Increasing Visibility, Accessibility, and Engagement with Publications:
A Case Study of the Vancouver Art Gallery

by

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Abstract

Publishing in a gallery setting is a means of generating and disseminating scholarship around the institution's holdings, exhibitions, and activities. Though publishing is an important part of their mandates, many galleries can't support a publishing department or a full-time publishing coordinator. This predicament is one experienced by the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG), despite producing several publications a year. In 2013 the VAG lacked the resources to create the infrastructure necessary to support its publishing activities while simultaneously producing new publications; as such, it was a challenge for it to undertake long-term strategic planning, document publishing activities, and distribute its backstock. In response to these challenges, the VAG's Publications Coordinator initiated a publication study from May to December 2013. During this study research was conducted on how the VAG and other institutions publish, and a series of recommendations for the VAG were formed.

Keywords: Vancouver Art Gallery; publishing; galleries; publications

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

Despite producing several publications annually, publishing at the Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG) accounts for a small fraction of the institution's activities and output. With limited time and resources, how can the VAG simultaneously produce publications that serve its mandate and reach its intended audience, document its publishing activities, and plan for the long-term? This question, posed by the institution's Publications Coordinator, prompted a publication study at that VAG wherein research on gallery publishing was conducted and a series of recommendations on how to enhance the institution's publishing efforts were formulated and presented to the Curatorial department in a final report. As the Publications Intern from May to December 2013, I joined the Publications Coordinator in Curatorial to support this study.

To better understand publishing in art galleries as a whole, I first conducted research on what and how they publish. This research illuminated similarities in the publishing activities of different institutions while also uncovering some initiatives aimed at creating more unified methods of publishing. These findings were then compared to the Vancouver Art Gallery's publishing efforts and prompted a search for resources and initiatives available to support the VAG in publishing, both in print and digitally. Three goals for the publication study were formulated to organize this research in the final report, which included: increasing visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications; reducing excess inventory; and identifying present and future digital publishing opportunities.

To increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications, thorough documentation of the VAG's holdings was created. Based on this information, current promotional methods for publications were reviewed and new methods for promotion

were proposed. This information was further relevant in uncovering where the VAG was holding excess inventory. To reduce this excess, research was conducted on national and international art book distributors, as well as alternative methods for selling the institution's catalogues. Given that published content is increasingly made available in digital formats, it was also important to consider how the VAG was publishing digitally in the moment, as well as how it might continue to do so in the future. This included a survey of what platforms are available for sharing content, as well as any opportunities or challenges they offer.

Understanding how art galleries as a whole publish is a crucial first step in understanding the rationale behind the Vancouver Art Gallery's publishing efforts as well as how it might be able to create strategies to reduce current inventory, strengthen communication with and support from departments that participate in publishing activities, and assess opportunities to expand into the digital publishing landscape. This includes understanding what materials galleries produce, what personnel and systems of management are required to do so, and what audiences these materials are targeting.

Chapter 2.

Publishing in Art Galleries

Depending on the gallery, the institution's publishing program might include materials such as press releases, member newsletters, annual reports, brochures, and exhibition catalogues. In larger institutions materials that are promotional, versus interpretive, are generally undertaken by a Marketing department. Ideally, these materials are produced in alignment with the institution's mission and mandate[1] and with careful consideration of their function and audience.[2] Prioritizing the audience and function for a publication can be difficult for a gallery, considering that the needs of various stakeholders — including artists, curators, patrons, and sponsors — often need to be met. This struggle is especially evident in the production of exhibition catalogues, which enact an important part of the gallery's mission. The intention of a catalogue might include one or more of the following: to document detailed information about a collection or exhibition; to create a bridge between the gallery and the public; to offer new scholarship about artists and raise the profile of artists and the institutions showing their work; and to act as a resource for researchers, ensuring the gallery's activities hold a place in history.[3] Without careful consideration of audience and function, however, these catalogues run the risk of languishing on storage shelves as highly illustrated, scholarly texts.[4] This is an unfortunate reality given that catalogues are expensive to produce and seldom offer a return on their investment. As a result, galleries often turn to co-publishing to ensure

[1] Brown, Osa and Ian Thom, "Why are we publishing: permanent record or vanity press?" *Muse* 10, no. 4 (1993): 18.

[2] Cowan, Ann, Letia Richardson, and Barbara Johnston, *Publishing in Canadian museums and galleries: a study* (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing, 1992), 9-11.

[3] The Getty Foundation, *Moving Museum Catalogues Online: An Interim Report from the Getty Foundation* (Los Angeles: The Getty Foundation, 2012), 5.

[4] Cowan, Letia, and Johnston, *Publishing in Canadian museums and galleries: a study*, 14.

their catalogues receive sufficient marketing and distribution to reach their intended audience.

2.1 Co-Publishing

One means of mitigating the cost and personnel required to produce exhibition catalogues, as well as ensuring they are widely distributed, is through co-publishing. Co-publishing is considered a joint partnership between a trade publisher and one or more art galleries, though sometimes galleries partner up to share resources without involving a trade publisher. In the former, a gallery approaches a publisher with a list of potential titles from which the publisher can choose. This arrangement varies on a project-by-project basis, but generally involves the gallery covering costs affiliated with content generation — such as image reproduction and writers' fees — and the publisher covering costs affiliated with editing, design, marketing, printing, and distribution. The gallery then purchases discounted copies from the publisher to sell through the gallery store or other non-trade channels, such as the gallery's online shop; royalties are also received for copies sold by the publisher.[5] This partnership is beneficial to the gallery because they do not incur the entire cost of producing a catalogue and — depending on with whom the gallery co-publishes — their catalogues have the potential to gain wider national and international audience reach.[6] This partnership appeals to publishers who want to carry highly illustrated titles but cannot justify the costs involved with producing them.[7]

Unfortunately, not all publishers view exhibition catalogues as an asset to their program. Many believe that the lifespan of a catalogue does not exceed that of its corresponding exhibition. Though galleries understand that the majority of catalogue sales occur during their corresponding exhibitions, they believe these works continue to act as historical references and important scholarly texts past exhibition closing dates. This difference of

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[5] Kenward, Lucy (former Senior Editor, Douglas and McIntyre), Interview by author, October 16, 2012.

[6] Bogman, Suzanne, "Museum Publishing: International Challenges Guide us to New Perspectives," *The Art Book* 13, no. 2 (2006): 52.

[7] Brown and Thom, "Why are we publishing: permanent record or vanity press?" 18.

opinion can result in a toxic partnership between the two.[8] Publishers often feel that curators will not accept changes to artspeak-laden texts that the average reader cannot understand, while galleries often feel that scholarly credibility is lost when catalogues are produced as highly illustrated coffee table books.[9] Therefore, successful co-publishing depends on effective communication between the publisher and the gallery, which includes both partners understanding and respecting the importance of each other's roles.[10] The publisher must acknowledge the gallery's mandate and curatorial vision and the gallery must acknowledge the publisher's ability to create salable titles.[11] A successful co-publishing partnership is a viable solution for art galleries that lack resources and infrastructure to produce and distribute exhibition catalogues on their own.

