topics in art history, studio, and design. CAA estimates about half are dedicated to art history. While there has not been a steady increase in the number of pedagogical sessions in recent years, the percentage has remained around 5% since 2014.

³ A complete bibliography of the AHTR literature review is available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3E7Nm5vuwe0M3hrVky1YmwwTHhaZHA3SlcyaUpZY2xZbnl3/view?usp=sharing>

century seemed to motivate analysis around its relevance to student learning and application to art historical study. Most of the literature pertains to undergraduate courses. While a few authors explore period-specific or upper division courses, more common are discussions of general introductory courses that are often included among General Educational requirements at many institutions.

Characteristic to the current literature is a rehearsal of specific activities or art historical approaches used by instructors, or general position statements about practices involving object-based learning, engaged classroom strategies, and skills building. Overwhelmingly, these discussions are not dependent or focused on technology, with notable exceptions that address the history of digital imagery, the emergence of digital technology and online instruction, and digital research practices. Most of the authors seem far more concerned with engaging students, writing issues, and class activities, which may be enhanced by technology, but whose use was not addressed explicitly.

Significantly absent are studies that assess the effectiveness of teaching practices, present evidence of student understanding, and discuss achievement of specific skills and learning objectives essential to art historical study. Although the scholarship of teaching and learning in art history is scant, the existing literature includes anecdotal discussions that are important to sharing teaching techniques in the field, and theoretical analysis that considers their pedagogical intent and potential. But, there needs to be greater analysis of the strengths and weakness of our methods, more thought around how to refine them in the future, and new ways to transmit this information. This additional inquiry and dissemination would facilitate adapting art history's pedagogy to the particular needs of instructors and their students in a range of learning environments, and encourage practitioners to develop better teaching methods and practices of assessment.

Opportunity and Potential Impact of a Journal

These findings demonstrate the need for a SOTL-AH journal that engages a diverse audience of practitioners. A journal should focus on examining the effectiveness of art history's pedagogy, and aim to capture and transmit information that is lost in the informal sharing where pedagogical discussions now take place. The current literature is practitioner-driven but not evidence-based. More rigorous scrutiny is necessary for scholarly credibility and to support the application of pedagogical practices to art history and allied disciplines of studio art and design, art and museum education, visual and material cultural studies, and the digital humanities.

This project requires art historians articulate the values, methods, and essential knowledges that are the foundation of the discipline. A journal would provide space for discourse that

questions and refines these core beliefs, and that considers how established standards might be affected by developments in digital art history and other emerging modes of study. It would likewise encourage investigation of the intersections of art history and digital humanities, art education, and museum education in order to clarify the goals and distinct contributions of each of these fields to benefit students at all levels of instruction and different learning environments.

Art historians must work to identify the discipline's signature pedagogies and examine their role in building understanding for students. To this end, technology should be recognized as an inherent aspect of art history's pedagogy, not as a distinct topic. Since Wölfflin, art historians have relied on technology to teach fundamental content and skills. A tacit awareness of the role of technology-enhanced pedagogies contributes to a culture where art historians rarely document their reasons for employing specific technologies, how students engage with them, and their effectiveness toward achieving course objectives. While instinctive to art historians, the ability to negotiate students' experience of the mediated object is necessary to many instructors in formal and informal learning environments today.

Over the past decade, digital projection, learning management systems, and online courses have become standard in academic courses, and instructors further enhance student learning through interactive blogs, threaded discussions, and electronic portfolios. A journal would offer a shared space to evaluate the effectiveness of technologies such as Nearpod, Voicethread, and AirMedia that are not discipline specific, but are now being adapted for art history classrooms. It might encourage the development of innovative projects like Smarthistory, Wolff, and Artsy, created for art historians and curators, but that have potential to impact many disciplines that employ visual content.

