Prospects and Strategies for Deep Collaboration in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums Sector

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This paper reports on the findings of a working summit hosted by the University of Miami in January 2016 at which the administrative heads of art museums and libraries from fourteen academic institutions convened to explore the barriers to—and opportunities for—deeper intra-institutional museum-library collaborations. The summit was jointly funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and featured presentations by thought-leaders in the academic galleries, libraries, archives, and museums (GLAM) sector. This paper presents a summary of the work, discussions, and outcomes of the summit including recommendations for further effort in the following areas: (1) collaborative practices; (2) shared budget strategies; (3) joint advocacy and advancement; and (4) future GLAM sector summits.
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INTRODUCTION

The missions and programs of college- and university-affiliated libraries and art museums have evolved significantly in recent decades. No longer simply repositories of knowledge and stewards of objects, academic libraries and museums play critical roles in the intellectual engagement, cultural enrichment, and personal as well as professional development of the many constituents they serve. Specifically, such institutions create and implement active learning partnerships with a broad range of departments and divisions across their campuses, leverage new opportunities for scholarship and collaboration, mine the scholarly potential inherent in the ever-changing arena of the Digital Humanities, and play increasingly critical roles in civic engagement.

Inherent in each of these functions are unique opportunities—and challenges—for academic museums and libraries, which must also maintain the highest professional standards with regard to the conservation and care of their collections, exhibitions, research, and education. The changing expectations for such institutions may be attributed partially to new models of self-directed, experiential learning, as well as advances in digital technology, which have revolutionized the creation, dissemination, and “consumption” of knowledge and information. The impact of such shifts is particularly notable among the principal constituents of libraries and museums in the higher education sector—the faculty and the students they mentor and teach—who now seek new and innovative ways to integrate library and museum collections into their learning and research agendas.
Working together, academic libraries and museums have the opportunity to harness the enormous potential inherent in these changes and to create rich collaborative networks, share resources, and foster dynamic cross-curricular interdisciplinary teaching, learning, and scholarship. They equally have the capacity to help one another learn how to best manage shared challenges—whether fiscal, administrative, or programmatic. However, the evolution of library and museum acquisition, preservation, resource discovery, and access practices as well as technology strategies, have generally followed separate trajectories. Similarly, the missions and visions for these organizations have evolved along distinct paths. The frequent placement of libraries and museums in disparate academic organizational structures erodes opportunities for intense collaboration and communication around program development, which is so critical at this juncture. These contextual considerations initially suggested the need for a Summit designed to bring teams of library and museum directors from leading academic institutions together to explore the challenges to—and possibilities for—deeper collaboration. Bearing these exciting possibilities in mind, the University of Miami hosted “The Academic Art Museum and Library Summit,” a two-day conference held January 27-29, 2016. This inaugural event brought together fourteen pairs of library and museum directors from a representative cross-section of American colleges and universities. Working together, these teams spent two days immersed in interactive, participatory programming designed to inspire expansive thinking and facilitate the mining of rich collaborative opportunities among this academic subset of the broader sector of institutions described as Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAMs). Invitees submitted proposed topics for discussion, as well as at least one idea for a collaborative project on
their home campuses, in advance of the Summit. The former helped to shape the convening’s three plenary sessions, while the latter ensured that each pair of attendees had engaged in meaningful dialogue regarding the challenges of and possibilities for deep collaboration well in advance of their arrival to Miami.

The Summit’s program featured a keynote opening address (Daniel Weiss, President, Metropolitan Museum of Art); a distinguished speaker’s talk (Winston Tabb, Sheridan Dean of University Libraries and Museums, Johns Hopkins University); a speaker representing an international perspective (Jeremy Upton, University of Edinburgh); a facilitated plenary session (Elliott Shore, Executive Director, Association of Research Libraries); and closing remarks (Clifford A. Lynch, Director, Coalition for Networked Information). Recognized for the depth and breadth of their experience and expertise, their commitments to excellence, and their “future-now” attitudes, these speakers’ roles were both informational and inspirational, and their presence suffused the Summit—and its participants—with vision and energy.
The Summit agenda also included three plenary sessions, each of which was facilitated by pairs of attendees based upon their pre-Summit submissions, including proposed future projects. These sessions, which were designed to encourage bold and innovative thinking about key issues in the field, and the presenting teams were as follows:

