Project Name: Digitization of the Fashion Research Collection
Date: March 10, 2014
Submitted by: Ingrid Mida and Lu Ann Lafrenz
Year of Funding: 2013

Project Abstract (max 200 words)

This project was designed to create an online resource of key artifacts from the Fashion Research Collection. Until recently, this collection was inaccessible and substantially undocumented. This project was intended to encourage faculty, student and interdisciplinary research, attract potential students and scholars and elevate Ryerson's profile.

Funding for the photography of 75 key artifacts was obtained via the LTF grant. With the assistance of additional funding from the Work-Study program and the department budget, 158 artifacts were photographed.

Online access to the collection is now available through Twitter, Pinterest and a collection blog by Collection Co-ordinator Ingrid Mida. This has opened the scope of the collection to a world-wide audience and the blog has had 4665 views since initiation on August 26, 2013 to March 10, 2014. Students from fashion, interior design, theatre, and arts programs have visited the FRC to conduct research. Tours of the collection have been provided to students, faculty, visiting scholars, delegates from other fashion programs and museums. The FRC has also been featured in the National Post, Ryerson Today and in a show Where Cool Comes From. Ingrid Mida has also presented papers related to this project at conferences in Toronto, Chicago and New Orleans.

Summary of Work Accomplished (max 1500 words)

Study collections of dress offer students, faculty and visiting scholars the opportunity to engage with actual garments and accessories, offering physical specimens for design inspiration and material culture studies. Students can feel the weight of the fabric in hand, examine the details of cut, construction and embellishment, consider the relationship of the garment to the body or search for evidence of how the garment was worn, used or altered over time.

The digitization of collection artifacts has not been well documented in research literature and there are very few resources that exist related to this topic. Although Drexel University, Kent State and FIT have some of their fashion related artifacts online, none of these institutions has published any information on how it was done or the impact that it has had on access or research. Ingrid Mida attended a conference in Florence by Europeana (at her own expense) and undertook to create a methodology by which she could guide students to undertake the work with her supervision.

Ingrid Mida initially selected 100 artifacts for photography. After the renovation and move of the Fashion Research Collection from the library location into KHW66, a secondary
evaluation process took place since the artifacts were finally accessible and could be properly assessed as to condition. From this revised list, the artifacts were sorted into categories related to the degree of difficulty associated with their mounting and photography. This sorting included categories like hats, accessories and coats which required little work in terms of mounting or advance preparation as well as categories like two-piece ensembles and historic items which required substantial work to set up and photograph.

Two students were hired for a period of 6 and 8 weeks. Kathleen O’Reilly was hired to assist with the advance preparation of artifacts and to help mount the garments for photography as well as return the items to storage. Jazmin Welch was hired to take and edit the photographs.

In spite of considerable technical difficulties related to the camera and computer equipment available, the students were able to photograph 158 key artifacts, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF ARTIFACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shoes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hats</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furs &amp; Feathers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Accessories</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses, day</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dresses, evening</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantsuits/jumpsuits</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other two-piece ensembles</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coats/jackets</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic items (pre-1920)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The initial work period did not include time for editing of the photographs and that work took place during a work-study placement for Jazmin Welch for the fall and winter terms.

In August 2013, Ingrid Mida began to tweet and upload to Pinterest at least one watermarked photo from each artifact to allow students to get an idea of what was available in the collection. As well, she began a collection blog www.ryerson-fashion-research-collection.com. This blog has tabs on how to make an appointment, features a gallery of photos of artifacts, blog posts about the collection and artifacts therein, tips on getting the most out of an appointment in the fashion research collection as well as resources and links to assist with fashion research.

Classes visited by Ingrid Mida, in which she spoke about the collection and used photographs from the project, included:
- MA Studio
- MA Research Methods
- MA Fashion Theory II
- MA Fashion & Art
- MA Literature & Modernity (English Department)
- Undergrad Research Methods
She has also given lectures at the Toronto Public Library in February 2014 using images from this project.

To open up the collection even further and allow full access to the catalogue, Ingrid Mida is working with a team in the library to create an open access catalogue. The first phase of this project is underway and includes 1400 artifacts. This catalogue will allow a user to search for garments and accessories by time period, types of garments, designers, or key words. For the items that have been photographed with the LTEF monies, the photos will be uploaded as well. It is hoped that the first phase of this project will be online by the Faculty conference in May. Once the entire collection is online, Ryerson University will be the first study collection in the world to offer complete access to the catalogue. The only other museums in the world that presently allow such access include: The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia.

**Evaluation of Project’s Success (max 600 words)**

Explain how you know that the project was successful (Include evidence of rigorous evaluation.)

The measure of this project is in terms of whether or not the FRC has become more accessible to students, faculty and outside researchers. The media coverage, the conference presentations and number of unique visitors to the FRC blog would suggest that the project has surpassed expectations. Visitors to the blog come from Canada, US, UK, France, Sweden, India, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Russia, Poland, Spain, and Indonesia.

Ingrid Mida is currently working on a book on how to do material culture research under contract with Bloomsbury UK for publication in fall 2015. Although she is using her own images, she may use some from this project, especially in the chapter which highlights how to use online collections for research. This book will extend the reach of the Ryerson project in print form to students, researchers and museum professionals around the world.

The key stumbling block for the project is the absence of broad faculty support in the School of Fashion for the Collection as well as a lack of funding for the job of Collection Co-ordinator Ingrid Mida. Much of her work to ensure the success of this project was done on her own time and with her own resources, and at the present time, her contract is set to expire on April 30, 2014 with no certainty as whether or not it will be extended.
Transferables (max 500 words)
List and describe knowledge gained in this project and how that knowledge could benefit faculty members in the Ryerson community

Social Media – finding new ways to reach students

Digitization of artifacts – a checklist was developed for the photography of artifacts which could be used by other departments initiating such a project and has already been shared with a faculty member who wishes to photograph her personal collection.

Copyright issues – a protocol or standards for images could be established and shared within the Ryerson community

Collection management – Acceptance of donations by any department in Ryerson should be evaluated in terms of relevance to the curriculum. No items should be accepted if it is not possible to ensure that the item will be properly cared for.

Media or Publication (max 500 words)
List any media attention your project has received internally from Ryerson or externally. List any publications or conferences you have attended where data from this project was presented. Confirm that you acknowledged or will acknowledge the grant’s contribution to your work in media, publication or conference presentations.

Media:


Where Does Cool Come From, February 2014

Publications:


Upcoming book publication: “The Dress Detective: A Guide to Object-based Research in Fashion” by Ingrid Mida (for publication in fall 2015 and will likely include selected photographs from this project.

Conferences:


Note: The LTF Logo was included in the ITAA conference, but not in other conference presentations. Ingrid Mida did not receive any funding support for attending any of these conferences.

Financial Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Item (list all items on original budget that were funded)</th>
<th>Amount budgeted</th>
<th>Amount expended to date</th>
<th>Balance remaining for this item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Padding, tulle, felt</td>
<td>200.00</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray backdrop paper</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booties</td>
<td>20.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mannequin Heads</td>
<td>300.00</td>
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<td>External Hard Drive</td>
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<td>Battery Pack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Replacement of camera lens (broken during project)</td>
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<td>115.00</td>
<td>-115.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salaries</td>
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<td>11,237.28</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total balance remaining to be spent: 152.72