Art historians must also begin to look critically at the broader relationship of digital culture to art history pedagogy. Advancements in digital learning have the potential to change radically the educational landscape of the future. A journal would encourage discussion about the evolving role of the "digital" among art historians in higher education, and allow for exchange and collaboration with colleagues, especially those in museums, archives, and libraries who are actively engaged with similar issues.

Establishing a journal is a necessary first step to expanding the discussion of art history pedagogy beyond the narrow scope and shallow depth of the current literature. It would provide a space to consider the distinct needs of instruction in different types of institutions, content areas, learning environments, and the opportunity to address issues of scalability, student learning levels and changing demographics, and pedagogical training for graduate students in art history. These studies

would build on and complement existing scholarship from allied disciplines, and demonstrate a range of methodological models for art historians interested in conducting their own pedagogical research and analysis.

AHTR's Art History Pedagogy and Practice Initiative

Scheduled to launch in Fall 2016, *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* is an e-journal devoted to the scholarship of teaching and learning in art history. Inspired by discussions at CAA in 2015 and supported by a Digital Projects Award from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, AHTR began this initiative in response to a perceived need for an academic journal of SOTL-AH, which this report now makes clear. Building on the success of the [AHTR Weekly](#) as a popular forum where practitioners share their experiments and ideas about teaching art history, *Art History Pedagogy & Practice* will complement this exchange by providing a parallel space for rigorous scholarship exploring pedagogical issues in art history, and examining the effectiveness of instructional practices on students' understanding of the discipline.⁴

AHPP will be managed by the AHTR leadership team with the guidance of an Advisory Board that includes leaders in the fields of art history, SOTL, art museum education, and digital humanities who share a common interest in advancing pedagogy in the discipline.⁵ AHTR has partnered with The Graduate Center at The City University of New York to secure a place for *AHPP* in Academic Works, CUNY's Digital Commons repository. While *AHPP* will have its own URL, unique design, and retain autonomy over its operations, the affiliation with CUNY, a doctoral institution with a longstanding commitment to innovations in teaching, learning, and the digital humanities, brings greater academic legitimacy, expertise in scholarly communications, and ensures our commitment that *AHPP* remain an open-access publication that will never impose contributor or subscription fees.

Although the need for *AHPP* is clear, it is imperative to cultivate conditions throughout the field necessary to the journal's sustained success. AHTR's survey showed limited familiarity among art historians with developments in the scholarship of teaching and learning, and only 17% indicate that they have had training in ways to study the effectiveness of their teaching practice. While a range of methodologies are possible, art historians will need greater support than they currently have to develop pedagogical research to meet standards for academic publication.

⁴ See the AHTR Weekly at <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/journal/>

⁵ Details about *AHPP*'s Advisory Board are available at <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/e-journal/>

Most importantly, the goal to advance the scholarship of teaching and learning in art history will require a cultural sea change in the discipline that acknowledges the scholarly value of this work. When asked whether a journal would affect decisions about tenure, survey participants appear uncertain, with about half saying there would be little or no effect, and the other half thinking the impact would be significant. While this data may reflect the distribution of respondents across institutions with different tenure requirements, it mostly likely demonstrates ambivalence among art historians whether SOTL-AH is a viable research topic that would be recognized by their peers. Regardless of these concerns, *AHPP* will offer scholars the opportunity to publish SOTL-AH in a peer-review publication, which is essential to decisions around tenure and promotion.

In his report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Carnegie Foundation, 1990), Ernest Boyer famously argued that teaching should be recognized as one of four essential components of scholarly activity. Since that time, more scholars have acknowledged that the questions we have around teaching and learning constitute intellectual concerns inherent to our disciplines, and thus are deserving of the rigorous investigation characteristic to all scholarly work. SOTL-AH offers a distinct entree into the core knowledges that are at the foundation of art historical practice and considers how students understand and apply these ideas toward their own academic ends. In this way, SOTL-AH is necessary not only to raise the profile of teaching in the discipline, but also to ensure the field will continue to expand and flourish in the future.