

SUCCESSSES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

for the Oklahoma Contemporary Art Reference Library at the Downtown Branch of the Metropolitan Library System

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Overview

The Oklahoma Contemporary Art Reference Library (OCARL) at the Downtown Library of the Metropolitan Library System began circulating on August 23, 2021, and officially opened on October 18. This report outlines the successes to date and suggests some ideas for the future.

- The OCARL collection is circulating at a higher rate than similar material at the Downtown Branch.
- There are potential growth areas in the collection in subject matter and age range.
- Half of the donated funds remain for future projects and library materials.
- Take-away kits related to the collection and contemporary art are popular with library guests and staff.
- Library staff responded well to training and information about the collection and remain engaged and curious.

Circulation and Collection

The OCARL collection is circulating at a higher rate than comparable areas at the Downtown branch. Turnrate, the cumulative circulation divided by the number of items in a collection, is a useful statistic for assessing the popularity of a collection. At the time of this report, the OCARL collection had 473 books in circulation. 95% of items in the collection are categorized as Adult Non-Fiction 700s (topics on Art and Recreation). The OCARL 700s circulate well, with 802 cumulative circulations (initial checkouts plus renewals). The turnrate for the OCARL 700s is 1.79, which is 56% higher for these topics at the Downtown Library (turnrate of 1.15).

The OCARL also contains a variety of books that support the study of Contemporary Art. It is hard to know if there are enough items outside of the 700s to constitute a useful sample size, but there are high circulations in the 300s (i.e., Social Sciences, OCARL books on costumes, collecting, and the Black experience) and the 600s (i.e., Technology, OCARL books on design and the intersection of art and technology). It may be advantageous to add books in these areas because of patron interest.

Particularly popular titles cover a wide range of topics and include *Dandy Lion: the Black Dandy and Street Style*, *Symbols in Art*, *Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the*

Drive to Waste, Abstract Art: A Global History, Yayoi Kusama: I Who Have Arrived in Heaven, and Performance Now.

Although limited in number, the children's books in the collection circulate very well. This is an area with huge potential for growth.

Oklahoma Contemporary staff agreed to send an annual list of requested purchases in early winter. The first list arrived in December 2021 and all books purchased were on the shelf by March 2022. We look forward to expanding the collection through future donations and purchase requests from our collaborators.

Budget

Of the \$43,000 grant given to the Library System by the Kirkpatrick Foundation, just under \$20,000 has been spent. The expenses can be broken into three categories: books purchased for the OCARL collection, improvements of the physical space housing the collection, and supplies and promotion for the opening reception in October 2021.

Books (new additions, replacements, bookplates)	\$6835.64
Opening Reception (food, parking, invitation, rentals, promotion)	\$4792.66
Space Improvement (branding, technology, easels, seating)	\$8358.31

Remaining funds are expected to be allocated to the purchase of additional books, replacement books (items that are lost or damaged), supplies for programming, and technology licenses.

Programming

In-person opportunities have been slow to return to most organizations, including the library. Unfortunately, there have not been any live events to support the collection in its first eight months. Planning has begun to establish a speaker series in Fall 2022.

Oklahoma Contemporary created 150 take-home kits in July 2021 that were distributed at five libraries across the county. Several MLS staff visited Oklahoma Contemporary in late March 2022 to view the John Newsom exhibit and brainstorm programming for Summer Reading. Library staff created one in-person program hosted at two locations, and two take-home kits that will be distributed at ten locations. OCAC staff created and donated 150 take-home kits based on the library's 2022 Summer Reading theme. During June and July, over 700 take-home kits will be distributed at library branches across Oklahoma County.

Fifty books from the OCARL collection, along with regular library holdings, have been installed as a reading library to support the Newsom exhibit in OCAC's Learning Gallery.

All library branches are slated to begin receiving *ArtDesk* upon receipt of magazine racks. Having the publication available will increase interest in the OCARL collection and OCAC and provide librarians with material and inspiration for programming.

Staff Training

As the books circulate at all 19 locations, it is vital for library public services staff to understand the collection's role and procedures. To that end, the library system requires OCARL collection training for all public services staff as of August 2021. An additional 30 MLS employees from non-public service roles have opted into the training as well.

Anecdotally, staff have asked about the best ways to search and promote the collection and have shared their delight with the Newsom exhibit.

Conclusion

The initial success of the OCARL is not surprising based on the generous support from the Kirkpatrick Foundation, ArtDesk, and Oklahoma Contemporary. Likewise, Metropolitan Library staff have gone above and beyond to ensure success in all arenas and expedited their workflows to accommodate the project. The initial foundation laid during the planning period allowed the project to succeed, and the collection should be self-sustained with only minor updates and additions.