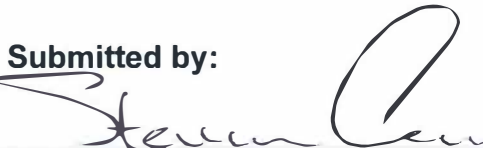


Museums Miami Center Proposal

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[1] Summary and Mission

Disciplines ranging from art history to geology, from anthropology to biology depend on objects—a painting, a carved spear, a geological map, an ore sample—as records of human interaction with each other and with the world around them. From philosophical considerations on the nature of “thingness” to the exhibition practices of museum curators, from the ethics of anthropological display to the use of 19th century natural history specimens in the study of 21st century climate change and biodiversity, objects and museums intersect with the investigations of a wide range of scholars and practitioners.

Recent academic studies in educational psychology and museum studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of object-based learning strategies.¹ The designation of Museums Miami as an interdisciplinary research center will enhance liberal arts education at Miami University by strengthening the role of museum collections in student learning and for enhancing faculty research opportunities. This Center will support interactions among Miami’s object-based collections, thereby facilitating and enhancing interdisciplinary connections in the classroom and in scholarly research. Comparable object-based learning efforts have been underway for some time at Harvard University, Dartmouth University, and the University of Michigan among others.

Miami University’s collecting units for purposes of this proposal include: Freedom Summer Archive; Hefner Museum of Natural History; Karl E. Limper Geology Museum; McGuffey House and Museum; Miami University Arboretum (in process); Miami University Art Museum; Miami University departmental collections (e.g. Anthropology, Art, Athletics, Computer Science, English, Music); Miami University Hamilton Botanical Conservatory; Miami University Libraries Special Collections; Myaamia Archives (part of Special Collections; participation by the Myaamia Center will be encouraged); Turrell Herbarium; University Archives; Western College Museum and Archives (Patterson Place Museum).

The mission of Museums Miami is to:

- position Miami’s museums and collections as an integral part of the educational experience at Miami University in ways that benefit all majors at both the undergraduate and graduate levels;
- increase interdisciplinary dialog and exchange among Miami’s museums as well as with informal collections housed in departments and other units at the university;
- provide increased access to physical collections through comprehensive digital catalogs and an integrated interface that allows Miami’s independent collections to be searched simultaneously;

¹Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan, **Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education** (Ashgate, 2015).

- enhance the interdisciplinary research capabilities infrastructure at Miami University;
- formally integrate the wide-ranging contributions of Miami's museums and material collections into the institutional strategic plan.

[2] Museums Miami Center Objectives

Objective 1: Position Miami's museums and collections as an integral part of the educational experience at Miami University in ways that benefit all majors.

Miami's museums and collections currently serve a diverse range of students and courses. (Appendix Two) Museums Miami will serve as an "umbrella" under which existing collaborations can be strengthened and new academic programs and initiatives using the university's unique collections can be developed. These programs could include a FYRE (First Year Research Experience) Program focused on object-based research and teaching opportunities through the Miami University Humanities Center. The initiative will also build upon the Museums and Society minor to develop additional curricular opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Objective 2: Increase interdisciplinary dialog and exchange.

This dialog and exchange will take place among Miami's museums as well as with collections housed in departments and other units at the university. Miami's collections, both formal and informal, are housed in many different places on campus – from Athletics to the University Libraries. Bringing all those with an interest in Miami's collections together constitutes a rare opportunity to "de-silo" academic life on campus. The Center will also provide a forum for such connections and will facilitate interactions between faculty and students. Miami's collections will serve as a bridge between departments and colleges. Such interactions will doubtless engender new ideas for academic courses, new ideas for public exhibitions and collaborative research endeavors.

Objective 3: Provide increased access to physical collections through comprehensive digital catalogs and an integrated interface that allows independent catalogs to be searched simultaneously.