2.2 Challenges

Due to limited administrative and financial resources and infrastructure that is not tailored to publishing, galleries face several challenges in producing catalogues. Finances are a significant concern, as many of the materials a gallery publishes are not cost recoverable. For institutions that consider marketing materials as part of their publishing program, brochures, newsletters, and web pages are distributed free of charge. Catalogues — which are more expensive to produce — are budgeted as part of their corresponding exhibitions and are not expected to generate a return on their investment. As a result, a gallery's ability to publish is limited by how generous exhibition budgets are and how much money the institution receives from granting agencies.[12] If an institution does not have the resources to support a full-time Publishing Coordinator or department, they may employ a part-time Coordinator or rely on the Curatorial department to manage the production of catalogues as part of their exhibition planning. Curators involved in this process vary based on who is working on the exhibition.

[8] Cowan, Letia, and Johnston, *Publishing in Canadian museums and galleries: a study*, 22.
[9] Ibid., 13.
[10] Ibid., 9.
[11] Ibid., 23.
[12] Ibid., 17.

Without a stable Publishing Coordinator or department, however, it is difficult to give due consideration to audience and function and for galleries to ensure their catalogues maintain a consistent voice.[13]

Considering the audience and function for exhibition catalogues is a common challenge among galleries. Often the audience for a catalogue will include scholars — such as academics and curators — as well as general visitors to the gallery. This blurs the function of the work, resulting in a catalogue whose appearance resembles that of an illustrated coffee table book, with essays that confuse and frustrate readers who are not accustomed to scholarly texts.[14] Given that galleries can be viewed as intimidating and challenging spaces, catalogues offer an opportunity to make exhibitions more accessible to a variety of visitors.[15] As a result, galleries must consider what forms of content might appeal to a wider audience when producing their exhibition catalogues and how to arrange this content in a way that can be enjoyed by those with a cursory knowledge of the artwork and scholars alike. In doing so the gallery might avoid alienating general audiences, while continuing to provide valuable scholarship to students, researchers, academics, and curators.[16] Doing so further ensures that these expensively produced works end up in the hands of gallery visitors rather than collecting dust on storage shelves.

2.3 Opportunities

Though galleries face several challenges in publishing, a well-crafted exhibition catalogue is instrumental in documenting their activities and holdings; promoting their institution to patrons, sponsors, and other institutions; and enhancing their relationships with influential critics. To ensure these goals are met, a catalogue must reflect the gallery's mission and have a clear audience.[17] Considering these items forces the gallery

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[13] Cowan, Letia, and Johnston, *Publishing in Canadian museums and galleries: a study*, 12.

[14] Bogman, "Museum Publishing: International Challenges Guide us to New Perspectives," 52.

[15] Brown and Thom, "Why are we publishing: permanent record or vanity press?" 18.

[16] Thorp, Roger, "Publishing on Art: A Crisis?" *The Art Book* 13, no. 1 (2006): 28.

[17] Brown and Thom, "Why are we publishing: permanent record or vanity press?" 20.

to question what resources — in terms of time and finances — should be allocated for each project, while defining which production decisions are necessary and which are extravagant.[18] One method of ensuring that these considerations remain in focus during the production process is through effective management.

The production of an exhibition catalogue involves several departments within a gallery including Curatorial, Photo Imaging, and Development, among others. It is important that each department involved has a unified understanding of the gallery's mandate and goals, as well as everyone's role in the production of a catalogue. This approach encourages a greater breadth of creative input and forces departments to consider the intentions and decisions made by other departments in relation to their own.[19] This is especially important in considering how catalogue promotion and distribution can be integrated into the Marketing department's activities to ensure these works reach as wide an audience as possible. The potential for catalogues to reach a wider audience is only increased as art galleries expand into the digital landscape.

2.4 Galleries and Digital Publishing

Making exhibition catalogues available digitally offers art galleries the opportunity to reach a wider audience with their content. This expansion into digital publishing is a natural progression, particularly for galleries whose collections contain an increasing number of new media works. These installations have the potential to engage with gallery visitors in new and exciting ways, and their corresponding catalogues can do the same when presented digitally. Digitizing catalogues must be considered carefully as galleries find ways of identifying the merits of the book object — as seen by various audiences — and how those qualities can be successfully translated into a digital format. It is argued that the physical presence of the book — including its weight, materials, and smell — contributes to the experience of reading, and how we interpret and absorb the meaning of text and images. What galleries must therefore uncover is how to translate

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[18] Brown and Thom, "Why are we publishing: permanent record or vanity press?" 21.
[19] Cowan, Letia, and Johnston, *Publishing in Canadian museums and galleries: a study*, 13.

this multifacetedness into a digital format in an interesting and relevant way.[20] Similar to the production of print catalogues, there must be clear project management and careful consideration of audience to produce digital catalogues that offer relevant content presented in a suitable medium.

2.4.1 Management

The production of digital catalogues can be challenging for galleries who are new to the practice and have finite resources to spare for research and development.[21] Similar to the production of print catalogues, there are several departments involved in the production of digital catalogues including Curatorial, Photo Imaging, and Development. Rights collection is integral to digital publishing as content provided digitally is difficult to control and has the potential to reach a wider audience than content provided in print. Permission fees for images are traditionally determined by the number of books produced, which makes it difficult to determine the cost of images used digitally.[22] Galleries must therefore understand how the production process of a digital catalogue differs from that of a print catalogue and develop workflow processes suitable for publishing digital catalogues, which can be difficult given that galleries often lack the resources to do so. As a result, all departments involved must work closely together to ensure that content is well arranged, easy to navigate, and that images are being used legally.[23] A cohesive workflow can further ensure galleries reach audiences effectively.

2.4.2 Audience

Since digital catalogues offer a greater opportunity to combine forms of content that appeal to multiple audiences, individuals involved in their production must collaborate to

[20] Chan, Paul. "The Future of Art Book Publishing," panel discussion, New York Public Library, February 12, 2013, JW Player, 17:10, http://media.nypl.org (Accessed April 6th, 2014).

[21] French, Ylva and Sue Runyard, *Marketing and Public Relations for Museums, Galleries, Cultural and Heritage Attractions* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 13.

[22] Miller, James H., "Art Book's Future Now: Art & Photography Books 2013," *Publishers Weekly*, March 24 2013, http://www.publishersweekly.com (Accessed June 15th, 2014).

[23] The Getty Foundation, *Moving Museum Catalogues Online: An Interim Report from the Getty Foundation*, 12.

determine the best way for each form of content to be accessed by its intended audience. One solution is by employing what The National Gallery of Art terms the "skim, swim, and dive" approach. In this approach to digital publishing, basic information is available to general audiences, links to more detail are available to students, and scholarly content and comparative materials are available to specialists.[24] This approach further allows galleries to update existing catalogues with links to sources and archival materials, as well as audio and video interviews with artists and curators, as this content becomes available.[25]

Understanding these merits is important for galleries in deciding how audiences purchase, download, and interact with digital works.[26] Contrary to print publishing — where a gallery can anticipate how a reader will interact with content — digital publishing comes in several formats including websites, e-books, apps, and electronic journals. Galleries must therefore ascertain what form of digital content will suit a particular project and its audience best. For example, rather than publishing scholarly materials — such as curatorial essays — as part of expensively illustrated catalogues, these pieces can be published through an electronic journaling system, which encourages greater dissemination among academic audiences.[27] Considering audience interaction with digital content in comparison to print further illuminates how galleries might pair the two to serve their audiences better.