**Collaborative Teaching and Learning**
- Oberlin College
- Princeton University
- Skidmore College
- University of Notre Dame

**Collections Sharing and Exhibitions**
- Duke University
- Northwestern University
- University of Wisconsin
- Vassar College

**Strategic Alignments/Validating the Work of GLAMs**
- University of Georgia
- University of Oregon
- University of Texas
- Yale University

The University of Miami’s Lowe Art Museum and UM Libraries provided local hosting and logistical services for the Summit, while a steering committee comprised of leaders from the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries, Association of Research Libraries, the Coalition for Networked Information,
and the University of Miami Libraries and Lowe Art Museum advised on the program development. Generous philanthropic support was provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Council on Library and Information Resources also participated as invited observers.

The following white paper reports on the findings of the Summit and suggests directions for future work. Sections one through four document collaborative activities and practices underway at academic GLAM organizations as represented by the Summit participants. Section five documents thoughts of Summit participants on “prospects” for collaboration at the local level. Section six reflects on the “challenges” to higher education with a view to the role, impact, and potential for GLAM organizations. Section seven provides “strategic considerations” on how academic GLAM organizations can position themselves for collaboration in the broader contexts in which they find themselves. Section eight provides a “call to action” for moving the collaborative agenda forward.
COLLABORATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Presenting teams in the area of collaborative teaching and learning spoke to a range of topics connecting their individual and joint teaching and learning programming with institutional strategic plans, accreditation needs, and institution-wide, theme-based public events and exhibitions.

Faculty and Student Research Support

Multiple Summit participants discussed collaborative projects that are designed, in part, to inspire and support faculty and student research. Often these initiatives are tied to an exhibition and involve a related event such as a co-sponsored lecture or symposium. They can also involve the creation of a publication such as an exhibition catalog or monograph. These collaborations increase awareness of the presence of domain experts within both organizations and the likelihood of referrals of research questions and advising to relevant domain experts on their respective staffs. A richer engagement with both faculty as well as students (both graduate and undergraduate) results from these intentional collaborations.

Interdisciplinary Teaching

Team-teaching is also fertile ground for academic museums and libraries. Such interdisciplinary teaching not only creates a rich learning environment for participating faculty and students but also showcases museum and library collections. Academic GLAMs themselves benefit from new research conducted as a part of such programs and from an enhanced perception of their value as unique—and deeply relevant—campus resources.
Interdisciplinary Research

Libraries and museums are rich repositories of ideas, objects, and insights into how we think, who we are, and the stories we tell. Within these institutions are hidden veins of some of the most culturally charged and symbolically potent materials on earth. Storage, access, and discovery are a complex set of interacting motivations for both museums and libraries, and as a result GLAMs often create small worlds of under-explored collections. New collaborative research methods, often combining the creative, interpretive processes of artistic investigation with the sciences and humanities, could be engaged to unlock and reassemble ideas and insights contained in these obscure collections. The pooling of archival resources, presented as an opportunity for innovative research, could convert hidden collections into a platform for a deeper intellectual and methodological blending of approaches to knowledge.
COLLECTIONS SHARING AND EXHIBITIONS

Presenting teams focused on co-curated exhibitions, lending material for exhibition purposes, ancillary events, publishing, object examination technologies, and coordination of donor stewardship as well as gift-in-kind review.

Collections

Several participants spoke to the importance of coordinated collecting activities. This includes the transfer of library collections between libraries and museums as well as the pooling of resources in support of strategic and impactful new acquisitions. Such collaborations do not necessarily imply the elimination of overlap in collecting foci; for example, both sets of institutions may be interested in collecting the genre of artist books.

