Luna, Ashley

Libr 256

Assignment# 1

The Getty Research Institute

We were introduced to some basic information from our guide, Sally McKay, about the Getty Research Institute. The Getty Research Institute started as a small private research library that often referred visitors out to other resources because it’s limited resources. In 1997, it moved to it’s current location building bigger facilities. The Getty Research Institute is an independent library not affiliated with any school or government institution. The Getty Research Library contains over 1 million items in their collection. They have over 800 collections of photos and 300 databases available onsite. They collect books, periodicals, papers, artworks, manuscripts, dealer information, architectural materials, prints, rare photos, books, artist’s books, pre-cinema devices, audio, auction catalogs and digital resources. There collection is so large that many of their holdings are in a external offsite storage facility.

Their Library holdings focus on art history literature, artistic production methods, materials and display and conservation ( The Getty Research Institute). The Getty Research Institute is active in acquiring their collections through donations and purchases. They have a blanket agreement with many publishers to acquire new materials. The Getty Research Institute is the largest Art Library in the World and is the top art library lender. Its current staff consists of 41 professionals, 39 non-professionals, and 6 graduate interns.

According to the Getty Research Institute’s informational pamphlet, the Getty Research Institute is one of four programs that are part of the J. Paul Getty Trust. The Getty Research Institute is interested in “studying cross-cultural encounters as reflected in art.” The Getty Research Institute central mission is to support projects that focus on their holdings. Besides focusing on projects, there “goal is to provide resources, expertise, and a collaborative environment for research.” According to our guide, its audience consists of drop in visitors, artists and advanced scholars.

The Getty Research Institute is a three level building with special areas, rooms, a lab, and storage vaults. The first level is the Plaza Level and it is open to the public. The Getty requires that everyone check in with the security desk to receive a badge. In the Plaza level there is a periodicals reading room, a general reading room with reader spaces, a lecture hall and an exhibition Gallery. The Getty Institute often holds its own exhibitions separate from the Getty Museum.

The second level contains circulation, reference and interlibrary loan service desks. The special collections reading room and seminar room are located at this level. The special collections reading room is highly secured and is the space where patrons have access to restricted materials. Vault 1 is located in this level well and stores material from special collections that is requested. Vaults are not accessible to the public, but we were allowed to visit some of their vaults. They also have a special collections seminar room where groups of people can view materials and have discussions without affecting others in the special collection reading room. On the West Terrace/ Scholar Wing they have scholar offices for visiting scholars. The Institute provides grants for visiting scholars and for projects and lectures.

The third level contains more reading areas, vaults and lab. We were very fortunate enough to visit some more vaults at this level with the head of conservation leading us at this point. The vaults contain many of their collections with earthquake proof shelves. The vaults and the entire building are also climate controlled since some collections need specific conditions. We visited one vault that was as cold as a refrigerator that contained artworks such as “ The Literature Sausage” and “Flux Mouse”. The Last Vault we visited was the largest, and here is where the head of conservation discussed the Getty Research Institute’s move towards acquiring more materials with less processing. She also discussed that there are no backlogs and that everything obtained has at least an acquisition record. We also visited their lab that is not accessible to the public. The lab evaluates, cleans, frames or replaces library material. Not everything is taken to the lab and the acquisition process is based on a case-by-case situation.

The Getty Research Institute provides an array of services to the public and scholars. They answer reference requests in person, phone or by email. They will scan or create a digital item for you if it not possible to come in person to view the material requested and there are no copyright issues. It seems reference will do everything they can to give their patrons access to viewable material. According to our guide, 2/3 of reference requests are scanned and emailed. The public has “plaza privileges” which allows access to materials on the Plaza level. Stack Readers have access to the research library and special collections. Material is not allowed to be checkout of the institution, except inter-library loans. Material can be checked out within the Institution and placed on reserve shelves for stack readers. Scholars and graduate students are eligible. The Extended reader allows extended hours for library usage.

Throughout the tour our guide, Sally McKay, was very informative and helpful with our questions. She was very pleased that we were here and was very excited about showing us as much of the behind the scenes areas not typically accessible to the public. She highly encouraged us to come back and visit again as stack readers or to use any of the available resources at the Getty Research Institute. My expectations about the Getty Library were met and all its resources where beyond what I had expected. Their collections and storage facilities are impressive. It was interesting to see the variation and scale of some of their collections. Given that the Getty Research Institute is a big art archives, it was interesting to see how they handle their collections and patron requests. With all the available resources onsite and online, it definitely is a great resource for art research.

Resources

Getty Research Institue (n.d.) *Access Policy and Reader Privileges.* Retrieved February 15, 2013, from <http://www.getty.edu/research/institute/>

Getty Research Institute (2011). *Getty Research Institute* [Pamphlet].Los Angeles, CA: n.p.

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