Rather than rejecting the print catalogue in favour of the digital, galleries might benefit from a more collaborative approach for presenting content. During a panel discussion on gallery publishing presented at the New York Public Library, Sharon Gallagher (president of Artbook | D.A.P.) considered the possibilities of such an approach. She suggested using QR codes in print catalogues to link to content such as footnotes and back matter online, where they could be hyperlinked, and suggested that the same could

[24] The Getty Foundation, *Moving Museum Catalogues Online: An Interim Report from the Getty Foundation*, 19.

[25] Ibid., 5.

[26] Kim, Chul R., "The Future of Art Book Publishing," panel discussion, New York Public Library, February 12, 2013, JW Player, 45:00, http://media.nypl.org (Accessed April 6th, 2014).

[27] Thorp, "Publishing on Art: A Crisis?" 28.

be done to link to multimedia content, such as audio and video recordings. She went on to suggest that longer form texts could be published electronically for students, scholars, and researchers who want to study content in depth and could be made available through a paid subscription service, to mitigate the cost of their production.[28] Though publishing such content digitally increases its potential audience, many galleries lack the resources necessary to even entertain any of the options discussed above. As a result, considering a centralized system of research — such as that proposed by the Getty Foundation's Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative — might allow art galleries to pool their resources and work together to create, publish, and distribute catalogues in digital formats.

2.4.3 Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative

Founded in 2009, the Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative (OSCI) supported a collaborative study conducted by nine art galleries and museums that wanted to explore the potential of digital publishing for their collections. The project was initiated and conducted by institutions in the US, and the findings are now available to the public. The participants included the Art Institute of Chicago; the Arthur M. Sackler and Freer Gallery of Art; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Seattle Art Museum; Tate Gallery; the Walker Art Center; and the J. Paul Getty Museum. These galleries wanted to formulate strategies for digital publishing as a response to the static nature and short life span of their print catalogues and — as part of the initiative — were asked to research, plan, and create model catalogues for works in their collections. Although the galleries were unable to find a single solution that fulfilled their combined needs, they created a set of shared approaches to digital publishing that ensured some consistency among their efforts. It was agreed upon that digital catalogues needed to be more than a series of PDFs posted to a gallery's website, and that they needed to be dynamic, allowing the gallery to host audio and video materials, add and remove content, and create links. It was further decided that readers would benefit from the ability to tag and annotate text

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[28] Gallagher, Sharon, "The Future of Art Book Publishing," panel discussion, New York Public Library, February 12, 2013, JW Player, 27:40, http://media.nypl.org (Accessed April 6th, 2014).

and images, thereby focusing the content of the catalogue on their interest in the work.[29] Based on these needs, the galleries considered what approaches could be shared by institutions — regardless of their resources — to participate in some level of digital publishing.

Given that galleries often have disparate methods of managing their catalogues, the OSCI participants saw value in creating thorough and consistent documentation for these works, while using standardized vocabulary and metadata to simplify the process of finding content online.[30] Methods for complementing print catalogues with digital materials — rather than creating full digital catalogues — were also important to consider for galleries with finite resources.[31] Regardless of where or how content was being published, the participants continued to understand the need to first identify the audience and function of each work before defining solutions for its production.[32] Understanding these parameters is an important step in moving towards more user-centred and progressive forms of digital cataloguing.

2.5 Initiatives in Digital Publishing

The gallery experience and reading experience are changing as both expand and take advantage of digital technologies. Online initiatives such as the Rijksstudio and the Google Cultural Institute are making art accessible to a wider public and catalogues are no longer constrained to the parameters of the printed page. Though galleries face limitations collecting text and image rights for digital publishing, these initiatives encourage them to consider how technology might suit specific exhibitions in a way that enhances the experience of their patrons.

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[29] Helmreich, Anne, "Getty Voices: OSCI and the Future of Digital Publishing," *The Getty Iris* (blog), July 8, 2013, http://blogs.getty.edu/iris (Accessed June 15th, 2014).

[30] The Getty Foundation, *Moving Museum Catalogues Online: An Interim Report from the Getty Foundation*, 18.

[31] Ibid., 31.

[32] Ibid., 14.

2.5.1 Rijksstudio

Developed in 2013 by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, Rijksstudio features an online presentation of 125,000 artworks that are free to download and unrestricted in their use. The initiative came about as part of Rijksmuseum's effort to rebuild their website and create a platform engaging an international audience. Visitors to the site are encouraged to interact with the collection by browsing through and downloading high-resolution images of artworks by both famous and lesser-known artists. To facilitate this process, the site was built so that content could be easily accessed, downloaded, and shared, regardless of what device was being used.[33] With the Rijksstudio, Rijksmuseum has created a platform that encourages and facilitates visitor participation.

2.5.2 Google Cultural Institute

Similar to Rijksstudio, The Google Cultural Institute offers its visitors the opportunity to interact with artworks and historical artifacts they might never have had the opportunity to see otherwise. However, unlike Rijksstudio, images featured on the Institute's site are not available for download. Instead, this content has been developed to provide an engaging and interactive platform for education. As a facilitator for the sharing of art and cultural objects, the Google Cultural Institute has partnered with hundreds of museums, cultural institutions, and archives to provide content for their Art Project, World Wonders Project, and Archive Exhibitions.

The Institute's Art Project features over 40,000 high-resolution images of works from around the world including paintings, sculptures, historic and religious artifacts, photographs and manuscripts, as well as narrated videos, audio guides, and viewing notes. Visitors can either browse the works or create their own galleries to share. Their World Wonders Project uses Google street view and 3D modelling to give visitors access to modern and world heritage sites and their Archive Exhibitions share archival content that is seldom on display due to space limitations or the fragility of the materials. Contextualizing these photos, videos, and manuscripts are partnering museums and

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[33] Gorgels, Peter, "Rijksstudio: Make Your Own Masterpiece!" *Museums and the Web,* January 28, 2013, http://mw2013.museumsandtheweb.com (Accessed May 29th, 2013).

curators. Through these three projects, the Institute offers resources for educators including lesson plans and student worksheets, as well as links to art and history resources online.[34]

To partner with the Google Cultural Institute museums and galleries are required to fill out a "Partnership Request Form," which can be accessed through the Institute's website. On this form, it is clearly stipulated that Google only accepts copyright cleared or copyright free content.[35] Once accepted, partnering institutions are required to cover the cost of digitizing their own works, at which point they can upload them to the Institute free of charge. Google currently maintains that it will not charge any fees to access content, will not directly monetize content, and will not host any ads on the site.[36] The Google Cultural Institute has created a platform wherein they can easily update content to share with art patrons, educators, and students. Both the Google Art Project and Rijksstudio offer visitors the opportunity to interact with artworks much differently than they would with a catalogue. Elements of these initiatives have the potential to enhance the ways in which other galleries share content and encourage participation with their holdings. This desire to create greater engagement with publications was an impetus in considering how the VAG publishes in the present, and how it might continue to publish in the future.

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[34] "About," Google Cultural Institute, https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute (Accessed October 1, 2014).

[35] "Cultural Institute Partnership Request Form," Google Cultural Institute, http://g-cultural-institute.appspot.com/signup (Accessed February 2, 2015).

[36] "FAQs," Google Cultural Institute, https://support.google.com/culturalinstitute/partners/answer/2994434?hl=en (Accessed February 2, 2015).

Chapter 3.