Exhibitions

Most if not all Summit participants are already actively involved in collaborative museum-library exhibition programs. These take many forms, including complementary or tandem exhibitions, joint exhibitions supported by shared resources (including, but not limited to, collections materials and exhibition publications), co-created digital and online exhibitions, coordinated marketing efforts, and co-sponsored exhibition-related programs and events.
**IT and Digital Collaboration**

It was unclear how much progress has been made generally in connecting the catalogs of library and museum collections into universal discovery systems at the Summit partner institutions. However, collaborations in this area as well as in the area of digitization and digital preservation generally catalyzed a compelling vision of the future for participants. In terms of technology, several institutions are collaborating with researchers in the use of new technologies for non-destructive object analysis (Raman Spectroscopy and X-Ray Fluorescence).
STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS/VALIDATING GLAM WORK

It is a truism that the mission of an organization should serve as the litmus test for all programmatic and fiscal commitments. This is equally true for academic GLAM organizations, whose strategic plans must align with those of their parent institutions if they are to demonstrate institutional value. Thus GLAM organizations must focus on the role of arts, humanities, and humanistic social sciences in the larger institutions of which they are a part. However, at many of the participant institutions, interdisciplinarity and the pattern of disciplinary growth and impact are driving connections in collection building and public programming toward the sciences and health studies rather than the arts and humanities.
PROSPECTS

Summit participants were asked to submit ideas for collaborative growth in advance. Their submissions may be categorized into three broad themes: (1) regularizing or formalizing collaborations; (2) establishing more profound collaborations focused on deep structural affiliations across technical and public services; and (3) addressing organizational approaches.

**Regularizing/Formalizing Collaborations**

While there was unanimous agreement about the benefit of collaborative activity, participants noted that collaborative undertakings are frequently ad hoc and characterized by patterns of informality and spontaneity. A shared concern about moving the needle towards more intentional, mission-driven partnerships was repeatedly voiced at the Summit.

**Fashion Better Structured Collaborations**

Potential growth areas for more profound collaborations fell roughly into three areas: technical, public engagement/outreach, and curatorial services. This first includes shared digital resources, such as digital asset management and discovery, metadata creation, digital curation, and digital preservation. Analog preservation and conservation services were also referenced. A common theme under the rubric of public engagement/outreach was the extant strength that both museums and libraries offer in this arena; the question is how to harness and leverage these existing resources. With regard to curatorial services, joint appointments—
responsibilities for museum and library collections—emerged as opportunities meriting further thought and investigation.

**Organizational Re-alignment**

Several Summit participants focused on possible reorganization as a viable approach to creating the context for coherent, sustained collaboration. Not insignificantly, two of the three keynote speakers work in merged library and museum organizational contexts: Winston Tabb (Johns Hopkins University) and Jeremy Upton (University of Edinburgh). The possibilities of directing shared resources to the best advantage of museum and library collection and services programs in such a merged setting were articulated clearly by these directors.
CHALLENGES

Summit keynote speaker Daniel Weiss (Metropolitan Museum of Art) focused his remarks on the shifting landscape of higher education, which is impacting GLAM missions and programs. The challenges identified by Weiss fall into the following categories: (1) economic; (2) technology and digital media; (3) diversity; (4) erosion of public trust; (5) curricular; (6) academic governance; and (7) outcomes.

Economic Issues

Productivity and economic efficiencies amongst the skilled labor force are profoundly impacting the cost of higher education, as is the high cost of creating and maintaining competitive physical facilities and infrastructures.

Technology and Digital Media

The cost of investing in new technologies and refreshing enterprise-level technologies and infrastructure poses immense challenges. These pressures have given rise to new concerns about “technology for technology’s sake” and renewed the debate about the relative merits of STEM vs. STEAM curricula.

Diversity

Quantitative metrics, focused on heterogeneity and representation, have been eclipsed by qualitative measures, concerned with building a diverse and inclusive culture of belonging. These strategic (and moral) imperatives resonate across our campuses and embrace not only students and faculty but also staff, including those of museums and libraries.
Erosion of Public Trust

The general public is increasingly questioning the ultimate value of higher education, which often is regarded through a “return on investment” lens. This skepticism has been further heightened recently by sensationalized incidents of legal and ethical misconduct in colleges and universities, including discrimination, harassment, sexual assault, and inaccurate or falsified research data. The age-old “town-gown” divide also persists today, further eroding the public’s trust in institutions of higher education.

