

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

## at the UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

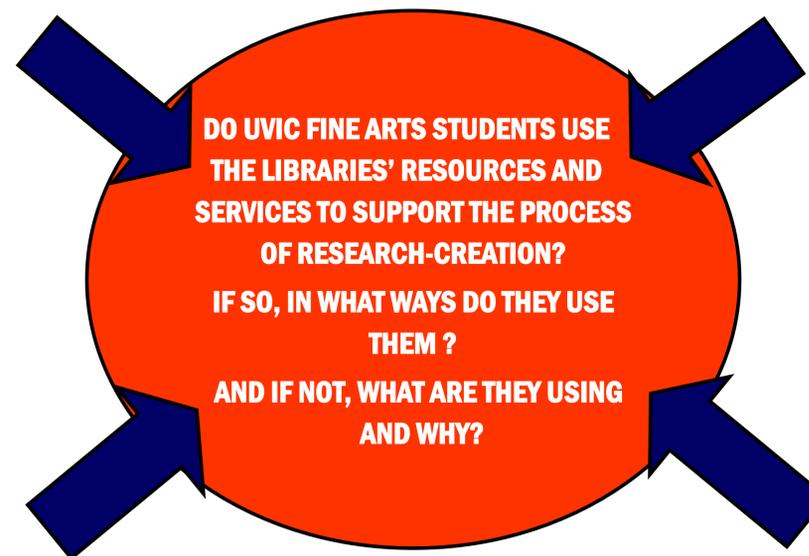
A study by Shailoo Bedi, Bill Blair, Tad Suzuki and Christine Walde, University of Victoria Libraries, Conducted 2013-2014

### 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.

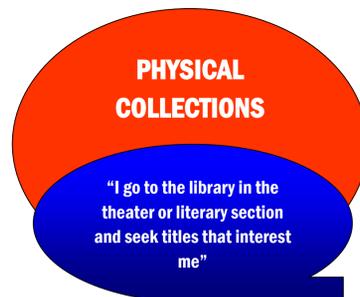


### The Role of the Library

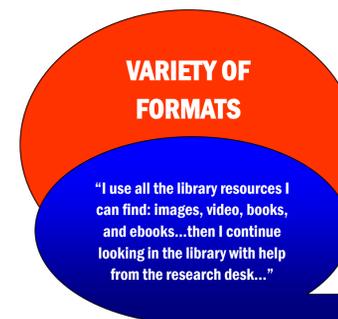
As a research team specifically *investigating the research behaviours of undergraduate Fine Arts students* in Theatre, Visual Arts, Writing and Music, *we wanted to know how and in what ways students use the library to support the process of research-creation*, if at all. Although History in Art is 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.



- 47% of respondents visited the library weekly, 23% monthly
- 24% of respondents came to the physical library to look for materials, 21% to study independently and 20% to conduct research
- Print is still important: 73% indicated their preference for print, especially for images and scores; while only 15% preferred online sources for images
- Library catalogue was the most popular way respondents searched for all types of materials
- Most frequent users of the physical library are Music students at 70%, followed by Theatre (58%) and Visual Art students (44%)
- Primary reasons for coming to the library: Music students (95%) and Theatre students (80%) come to find print materials, whereas 71% of Writing students come to study independently



- Students from all disciplines use all formats of materials, though the intensity of the uses vary
- With the use of recordings, Music had the most respondents selecting Frequently (34%) or Sometimes (33%)
- Data analysis revealed that when selecting music recordings, more respondents selected Rarely or Never (18%, 8%) which might indicate the higher use of online recordings which are easily accessible online
- Not surprisingly, Film Studies students were the heaviest users of video recordings, with Theatre students being a distant second
- All respondents showed an overwhelming preference for online recordings with only 9% of 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduates and 6% of upper year undergraduates selecting print, indicating students had a clear comfort with online options for recordings
- In our focus groups, students revealed they liked having access to a variety of formats for the manifestation of a creative work, including LPs, CDs, DVDs, and books



- When looking for inspiration 70% of respondents use the Internet, 52% ask a colleague or teacher, 40% listen to recordings, and 37% browse the library collection
- When coming to the library, 30% of respondents indicated that they “know what they are looking for” however 35% like to browse
- Overwhelming majority of Fine Arts students prefer print books over e-books, with percentages ranging from 67% in Music to 76% in Visual Arts
- Preferences between print or online images among Visual Arts was split almost equally (36%, 38%), while the respondents in other disciplines overwhelmingly preferred online images (close to or over 50%) over print
- Music students overwhelmingly prefer print over online scores (58%, 16%)
- Many highly specialized visual art resources, including copyrighted materials, are not available online and many of our interview respondents reported being inspired by serendipitously browsing through the stacks for inspiration from print materials

**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.