The Vancouver Art Gallery

Understanding the role of publishing in a gallery setting helps to shed light on why publishing is such an important part of the Vancouver Art Gallery's mandate. The VAG was founded in 1931 as a public initiative led by businessman H.A. Stone. Along with Charles H. Scott — the director of what was then Vancouver's School for the Decorative and Applied Arts and is now Emily Carr University of Art + Design — the two men travelled to Europe to purchase the VAG's first collection consisting of 113 paintings, watercolours, prints, and drawings.[37] Since then the VAG has continued to collect historical and contemporary art produced regionally, nationally, and internationally. Originally located at 1145 Georgia Street, the VAG moved to the "Old Courthouse" at 750 Hornby Street in 1983, where it now maintains a collection of over 10,000 artworks, acquiring several hundred more each year. These pieces are loaned to other galleries and are used by researchers, scholars, students, authors, and publishers.[38]

The VAG operates with departments for: Administration and Finance, Art Rental and Sales, Audio Visual, Building Maintenance, Conservation, Curatorial, Development, Education, the Gallery Store, Human Resources, the Library, Marketing, Museum Services, Network, Operations, Photo Imaging, Preparation, Public Programs, Reception, Registration, Rentals and Facilities, Security, Visitor Services, and Volunteer Coordination. Each department operates on a separate budget line that contributes to the VAG's bottom line and any combination of these departments might be involved in the planning and execution of exhibitions, public programs, and publications.

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[37] Vancouver Art Gallery, *Internal Documents* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2013), 2.

[38] "Permanent Collection," Vancouver Art Gallery, http://www.vanartgallery.bc.ca (Accessed June 15th, 2014).

Current challenges facing the VAG include: how to work best with limited space and resources, how to increase connections and awareness in several communities, and how to plan effectively for the long term.[39] The publications program is by no means exempt from these challenges. Until the VAG's anticipated move to West Georgia and Cambie, there is minimal space for storing excess titles. Given that there is only one part-time employee whose work is dedicated to publications, there is also little time available for strategic planning.

Regardless of these challenges, the VAG continues to be viewed as a relevant centre for the visual arts and maintains a balanced budget line as a result of self-generated revenue and external funding.[40] Self-generated revenue comes from the Gallery Store, memberships, exhibition attendance, fundraising, and rentals. External funding comes from the City of Vancouver, BC Government, Government of Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, and Canada Council, as well as corporate sponsors and a handful of private and public grants and awards. The VAG further receives funds to support the acquisition of art from the 1984 Gallery Acquisitions Fund, which was established with assets received from sale of the 1145 Georgia Street building.[41]

3.1 What the VAG Publishes

Since 2008 the VAG has produced nearly fifty exhibition catalogues, ranging from 6–10 publications each year. As part of the institution's mandate, the publishing program is intended to promote and disseminate the work of BC, Canadian, and international artists, art historians, and scholars to educators, curators, collectors, students, and members of the general public. The publications themselves contain essays by curators, artists, critics, and scholars as well as full-colour reproductions, some of which have previously received little scholarly attention.[42] Each year the publishing program costs

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[39] Vancouver Art Gallery, *Internal Documents*, 1.
[40] Ibid., 1.
[41] Ibid., 6.
[42] *2012/13 Annual Report* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2013), 5.

from $250,000 to $450,000 and, although some expenses are recouped through sales, the program is not designed to be fully cost-recoverable.[43]

The VAG produces the following publications: catalogues, which are created to accompany in-house exhibitions; interpretive brochures, which are created to accompany the VAG's Offsite, *NEXT: A Series of Artist Projects from the Pacific Rim*, and Across the Province exhibitions; and microsites, which are small websites built specifically to accompany a single exhibition. The production of these publications is ongoing and may involve fundraising, securing reproduction rights, photography, digital image preparation, internal and external editing and proofreading, commissioning writers, book design, and sometimes translation.[44]

3.2 Personnel Involved in Publishing at the VAG

The Curatorial department is responsible for the acquisition and management of the VAG's collection as well as developing and directing exhibitions. They initiate the production of exhibition catalogues to document, promote, and disseminate the work of BC, Canadian, and international artists, scholars, and art historians to collectors, curators, educators, students, and members of the general public.[45] As a result, the budget for each catalogue is built into that of its corresponding exhibition, which means that once the budget for the exhibition is closed, that of its catalogue is as well.[46] Therefore, these works act primarily as cultural objects rather than financial commodities and excess stock is seen as a waste of cultural resources rather than lost profit. Because the VAG is not primarily a publisher and does not publish content as a means of supporting the institution financially, it can only allocate funds to support one part-time Publications Coordinator to manage the production of these works.

[43] *2012/13 Annual Report,* 13.
[44] Ibid., 13.
[45] Vancouver Art Gallery, *Internal Documents*, 3.
[46] Stefanucci, Tracy (Publications Coordinator, Vancouver Art Gallery). Interviews by author. September 9, 2013, and February 3, 2015.

As they are considered cultural objects, the process of publishing exhibition catalogues differs from that of trade books. If an exhibition involves intensive research or is a career survey, a Curator might suggest the production of a catalogue, which the Director of the VAG must approve. The Curator of the exhibition then creates a detailed publication proposal. In conversation with the Curator, the Publications Coordinator prepares a publication information document, which includes a summary of the catalogue, list of contributors, number of images and production specs, as well as a table of contents and a production schedule. The team working on a catalogue varies, and might include a combination of the following: a Curator, a Curatorial Assistant, the Publications Coordinator, the Manager of Curatorial Affairs, and staff assigned to work on the catalogue by a co-publisher. Given the amount of catalogues in production at once, Curatorial Assistants with experience producing publications might take on the role of the Publications Coordinator for select projects. The Chief Curator/Associate Director, along with the Director of the VAG, must approve all content and production choices before a catalogue is printed.[47] To ensure adequate marketing, distribution, and sales of the final catalogue, the VAG often seeks a co-publisher.

3.3 Co-publishing at the VAG

Given the resources required to produce and adequately distribute exhibition catalogues, the VAG often co-publishes with a trade publisher, or with one or more galleries with whom it is co-producing an exhibition.[48] Catalogues that are co-published tend to have more content than those published solely by the VAG and come from exhibitions with broader markets.[49] Until its bankruptcy in 2012, the VAG primarily published with Douglas & McIntyre,[50] and have since partnered with the German publisher Hatje Cantz and British arts publisher Black Dog Publishing. The shift toward co-publishing in Europe

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[47] Stefanucci interview.

[48] *2012/13 Annual Report*, 13.

[49] Freundl interview.

[50] Douglas & McIntyre was previously an imprint of the Canadian publishing firm D&M Publishers. Following D&M's bankruptcy in 2012, the imprint was purchased by Harbour Publishing, where it now resides as Douglas & McIntyre (2013) Ltd.

is a natural transition, as the market for art books is greater than that of Canada, making the cost of their production more justifiable.

