Building a Digital Collection: Annual Reports at Seattle Art Museum

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Project Description:
Our project involved the digitization of annual reports for SAM. Dating back to 1932, the reports hold a fount of information but were difficult to access. By building a digital collection, we empower users to access these materials independent of library staff, freeing physical space in the library.

Environmental Scan:
Out of 894 American institutions, only 171 host their annual reports online. Out of the 171 institutions, many have unaccountable gaps between years of reports. We believed this was an opportunity for SAM to practice radical transparency by publishing their reports.

Digitization/Metadata:
We scanned all 71 reports and extracted words from the document to make text within reports searchable. After researching image rights, our group assigned Dublin Core metadata for each report.

Shared Shelf/Omeka:
We uploaded reports and the metadata spreadsheet onto the open source online repository, Shared Shelf. We then created an online exhibition in Omeka, creating a timeline and narrative for all 71 reports.

Outcomes:
Accessibility | The reports are now accessible to staff and patron alike without access to library.

Transparency | The reports offer a level of transparency that the museum lacked.

Posterity | The reports are now in a format that bodes well for posterity.

Further Projects:
Our project is a pilot for SAM’s Dorothy Stimson Bullitt Library. With this successful implementation, the groundwork has been laid for future digital collections for SAM, which will continue their mission of connecting art to life.