Curricular Challenges

Closely associated with the erosion of public trust in institutions of higher learning is the decline of the perceived value of a liberal arts education. Given the high cost of post-secondary education, students and their parents increasingly are demanding from such institutions hard data on employment placement rates and salary potential for graduates. This narrow instrumentalist vision of the value of a college/university diploma has, in some instances, skewed curricular decisions and educational priorities on our campuses, which are equally being challenged by the rise of informal, self-directed learning opportunities (e.g. MOOCs). A third curricular challenge stems from a heightened commitment to accommodating the needs and sensitivities of all students with exact parity. While laudable and just, these goals have, in some instances, had a “chilling” effect on full freedom of expression and stymied the more challenging intellectual exercises and frank conversations that often accompany personal exploration and growth.
Academic Governance

The academy is still frequently governed by 19th-century organizational structures, characterized by deeply hierarchical and bureaucratic processes, slow decision-making cycles, and a lack of transparency. The growth of interdisciplinary collaborations challenges traditional academic departmental structures. Academic libraries and museums are organized around management and preservation of physical collections of books and works of art with unique preservation and descriptive requirements; however, the replacement of these analog collections by digital objects that have more in common with regard to preservation and description poses questions regarding our organizational structures.

Outcomes

In spite of all of the challenges facing the higher education landscape, there is still much good news. The question is how can that story be communicated most effectively. How do we tell the story of that in which we are investing? How do we make the case about the value of deep learning? And how do we make ourselves relevant to the wo/man on the street?

Workforce Organization and Development

Workforce segmentation poses yet another challenge to academic GLAM organizations, which are increasingly having to unbundle and outsource services in the face of mounting economic pressures. Inconsistencies in training are also an issue, for while virtually all professional librarians graduate from information studies (IS) programs, relatively few museum professionals graduate from museum studies programs. This hampers the potential for collaboration, particularly...
in collections management positions but also in education and outreach positions where GLAM colleagues could—and should—be working together much more frequently.
STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

The challenges posed to the Summit participants by Daniel Weiss during his keynote elicited significant discussion among the break-out groups. Conversation about how academic GLAM leaders and their programs might engage these challenges may be classified as follows:

**Address the Shifting Landscape of Higher Education**

These challenges require thoughtful advocacy of core values represented by our institutions, including critical thinking, visual literacy, ethical reasoning, and a sense of civic responsibility. Princeton University Art Museum, for example, has made an overt commitment to involving itself “in the life of every Princeton student” and “to serv[ing] as gateway for the wider community.” This may be seen as a clarion call for academic GLAM organizations to: (1) enhance the student experience; (2) share resources across divisional structures; and (3) maximize the latent promise of collections adjacencies.

**Enhance and Promote the Relevance of GLAMs**

In order to maximize impact, academic GLAMs must develop intentional strategies as key academic connectors. The Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (University of Oregon) excels at this through their strategic plan, which intentionally: (1) builds cultures; (2) engages communities; (3) promotes shared learning; (4) sustains tomorrow; (5) embraces experimental technologies; and (6) accommodates makerspaces. A key element of enhancing the relevance of GLAM organizations is adequate and timely pre-planning that, among other things, provides academic partners with sufficient lead time to prepare for meaningful co-curricular engagement.
Continue to Embrace and Embed Technology

GLAMs should expand their embrace of digital exhibitions and increased reliance on digital imaging/databases. Such initiatives should not simply document exhibitions but also embrace the penumbra (see, e.g., Musical Instruments Museums Online: http://www.mimo-international.com/MIMO/). In addition, academic libraries and museums should be jointly developing and exploiting 3D imaging to support 2D presentations/materials. The Jordan Schnitzer, for example, works with the University of Oregon’s science library to reproduce objects using the library’s 3D printer. Further, the science and technology of nondestructive technical examination of collection objects should be developed and exploited jointly. Finally, metadata for collections information is essential and critical for engaging the networked future (see https://viaf.org/).

Approach Infrastructure in New and Innovative Ways

Academic GLAMs should consider the creation of shared or at least adjacent offices to create new galleries and hands-on educational facilities. They should equally explore shared spaces for selected technical operations (including conservation, digitization, and/or exhibit preparation) as well as shared collections storage and management strategies and solutions.