When the VAG decides to co-publish, it approaches a suitable publisher with a proposal for a single catalogue or a series of catalogues. The publisher then considers the proposal with their editorial board and selects which catalogues they would like to produce.[51] Co-publishing agreements now — as opposed to those arranged in the past with D&M — typically follow a custom publishing model, wherein the publisher acts as a service provider rather than a partner. As part of these arrangements, the Curatorial department generally covers the cost of content development — including writing, photography, reproduction rights, and substantive editing. The publisher conducts copy editing, often provides design services, facilitates the printing of the catalogues, coordinates shipping of the VAG's order to the institution, and plays a key role in marketing and selling the publication.[52] The Curatorial, Development, and Marketing departments disseminate complimentary copies of these publications to various stakeholders and the Gallery Store handles book sales in their brick-and-mortar and online shops, as unused or unsold catalogues take up prime storage space and are seen as wasted cultural or financial capital.

[51] Kenward interview.
[52] Stefanucci interview.

Chapter 4.

Publication Study Goals to Inform Recommendations in Final Report

Developed by the Publications Coordinator, the publication study was a means of conducting research that could be used to form recommendations on how the VAG might strengthen its publishing program. This research was organized under the following three goals: to increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications; to reduce excess inventory; and to identify present and future digital publishing opportunities. The first goal required thorough documentation of the institution's inventory, digital presence, and marketing efforts. By considering the excess inventory identified in the first goal, the second goal required research on how to reduce this excess through national and international distribution, as well as alternative methods for selling publications. In considering how publications might be produced and disseminated digitally, the third goal required documentation of what digital publications the VAG had already created, then what opportunities were available for digital publishing in the future. Documenting the VAG's publishing efforts was a crucial first step in considering what methods of production and distribution might suit its publications best moving forward.[53]

4.1 Goal 1: Increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications

An excess of publication backstock is a serious concern for the VAG. Publishing at the institution is a means of documenting and promoting its activities and fulfilling its

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[53] As the Publications Intern for the duration of the publication study, I was charged with the task of collecting and organizing data as well as co-authoring the final report.

mandate. Therefore, it is important that these efforts reach as wide an audience as possible. With 6–10 new catalogues being published annually, the VAG requires methods for maintaining thorough documentation and ample promotion of these publications to ensure that they receive the greatest amount of visibility and engagement possible. As a first step, the Publications Intern created thorough documentation of the institution's inventory, digital presence, and promotional methods starting from 1997, in order to create a foundation of understanding that could then be used to assess how the VAG might increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with its publications.

4.1.1 Inventory Documentation and Analysis

To increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications, it was first necessary to create a thorough listing of the VAG's printed materials including catalogues and interpretive brochures. Using past inventory counts as a starting point, each publication was researched and a database was created which included the title and subtitle, release date, number of copies remaining, co-publisher, category, cover price, number of pages, number of illustrations, size and format, editor(s), contributor(s), BISAC codes and ISBN. Drawing from conclusions made by the Open Scholarly Catalogue Initiative, this standardized vocabulary is a means for the VAG to ensure its catalogues are easier to share online.[54] Moreover, collecting and recording information on the VAG's holdings created rich metadata that can be used for any future digital initiatives whether in publishing, promotion, or distribution.

4.1.2 The VAG's Digital Presence

This data was paired with an analysis of the VAG's digital presence, which included promotion of exhibition catalogues through its main site and the Curatorial department's microsites. At the point of the publication study's completion in December 2013, only a portion of the VAG's catalogues were listed on its website. There was no search or buying function for these catalogues and their descriptions were inconsistent in length

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[54] The Getty Foundation, *Moving Museum Catalogues Online: An Interim Report from the Getty Foundation*, 18.

and tone. Without a search function, visitors to the VAG's main site had to scroll through the "Publications" pages by year to find information about select catalogues. Without a buying function, visitors could only purchase catalogues by visiting the Gallery Store, resulting in lost opportunities to sell excess catalogues online.

Some catalogues were further promoted through the Curatorial department's microsites. Built separately from the VAG's main site, microsites were created as a means of promoting single exhibitions. Though these sites offered the VAG the opportunity to promote catalogues as part of exhibitions, they required a great deal of time and resources to produce. Moreover, despite the energy expended to create a microsite, it was often difficult to find online; microsites were accessible either via a link in the exhibition description on the VAG's main site or by conducting a Google search, wherein they often appeared after the main site. This was problematic for catalogues that were featured on a microsite and not on the main site.

Based on these observations, it is clear that the VAG needs a more cohesive approach to promoting catalogues online, as well as strategies for creating Curatorial microsites, to ensure that the lifespan of catalogues continue past the closing date of their corresponding exhibitions. Information on all publications should be made available through the VAG's main site, since it represents the institution as a whole. As a secondary means of promoting select catalogues, microsites are an asset to the promotion of the VAG's holdings, but could benefit from the use of templates for their design and set deliverables for their content, to mitigate the amount of resources required to produce them. To ensure these efforts are noted, it is important for the Marketing and Curatorial departments to work together in support of the VAG's publishing activities.

4.1.3 Marketing Efforts

Given that the Curatorial department expends a great deal of resources in producing content in print and online, it is important that the Marketing department work with them to promote the institution's publishing efforts. This is especially important for promoting catalogues that have not been co-published and therefore do not benefit from the

marketing efforts of a partner publisher or institution. At the publication study's completion in December 2013, the VAG offered print marketing through its member's newsletter *Glance*, and marketing online through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and *e-glance* — an electronic newsletter available only to VAG members.[55] The Marketing department further sent custom emails and used print and online advertising to inform specific audiences about upcoming exhibitions, events, and publications. At this point, there was no newsletter available for non-members and catalogues were only sometimes promoted as part of exhibition press releases, or through the distribution of media copies.[56]

Though the Marketing department had several channels for promoting the VAG's activities, they focused heavily on communicating with existing members and sparingly promoted catalogues and other materials published by the Curatorial department. Increasing communication with non-members may broaden the audience for exhibitions, events, and publications. Some methods for initiating this communication could include a newsletter for non-members or a central blog containing current information on the institution's activities.[57] By pairing these initiatives with a cohesive social media strategy, the VAG may create a forum to promote its catalogues to a wider audience.

4.2 Goal 2: Reduce excess inventory

After considering methods of increasing visibility, accessibility, and engagement with its publications, the VAG has the opportunity to explore methods of moving print and digital content from storage into the hands and onto the screens of academics, students, and art enthusiasts. For exhibition catalogues, specifically, co-publishing agreements can mitigate the need for such, as the co-publisher often oversees distribution. However, when such an agreement is not possible, the VAG must arrange distribution for

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[55] Stefanucci, Tracy (Publications Coordinator, Vancouver Art Gallery) and Stephen Webster (Director of Marketing and Communications, Vancouver Art Gallery). Email correspondence, June 13, 2013.

[56] Stefanucci interview.

[57] French and Runyard, *Marketing and Public Relations for Museums, Galleries, Cultural and Heritage Attractions*, 13.

publications on its own accord. This might include forming agreements with national and international art book distributors, selling catalogues online, or making publications available for purchase at VAG events. Each method comes with an array of opportunities and potential challenges.

4.2.1 Potential Distributors of Inventory

With limited space for storing excess catalogues, the VAG must consider methods for reducing its stock, which involves either selling, donating, or destroying these publications. The most promising of the three options is selling catalogues, which avoids wasting cultural resources and offers the VAG a partial or full return on its investment. Finding buyers for a catalogue past the end of its corresponding exhibition can be difficult, as the institution generally promotes its publications in conjunction with the exhibitions. As a result, the VAG might benefit from partnering with a distribution house, such as ABC Artbooks Canada or Artbook | D.A.P.