Museums Miami will work with the Center for Digital Scholarship and other support units to develop a single-search interface capable of integrating object data from the individual content management systems in use across the university. This interface will allow students, faculty, alumni and scholars to access Miami's collections for research purposes. The search process itself will assist in making interdisciplinary connections between objects in disparate collections in preparation for hands-on study of the original objects themselves.

Objective 4: Enhance the interdisciplinary research capabilities infrastructure at Miami University.

The Center will serve as a catalyst and clearing house for interdisciplinary object-based research at Miami. Professor Daniel Prior (History), for example, is conducting ongoing

research on a collection of bronze artifacts from the ancient Inner Asian steppes owned by the Art Museum, combining archaeology, comparative mythology, folklore, art history, linguistics, and population genetics. Prof. Steven Conn (History) is developing an undergraduate research course titled "The History of Miami University in 50 Objects" that will involve all of Miami's collections as students think about new ways to tell the story of the university. Other opportunities include collaborations between Art History faculty and the Heffer Museum of Natural History to develop a course on the inter-relationships between the history of art and the history of science.

Objective 5: Formally integrate the contributions of Miami's museums and material collections into the institutional strategic plan.

The inclusion of Museums Miami in the formal institutional plan will ensure that collections-based units are fully recognized for their direct and indirect contributions to the curriculum and faculty research. While the intrinsic value of museums and collections across the University are understood and supported by museum professionals and faculty who currently utilize these resources, Center status will serve to elevate our collections as vital, unique and irreplaceable institutional resources. In addition, this status will provide a unified voice during internal discussions regarding resource allocations, and to external granting organizations.

[3] Activities and Timeline

The following table gives an overview of the activities that will be undertaken in the first three years of operation.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Organize Museums Miami Steering Committee	x		
Appoint individual to serve as Center Director	x		
Identify physical office space for Center	x		
Formalize internal and external partnerships with Center	x	x	x
Develop brand identity and promotional materials of Museums Miami	x		
Identify internal and external funding opportunities; apply for internal and external funding as determined by Steering Committee	x	x	x
Design and develop a comprehensive digital interface with the assistance of the Center for Digital Scholarship and the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering, and Interactive Media Studies	x	x	
Phased testing and implementation of single-search interface for object collections represented by the Center		x	x
Implement object-based teaching strategies in dedicated educational spaces (FYRE, Teaching Lab)		x	x

Organization of Steering Committee: The Steering Committee will be comprised of staff representing each unit of the Museums Miami collaborative as well as Miami faculty (tenured and untenured) with a demonstrated commitment to the Museums Miami mission and objectives. The steering committee will provide guidance and leadership to Museums Miami and assess progress toward the stated objectives and goals. At a minimum, the steering committee will hold two meetings per year and will also be responsible for assisting with public outreach. Members will serve staggered three-year terms, with the opportunity for renewal. A chair and secretary will be designated by majority vote of the committee.

Appoint Center Director: The directorship of the Center will rotate amongst the chief administrators of each of Miami's formal collecting units included in the Museums Miami collaborative. The selection process will be coordinated by the Steering Committee. The Center Director will report to the Deans of the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Creative Arts and University Libraries. Center Directors will serve a two-year term, with the appointment approved by the Office of the Provost. The Director and Steering Committee will submit an annual report on Center activities to the Associate Provost for Research and Scholarship. Review of Center status will take place after five years.

Identify Physical Office Space for Center: While the ultimate goal is to secure a dedicated space for Museums Miami, initially this would follow the Center Director.

Formalize Internal and External Partnerships: The first year of Museums Miami will be dedicated to building internal and external partnerships. These partnerships might eventually support the construction of up-to-date museum study and exhibitions spaces (through renovation and expansion). Their purpose would be to enhance utilization of existing museum collections and expand access and awareness of physical collections through smaller and temporary exhibition spaces across Oxford's main campus and on the regionals.

Museums Miami will also develop partnerships with equivalent institutions in the region, such as the Smith Library of Regional History, the Cincinnati Museum Center, the Oxford Museum Association, and the Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park and Museum. These partnerships will strengthen the reputation of Miami University by increasing knowledge about its museums and collections and expand professional and research opportunities for our students.