Create and Model Diversity and a Culture of Belonging

Academic art museums and libraries must accurately reflect diversity and create welcoming and impactful communities for a multiplicity of students. To achieve this critical end, they may wish to appoint liaisons who can work with diversity officers on their home campuses. GLAMs must equally be nimble and responsive in the face of broader social issues and should consider recasting their activities as proactive rather than reactive. The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery and the
Lucy Scribner Library at Skidmore College are attempting to embody their campus’ commitment to “inclusive excellence,” noting: “We want students to see themselves in and through our collections ... cultivating new holdings that allow a broader range of students to see themselves in the Tang’s and the Library’s collections could be a new way to help keep at-risk students engaged.”

**Rebuild Public Trust**

Academic libraries and museums must rebuild eroded public trust. Fortunately, they are well-positioned to do so with real opportunities for positive change well within reach. These include soliciting increased public input at the development and implementation stages of their exhibitions and programming and better supporting the education and enrichment needs of core constituencies, including young families, K-12 students and their educators, and lifelong learners. Academic GLAMs can “give back” to local and regional communities through increased visibility and access, such as enhanced online open access. And GLAM organizations should recast themselves as stewards rather than guardians of their collections and think critically about the narratives they are creating and communicating through their work.

**Position GLAMs as Centers of Academic Freedom**

GLAM organizations are perfectly positioned to function as cross-silo, neutral spaces; a position whose advantages they should maximize. In particular, academic museums and libraries should use their collections to catalyze and contextualize challenging conversations while also creating “safe spaces” for intellectual exploration.
Explore Alternative Workforce Organization and Development Strategies

GLAM organizations should embrace administrative malleability and look for new, more effective and collaborative personnel models. These models might include (but need not be limited to):

- Exploring opportunities for shared or joint appointments (see, e.g., http://mac.mellon.org/mac-files/cuam_report.pdf)

- Consolidating resources, including integrated data management/filing systems, joint emergency preparedness and disaster recovery policies, and coordinated acquisitions and stewardship policies, resources, and mechanisms.

- Increased collaboration in the realm of academics, including joint faculty support grants, team-teaching opportunities, shared literacy training programs, collection adjacencies, collaborative research, and joint exhibitions.
“THE NETWORK TURN”

Clifford Lynch provided a summary address at the Summit’s conclusion, highlighting and aggregating the proceeding’s recurring themes and sharing his thoughts about the future of GLAM collaboration.

I want to be mindful of the digital turn, to which we’ve certainly alluded, but not engaged as squarely as we might. The fact that, increasingly, we can represent collections in digital form and do things with them that we could not do before … There’s also though … the network turn … which takes a turn to the digital as a prerequisite, but goes far beyond that and I think changes a lot of the rules about everything from inter-institutional collaboration to public engagement and I think in some ways, may have more lasting impacts on our strategies going forward than simply the ability to represent and capture material in digital form.

Key elements of Lynch’s “network turn” and the impact of this same on the future of GLAM organizational collaborations include: (1) exhibitions and related programs; (2) patron-object interaction; (3) discovery and metadata; and (4) professional education.

Exhibition and Related Programs

Exhibitions typically generate ancillary activities, including lectures, symposia, teaching activities, and catalogs. When such displays are digital, whether partially or exclusively, the most common concerns related to physical objects—availability, fragility, conservation, cost, etc.—evaporate. The practice of
traditional physical exhibitions may, therefore, recede in favor of inter-institutional collaborative digital displays. This, in turn, has the capacity to influence curricula, engage faculty across a diverse range of disciplines more effectively and with greater frequency, and indeed fundamentally remake scholarly communication. Lynch noted: “This is a chance to rethink and form a new nexus of collaboration, bringing together libraries, museums, faculty, and also scholarly publishing activities.”

**Patron-Object Interaction**

The capacity of new technologies to reproduce objects at the multi-dimensional level has significant implications for the work of GLAMs. There is a tremendous potential embedded in the capture of objects using not only traditional scanners but also cell phones with refined and powerful cameras, which are increasingly ubiquitous. What will it mean—what new opportunities arise—when it is possible to offer an online catalog of three-dimensional objects in GLAM collections? How will patrons choose to interact with these collections? Will we consider providing a “print” or “materialize” option? What happens when a collection can be replicated in part or whole at a remote location?