4.2.1.1 ABC Art Books Canada

ABC Art Books Canada offers national and international marketing and distribution for Canadian art publications. It facilitates data-exchange with databases such as Barnes & Noble, Baker & Taylor, and Bowker, while also making publications available through Amazon.ca, Amazon.com, and Amazon.co.uk. The distributor further has a standing order with libraries including the Tate Library and Archive, the Metropolitan Museum Library, and Kustmuseum Basel. Along with its online initiatives, ABC participates in several exhibitions and fairs including, Art Toronto, MASS MoCA's *Oh Canada*, and Maison Rouge's *My Winnipeg*. Their main office is located in Montreal, with satellite offices in New York and the UK and it has sales representatives in Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Lost Angeles, London, and Paris.

The application process to partner with ABC Art Books is fairly straightforward. Art galleries are required to contact the Director of the organization to discuss representation. Once approved for representation, the gallery's books are made available through ABC's website and databases. Though easy to navigate, the aesthetic of ABC's site does not reflect the industry that it serves. Moreover, visitors cannot buy

titles directly from the site; instead they are directed to either visit an Amazon page for the book or email their credit card information to ABC to place an order. Though the distributor has formed relationships with several museums and libraries, it uses social media sparingly, including a Facebook page that is updated infrequently.[58]

4.2.1.2 Artbook | D.A.P.

Distributed Art Publishers Inc. (D.A.P.) is a distributor and co-publisher of books, special editions, and exhibition catalogues on art, photography, design, and culture. Founded in 1990 in New York, D.A.P. is the exclusive North American representative of the Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Walker Art Centre. D.A.P.'s editorial, design, publicity, sales, and marketing departments are based in New York and are supported by a Los Angeles Showroom. Artbook is an online retail extension of D.A.P. that sells publications directly to the public. Together Artbook and D.A.P. are involved with distribution, digital books, publishing, retailing, and event management. Some Canadian stores that D.A.P. distributes to include, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Metropole, Presentation House Gallery Bookstore, Swipe Books, TYPE Books, and Vancouver Special. They currently represent books from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, as well as The Power Plant in Toronto.

The application process is somewhat more complicated than that of ABC Artbooks. D.A.P. accepts submissions on: art, photography, literature, architecture, and design. To apply for representation of a single publication, galleries must submit a resume and exhibition list for the artist; the retail price and print run of the publication; and a dummy as well as a finished copy of the publication. To apply for representation for all their publications, galleries must send samples of previous publications, as well as information on their upcoming titles. Submissions must arrive in mid-February (for the Fall/Winter catalogue) or mid-August (for the Spring/Summer catalogue) and galleries should expect to wait 4-6 weeks to see if their projects have been approved for representation.

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[58] "About ABC Art Books Canada," ABC Art Books Canada, http://www.abcartbookscanada.com (Accessed May 29th, 2013).

D.A.P.'s website is contemporary and easy to navigate. Along with a thorough listing of the publishers they represent, D.A.P. has links to brick and mortar stores where visitors can purchase their publications. The site further offers gift guides for casual shoppers as well as curatorial services for customized libraries available to private collectors, businesses, and cultural institutions. To notify its audience of new publications and upcoming events, D.A.P. is active on Twitter and has a Facebook page that is updated regularly. D.A.P.'s digital presence is paired with an attention to detail in creating retail booths at art and book fairs in the US and abroad. The distributor often collaborates with galleries and artists in the creation of these spaces.[59]

4.2.2 Alternative Strategies for Moving Inventory

Though partnering with a distributor is one means of selling to a wider audience, the VAG could further benefit from exploring alternative strategies for selling excess catalogues. Because the VAG's Curatorial department and the Gallery Store operate on separate budget lines, the Curatorial department might benefit from selling their backlist via an online retailer, such as AbeBooks. It could further mitigate this excess by promoting and selling catalogues at events held at the VAG, such as the Vancouver Art/Book Fair.

4.2.2.1 AbeBooks

Launched in 1996, AbeBooks is an online marketplace for books available in North America, the UK, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy. As well as featuring a user-friendly interface, the site allows booksellers to customize pages to reflect their own branding. AbeBooks has a strong presence on social media, with an active Twitter account and a Facebook page, as well as a YouTube channel and a blog. Booksellers set their own prices and shipping rates and are required to pay a monthly subscription fee based on the amount of titles they host, as well as an 8% commission on each title sold. Inventory

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[59] "Artbook Services and Partnerships," Artbook | D.A.P., http://www.artbook.com (Accessed May 22nd, 2013).

is managed using Homebase — a free inventory management system provided by the site — and booksellers are paid by AbeBooks weekly via an electronic money transfer.[60]

In considering the option of creating a storefront through AbeBooks the time commitment to create and monitor an account was further calculated to assess whether or not it would be feasible for the Curatorial department to implement. The Publications Coordinator and Intern calculated that it would take up to an hour to create a bookseller account and approximately ten hours to upload images, descriptions, and metadata for the excess catalogues identified by Curatorial. They then estimated that monitoring sales and preparing catalogues for shipment could be completed within an hour each day. Based on these figures — though there is an initial time commitment in inputting the data — the exposure to a greater range of buyers online could make it a feasible option for the VAG.

4.2.2.2 Vancouver Art/Book Fair

As well as offering catalogues for sale online, the VAG hosts several public programs and events wherein it could further promote and sell their publications. One of which — with a focus on art publishing — is the Vancouver Art/Book Fair (VA/BF). Founded in 2012, VA/BF is the only international art book fair in Canada. Modelled after the New York Art Book Fair, but adapted to Vancouver's scale and audience size, the two-day fair attracts local, national, and international publishers and features exhibitors, programs, performances, and installations. Since its inception, the Fair has been held at the VAG, which offers the institution an opportunity to promote and sell its catalogues in a setting dedicated to art publishing.[61]

One difficulty in doing so, however, is ensuring that the VAG's catalogues stand out amongst the plethora of printed matter. Given that its publications tend to be more expensive and less ephemeral than others at the Fair, the VAG ought to consider how it presents its catalogues in a way that draws attention, as well as what incentive could be

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[60] "Sell Books," AbeBooks, http://www.abebooks.com (Accessed July 3rd, 2013).

[61] "About," Vancouver Art/Book Fair, http://2014.vancouverartbookfair.com (Accessed September 20th, 2014).

offered to festival visitors to purchase publications. For example, partnering with local artists to create a table or reading space that relates to the catalogues being sold is one option, as well as offering these publications at discount either individually or in bundles.

4.3 Goal 3: Identify present and future digital publishing opportunities

Given the expansion of digital publishing, the VAG has the opportunity to consider how it might reflect this expansion in its own publishing activities. Up until the point of the publication study's completion in December 2013, the VAG's digital initiatives included: promoting exhibition catalogues via its main site and the Curatorial department's microsites; publishing interpretive brochures and select texts on the online platform Issuu; and producing its first digital app as part of the exhibition *Lost in the Memory Palace: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller*. Moving forward the VAG must first consider what materials ought to be digitized then what methods and platforms for digitization are suitable for this content. This will ensure that sparse resources are allocated effectively and that the VAG has the greatest potential for exploration and experimentation.