Brand Identity and Promotional Materials: Raising the public profile and awareness of Miami University's object collections is a key goal of Museums Miami. Achieving this goal will involve branding, website development, and the integration of Museums Miami's brand into other materials promoting Miami University's undergraduate teaching and research opportunities.

Apply For and Receive Internal and External Funding: Museums Miami will identify and apply for support internally as well as external grant opportunities to support the

development of a digital interface as described in Objective 3. Funding sources include the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Ohio Humanities Council, National Science Foundation, Institute of Museum and Library Services and other granting agencies. The Museums Miami Steering Committee will work with the development officers in each of the participating colleges to identify potential donors to establish an endowment for the Center as well as promote the Center's goals.

[4] Measurable Outcomes

Museums Miami Center success will be measured by **increased Miami University faculty actively using collections** in their courses or research, **increased Miami University undergraduate student participation** (students actively conducting collections-based research), **success securing grants** from external foundations and corporations, **greater participation by local and regional K-12** educational institutions in Museums Miami unit programming.

[5] Proposed Budget [NOTE: Given the uncertainties of how the center will be funded, the budget numbers will be added at a later time.]

Note: budget will be by fiscal year, July 1-June 30.					
	PROPOSED SOURCES	Year 1 (FY 2019-2020)	Year 2 (FY 2020-2021)	Year 3 (FY 2021-2022)	Total
	CAS Dean support	Web design			
	CCA Dean support	Branding			
	External grant support		Digital Interface design	Digital Interface testing and installation	

Appendices

Appendix One: Personnel currently involved in Museums Miami collaborative

Dr. Jeb Card, Assistant Teaching Professor, Anthropology
Dr. Steven Conn, W.E. Smith Professor, History
Dr. Daniel Gladish, Professor (Botany) and Director of the Conservatory
Stephen C. Gordon, Administrator, McGuffey House and Museum
Dr. Kendall Hauer, Director, Limper Geology Museum
William M. Modrow, Head Special Collections, Miami University Libraries
Dr. Nicholas P. Money, Professor and Director, Honors Program
Dr. Daniel Prior, Associate Professor, History
Kaylie E. Schunk, graduate student, History
Dr. Marguerite S. Shaffer, Professor, History and Global & Intercultural Studies
Dr. Helen Sheumaker, Associate Teaching Professor, History and GIC
Laura Stewart, Collections Manager/Registrar, Miami University Art Museum
Dr. Pepper Stetler, Associate Professor, Art and Architecture History, and Associate Director, Miami University Humanities Center
Steve Sullivan, Director, Hefner Museum of Natural History
Dr. Michael A. Vincent, Instructor and Curator, Turrell Herbarium
Dr. Robert S. Wicks, Professor, Art and Architecture History, and Director, Miami University Art Museum
Dr. Jennifer Yamashiro, Senior Lecturer, Art and Architecture History, Humanities & Creative Arts

Appendix Two: Sample fields that frequently use object-based learning to support educational objectives

American Studies
Animal Classification and Biodiversity
Anthropology
Archaeological Description
Archaeological Field Methods
Art and Architecture History
Biological Anthropology
Black World Studies
Botanical Description and Classification
Classics
Criminal Justice

Digital Humanities
Early Modern Studies in Text and Image
English Literature
Enlightenment and Evolution
Experience Design
Field Botany
Geology
Global Studies
History of Science and Technology
Life on Earth
Literature and Identity
Mapping a Changing World
Museums and Society
Opening Minds through Art
Orientation to American Languages and Educational Culture
Paleontology
Popular Prints and Cultural Change
Photography
Plant and Fungal Diversity
Plant Taxonomy
Plants, Humanity and Environment
Problem Solving
Sociocultural Studies in Education
Taxidermy
Tourism
Visual Culture
Women's Studies