



PRESS RELEASE

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Williams College Awarded \$500K Mellon Grant to Integrate the Museum Art Collection into the Curriculum

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Williamstown, Mass. – The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has awarded Williams College \$500,000 for the expansion of the museum’s online collection as a platform for experimentation, teaching, and research. With this grant the museum will inspire new ideas and practices in how campus museums in particular leverage their digital collections.

Enhancing engagement through online access has been a long-standing goal for the museum, which has now digitized much of its collection and made all of it available online. The three-year grant will support the development of in-depth cataloguing and metadata about the collection and openly accessible tools for deep engagement with collection data. It allows for the creation of a dynamic online collection interface that invites both serendipitous browsing and focused research, including the ability to search objects by usage in college courses and disciplines.

“With the generous support of the Mellon Foundation, we anticipate generating new models for how a museum’s digital collection can catalyze teaching and learning in the liberal arts,” said Christina Olsen, Class of ’56 Director. “We envision an exciting range of data visualization and digital humanities projects. Students might crowdsource the annotation of objects or create algorithms to mechanically classify artworks by style or

subject. Faculty teaching courses in big data, artificial intelligence, and machine learning can craft new projects that make use of a data set never before available for curricular use.”

WCMA will create a three-year position for a Digital Collections Project Manager who will collaborate with departments across campus to ensure the strategic application of digital technologies to address teaching and learning goals. The grant also makes possible the hiring of cataloguers and a user experience design consultant along with a two-year digital humanities postdoctoral fellowship.

“We know that the pedagogical potential of both the physical and digital collection is enormous,” said Olsen. “This project was inspired by faculty across a range of fields who came to me excited about all the innovative work their students could do with enhanced access to our collections dataset. This project deepens and widens the value of museum collections in the 21st century, especially in higher education.”

Williams College Museum of Art

The Williams College Museum of Art makes dynamic art experiences to incite new thinking about art, museums, and the world. At the heart of the Williams College campus the museum draws on the collaborative and multidisciplinary ethos of the surrounding college to enliven the more than 14,000 works in its growing collection. The museum and its collection is a catalyst for student learning and community engagement. WCMA is located on Main Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. The museum is open 10 am to 5 pm, Thursdays 10 am to 8 pm, and closed Wednesdays September through May. In June, July, and August WCMA is open every day 10 am – 5 pm and 10 am – 8 pm on Thursdays. WCMA is free and open to all. For more information, contact the museum at 413-597-2429 or visit wcma.williams.edu.

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