**Discovery and Metadata**

The vision of integrated discovery for GLAM content, via Google or institutional search and discovery systems, is compelling. Commercial and open-source initiatives in the library and museum sector have created the promise of integrated discovery across all classes of materials, including digital resources. Integrated databases in the GLAM sector will require addressing several challenging underlying
metadata issues. The key challenge is aligning the emerging array of uncoordinated name authority initiatives including, among others, the Virtual International Authority File (“VIAF”), Wikipedia, and scholarly identity management tools and systems (including institutional Research Information Systems). To quote Lynch: “The sooner we really try and converge all of this knowledge representation, the better.”

Professional Education

Leveraging the impact of the network turn requires attention to professional education and preparation. Collections and stewardship issues that connect GLAM institutions are not currently embedded in the curricula of advanced library science, museum studies, or curatorial training programs. And while creating pedagogical goals that support a broad and integrated approach across GLAM organizations may be challenging, their inclusion is increasingly critical. Programs like CLIR Fellowships are helpful but not a substitute for more direct inclusion in i-School curricula.
A CALL TO ACTION

A 2008 Research Libraries Group project gathered representatives of five institutions (Princeton, Yale, the Smithsonian, Edinburgh University, and the Victoria and Albert Museum) and identified nine categories of catalysts for sustained collaboration across the libraries, archives, and museums (LAM) sector. The nine categories identified were vision, mandates, incentives, change agents, mooring, resources, flexibility, external catalysts, and trust. ¹

The opportunities for and benefits of achieving a deep level of collaboration across the academic GLAM sector—even within a single institution—have never been more pressing. One vision was outlined by Elliott Shore in this closing reflection on the AAML Summit:

*Imagine a scenario in which the core of the university’s mission has a place together—either in one department or in allied groupings with shared spaces and staff—where the creation and dissemination of knowledge, the preservation and exhibition of our cultural heritage, the teaching and learning with objects both physical and digital—all happens in a coherent way.*

The ideas for concrete actions in support of deep and sustained collaboration that follow were raised by Summit participants during their required pre-work, in the course of their presentations, and/or in group conversations during the two-day convening.

Prospects and Strategies for Deep Collaboration in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums Sector

Academic GLAM leaders should seek to ...

Embed Collaborative Practices.

Academic art museums and libraries would benefit greatly from creating formal structures that embed their existing collaborative practices, making them less ad hoc and more intentional, scalable, and sustainable. Possible paths forward might include: (1) creating agreements that identify areas of respective resources that can be shared without intra-institutional cost-recovery mechanisms; (2) establishing standing meetings between curators, collections managers, and/or educators; (3) developing inter-departmental working groups; and (4) co-developing and co-implementing a regular schedule of collaborative exhibitions.

Develop Collaborative Budget Strategies.

Academic GLAM organizations are perfectly poised to seek support (whether internal or external) for: (1) faculty grants to encourage and underwrite the creation and implementation of interdisciplinary exhibitions, shared curricula, and/or integrated digital collections; (2) the development of joint positions (curators, academic liaisons, exhibition teams, etc.); (3) jointly-managed program spaces (e.g., preservation/conservation facilities, collection storage, etc.); and (4) capital investment, including the purchase of critical collections-related equipment, materials, and supplies.

Collaborate in Advocacy and Advancement.

Academic GLAM organizations should develop and implement carefully considered joint fundraising platforms. Intentionality
and mutual self-interest should form the foundation of this approach, which ought to replace the extant ad hoc model.

**Convene Future Summits.**

The University of Miami Academic Art Museum and Library Summit was intended to be a *pilot* program and, as such, designed to lay the groundwork for subsequent academic GLAM colloquia. Future convenings might include specific foci, such as the needs and capacities of archives, the roles and responsibilities of senior administrators and chief academic officers, and the utilization of new technologies. Future summits should be hosted at a range of different institutions to ensure that a plurality of audiences and a broad range of needs are adequately addressed.
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The Lowe Art Museum (miami.edu/lowe), a unit of the College of Arts & Sciences, is located on the campus of the University of Miami at 1301 Stanford Drive, Coral Gables.

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