4.3.1 Digital Platforms

At the point of the publication study's completion, digital publishing at the VAG consisted predominantly of content featured on the Curatorial department's microsites and posting interpretive brochures on Issuu. Curatorial microsites and content sharing platforms were and continue to act as a means of sharing published works with academics, students, and art enthusiasts while further promoting the VAG's activities. This is especially important for more ephemeral materials — such as brochures — or for texts that support research and scholarship. As well as Issuu, e-Artexte is another platform that continues to offer the VAG the opportunity to disseminate such materials.

4.3.1.1 Issuu

Issuu offers a gateway for the VAG to enter the digital publishing landscape, as the institution has finite resources for digitizing and posting publications on its own. At the time of the publication study's completion, eleven of its interpretive brochures were posted on the site, which offers unlimited publishing free of charge. To include features such as targeted distribution, site integration, and customization, publishers are required to pay up to $30/month.[62] Publications made available through Issuu are free to read and the site supports all major document formats including PDFs, which are a feasible file format for the VAG. The site supports all mobile and desktop devices and allows publishers to embed their publications directly onto a website or blog. Issuu also allows for links within the publication that direct users to the publisher's site and provides analytics for publishers, including: how many readers there are for each publication, what pages have the highest click through rate, and what devices are being used to view publications.[63]

4.3.1.2 e-Artexte

For catalogue content that contributes to research and scholarship, e-Artexte is a more appropriate platform for the VAG to reach a wider audience with these works. Functioning (in part) as a digital catalogue for Montreal's Artexte — an art book documentation centre — e-Artexte hosts content on contemporary art from 1965 to the present, including: exhibition catalogues, essays, monographs, and anthologies. The site allows museums, artist-run centres, and art galleries to archive their content in a space that is indexed by search engines, including: Google, Google Scholar, and OALster. Though site users can download catalogues for free, the VAG retains copyright for works posted on e-Artexte through a Creative Commons license that controls how its content is used and distributed. Metadata for each title — which was collected as part the publication study — is included for titles to enhance searchability. To host content on the site, contributors are required to obtain a membership and pay a yearly fee based on the annual budget of their publishing program. If a membership is not renewed, new content

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[62] "Pricing," Issuu, http://www.issuu.com (Accessed September 29th, 2014).
[63] "Essential Features," Issuu, http://issuu.com (Accessed September 29th, 2014).

cannot be submitted; however, past content will remain on the site. Similar to Issuu, e-Artexte accepts PDF files of catalogues, which is a file format that is feasible for the VAG to produce.[64]

4.3.2 Digital Cataloguing

Aside from hosting interpretive brochures and catalogues on online platforms, at the point of the publication study's completion the VAG was in the midst of working on its most experimental digital initiative to date. In collaboration with the Art Gallery of Ontario, the VAG was developing an iPad app in lieu of a print publication for the exhibition *Lost in the Memory Palace: Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller*. The intention of such was to create a digital publication that mimicked the interactive qualities of the artists' work. If completed, it would offer the opportunity for viewers to experience the works, whether or not they were able to visit the exhibition in person. Cardiff and Miller were seen as prime contenders for this form of cataloguing, given the nature of their work — which heavily employed interaction with technology — and their previous interest in experimenting with the form of their catalogues.[65]

It was decided that the iPad would be the most suitable device for the app. Regardless of the restrictions for users of different devices, the iPad continued to be a leader in arts-based digital publications. Likening the inability to create an app that could be used by everyone to the inability to distribute art books at every bookstore, those involved in the project agreed that the primary audience for the app would be iPad users. Cardiff and Miller were receptive to this initial concept; however, they were unwilling to commit until seeing a prototype. The VAG moved ahead with the project, while the AGO organized the exhibition tour. To ensure adequate distribution of the app, it was agreed that it needed to be ready prior to the exhibition opening in Toronto. The digital agency DARE was commissioned to build it based on the curators' shared vision for an immersive experience. Through the app, viewers were meant to navigate the works as they would

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[64] "e-Artexte Digital Repository Policies," e-Artexte, http://e-artexte.ca (Accessed September 29th, 2014).

[65] Grenville, Bruce (Senior Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery). Interview by author, November 19, 2013.

in the VAG. This included moving in and out of rooms and using interactions that were thematically appropriate for each piece.[66]

Unfortunately, the app was not well received. It was agreed that the file size for its prototype was excessive and both Cardiff and Miller found it too game-like. This is not surprising for the VAG's first attempt at creating an app in lieu of a print catalogue. Unlike books — which maintain certain conventions their audience can expect — digital cataloguing is a new field and difficult to envision without seeing a prototype. As a result, the VAG had to re-envision the project. The curators settled on creating a digital catalogue that would work cross platform with fewer game-like qualities. The new catalogue would require WiFi, reducing the amount of data that would otherwise need to be stored in the viewers' devices. This solution further required a simple clicking action to move from the main page to each of the works.[67]

Envisioning and developing the Cardiff and Miller app exposed the VAG to a host of possibilities and limitations. Similar to the production of print catalogues, digital catalogues must satisfy a variety of stakeholders, including the VAG as well as its audience and artists. What differentiates digital cataloguing from its print counterpart is the speed with which the technology to produce digital catalogues changes and the lack of standard conventions in the format of these works. This is difficult for most galleries with finite resources to keep up with, with or without the development of information sharing systems —— as was outlined by the Getty Foundation's OSCI study.

4.3.3 Moving Forward with Digital Publishing

Because the VAG has finite resources available for digital publishing, it must carefully consider what form of digitization is best suited and most cost effective for each publication, as well as what content viewing platforms are appropriate for hosting each publication. Backlist titles that support research by academics and curators while offering content that appeals to the general public could be made available as basic PDFs, which

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[66] DARE, *Vancouver Art Gallery - Cardiff/Miller App* (Vancouver: DARE, 2013), 2.
[67] Grenville interview.

the VAG already has for several of their interpretive brochures and catalogues.[68] If the VAG does not have a PDF of a catalogue, it can request one from the designer of the publication. These PDFs can be posted in part or in whole to view for free through platforms such as Issuu or e-Artexte. Media-rich PDFs can be considered if an appropriate project arises. Before doing so, however, it is important for the VAG to ensure it has adequate rights to distribute content digitally.

4.3.3.1 Rights for Digital Publishing

If the VAG chooses to convert brochures and catalogues into digital formats, it is important to review their contracts to ensure that no conflicts regarding permissions will arise as they are converted and disseminated. For publications the VAG has self-published, this might involve contacting writers and photographers to secure digital rights. For publications that have been co-published, the VAG will need to seek permission from the co-publisher, which is likely difficult to receive. Moving forward, contracts for catalogues should be updated to include digital rights for content. However, while requesting such rights is possible, it may still be a challenge to receive the rights to reproduce images digitally.[69]

4.3.3.2 Centralized Curatorial Microsite

At the point of the publication study's completion in December 2013, the Curatorial department's microsites were created to promote only specific exhibitions. Links to the sites were buried at the end of exhibition descriptions on the VAG's main site and often appeared after the main site when input into a Google search. Rather than creating disparate sites for each exhibition, the VAG might consider creating one Curatorial microsite that would house content about all upcoming exhibitions. While reducing the amount of time involved in creating separate sites, the Curatorial microsite could further promote publications such as interpretive brochures, catalogues, and apps, while also hosting Curatorial content such as didactic texts, artist editions, and public programming

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[68] Hawryshkewich, Natalie and Tracy Stefanucci, *Final Report: Gallery Publication Study* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2013), 3.
[69] Hawryshkewich and Stefanucci, *Final Report: Gallery Publication Study*, 3.

videos that are not clearly available through the main site. The site could operate as a low stakes interim site until the VAG's main site can accommodate these needs.[70]

[70] Hawryshkewich and Stefanucci, *Final Report: Gallery Publication Study*, 8.

Chapter 5.

Recommendations in Final Report

The publication study was a means of documenting the Vancouver Art Gallery's publishing activities and assessing what infrastructure could be implemented to ensure continued production and documentation of publications that serve the institution's mandate and intended audience, while simultaneously planning for the long-term. After researching and compiling data on how galleries publish and relating these findings to the VAG's efforts, the Publications Intern worked with the Publications Coordinator to form recommendations for each of the study's three goals documented in a final report, which was to be used as a reference by the Curatorial department.

5.1 Goal 1: Increase visibility, accessibility, and engagement with publications

Based on documentation and analysis of the VAG's holdings and digital presence, the report recommended that the institution consider what backlist catalogues could be promoted further and what steps could be taken to market future catalogues. To ensure that Marketing has adequate information to promote these works, it was suggested that the Publications Coordinator provide the department with information for new catalogues that includes the following: catalogue specs, a sales handle, a blurb for social media, a description for the website, and any relevant links.[71]

[71] Hawryshkewich and Stefanucci, *Final Report: Gallery Publication Study*, 8.

5.2 Goal 2: Reduce inventory

With thorough documentation of their holdings, the report recommended that the Curatorial department decide how many copies of each catalogue to set aside for archival purposes and how many copies of each catalogue to sell. For catalogues published solely by the VAG, it was suggested that the institution explore a partnership with Artbook | D.A.P. or ABC Artbooks Canada to sell the excess, or to create an online shop on AbeBooks. The benefit of selling through AbeBooks would be that using an existing e-commerce platform might act as a low stakes trial run for the VAG to decide whether or not it is worthwhile for it to implement their own selling platform.[72]

5.3 Goal 3: Identify present and future digital publishing opportunities

Short-term strategies for this goal included securing digital rights for images and texts for upcoming catalogues and requesting that designers submit PDFs of catalogues for viewing on screen. As well as continuing to post interpretive brochures on Issuu, the report recommended that the VAG consider featuring select publications on the platform including: full catalogues published solely by the VAG and excerpts from upcoming co-published catalogues. In order to share content for scholarship, it was suggested that the VAG post its independently published catalogues and brochures on e-Artexte. Should a project arise whose format and budget permits, the VAG could then consider creating a media-rich PDF.[73] As part of long-term planning, the VAG could monitor downloads of these digital versions to assess whether it might be worth selling digital catalogues in the future and could create a centralized curatorial microsite to mitigate resources involved in creating several disparate sites.[74]

[72] Hawryshkewich and Stefanucci, *Final Report: Gallery Publication Study*, 6.
[73] Ibid., 3.
[74] Ibid., 8.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion

Initiated by the Publications Coordinator, the publication study at the Vancouver Art Gallery was a means of documenting its publishing activities; uncovering methods to increase visibility, accessibility and engagement with its publications; and creating systems to aid in long-term planning. As a first step, research was conducted on how galleries publish. This uncovered the diverse range of materials that they produce, the opportunities and challenges that arise from their publishing processes, as well as how some galleries publish and share content digitally. These findings were then related to the Vancouver Art Gallery's publishing efforts. The mandate to create content that serves art enthusiasts, students, and academics, while drawing resources from exhibition budgets to do so, affords the institution the opportunity to publish works without a primary focus on profit. There is, however, an impetus to disseminate publications as broadly as possible as a means of furthering its mandate and mitigating wasted cultural capital. As a result, the research collected as part of the publication study was organized by three goals from which recommendations on how to improve the institution's publishing activities were formed and presented to the Curatorial department in a final report. Some of these recommendations were steps towards supporting those goals, while others addressed long-term structural and operating challenges.

Since the completion of the publication study, the VAG has implemented some changes in the ways its publications are produced and disseminated. For example, in 2014 the Gallery Store launched an online storefront with a page dedicated to publications. Metadata and catalogue descriptions were drawn from those compiled for the study and the Publications Coordinator initiated a workflow for new additions to the page to ensure that all publication descriptions featured on the VAG's main site and the Gallery Store's site remain consistent. To handle excess catalogues, the Curatorial department signed

an agreement with an intermediary interested in selling them via AbeBooks, who takes a third of catalogue sales revenue as their fee.[75] The department also experimented with digital cataloguing as part of the *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything exhibition* by producing an audio app to complement the exhibition and by featuring a virtual tour on the Google Cultural Institute.[76]

Though AbeBooks offers one avenue for selling excess catalogue stock, it will likely only reduce the VAG's inventory by a nominal amount.[77] Therefore, the VAG must consider alternative means for moving excess stock to reduce the amount of catalogues remaindered or disposed because of storage space capacity. Partnering with a distributor is only feasible for catalogues solely published by the VAG — of which there are increasingly few — and requires time and resources to apply, which the Curatorial department cannot spare. What the institution might consider for catalogues that must be removed due to space limitations is partnering with the Gallery Store. Since both departments operate on separate budget lines, Curatorial will have to either sell or donate their catalogues to the Store, who can then sell them online. Because it is unlikely that the Store will agree to incur the cost of buying excess stock, the Curatorial department will realistically have to donate the catalogues. Though Curatorial would not receive a return on their investment in producing the catalogues, it might limit those that have to be remaindered or disposed of, thus reducing wasted cultural capital while marketing the institution through the dissemination of these works.

Though the *Douglas Coupland: everywhere is anywhere is anything is everything exhibition* experimented with digital documentation, this is not indicative of how the VAG can treat most of its exhibitions. Coupland was receptive to digital cataloguing and encouraged the sharing of his work via the Google Cultural institute.[78] As a point of contrast to Coupland's eagerness to explore digital formats, was Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller's apprehension towards the app that was created in lieu of a catalogue for their exhibition *Lost in the Memory Palace: Janet Cardiff and George*

[75] Hopkins, Richard (Owner, Hourglass Books). Interview by author, February 5, 2015.
[76] *2013/14 Annual Report* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2014).
[77] Hopkins Interview.
[78] Stefanucci interview.

Bures Miller. Through these two examples it is clear that digital cataloguing undertaken by the VAG cannot only be based on which projects it sees fit for experimentation, but those that the artist(s) involved do as well. This can be problematic given that the technology used to present digital catalogues is in constant flux and cannot be fully understood until a prototype is presented, and collecting the permissions to share works digitally can be difficult and costly.

What remains a constant impediment to advancing the VAG's publishing activities is a lack of financial and personnel resources. With only one part-time Publications Coordinator and a Curatorial department that is fully engaged in creating exhibitions, there is very little time for strategic planning involving publishing. The recommendations from the publications study implemented are those that could be maintained by the Publications Coordinator, such as documenting thorough metadata and descriptions for each new catalogue. Perhaps rather than trying to immediately enforce systems to streamline the production of catalogues, or trying to explore digital platforms, the Vancouver Art Gallery should focus on creating simple systems for documenting and disseminating information, while maintaining its focus on creating publications that reflect the nature of the institution as a space to support dynamic and thought-provoking works.

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