

Case study 6: Murray Bridge Regional Gallery, South Australia

www.murraybridgegallery.com.au

Summary

The Murray Bridge Regional Gallery (MBRG) is a small gallery, with a handful of paid staff and a few volunteers. The collection is being prepared for the web but has yet to become fully digitally accessible.

Background

MBRG is an initiative of the Rural City of Murray Bridge. Established in 2001 by a group of dedicated community members, it is located in the heart of Murray Bridge, at the rear of the Town Hall.

The Gallery features three distinctive exhibition spaces and produces three new exhibitions every six to eight weeks from its permanent collection of over 40 works of art. It also features contemporary local artists, including digital art installations; offers works of art for sale in its shop and runs artists' workshops.

MBRG is staffed by one full-time Director and one full-time Retail Manager. There are two casuals. The Gallery also has six volunteers who assist with the shop and installing exhibitions, and student interns for specific projects. The Director draws interns from students she teaches at University in Adelaide.

Community

Murray Bridge is located 76 kilometres east-southeast of Adelaide. With a population of more than 16,000, Murray Bridge is the fourth most populous city in the state. The city contains a number of heritage-listed sites, including the Murray Bridge Transport Precinct, listed on the South Australian Heritage Register.

Community engagement and partnerships

The Gallery attracts between 12,000 and 14,000 visitors each year and has some 600 followers on Facebook, an Instagram account and communications using Mailchimp. Its website is produced in WordPress and features a rotating slideshow of five works of art from the collection, varied from time to time.

The Gallery is pleased with the support it receives from Regional Galleries South Australia and also networks through Artshub. It is not working in partnership with other galleries, however it has a good working relationship with The Hahndorf Academy, the home of the Heyson Prize, in the Adelaide Hills and its Director Rachel McElwee.

Collection

MBRG has a growing collection of artworks by significant South Australian artists including Franz Kempf, Trevor Nicholls, Pamela Kouwenhoven, Rita Hall and India Flint, along with works by Dennis Nona and Josie Kunoth Apetyarr.

The works are mostly two dimensional paintings and additionally sculpture, textiles and multimedia. The works in the collection are donated and new acquisitions are limited. The Gallery's donors include The ANZ Banking Group Ltd, David Dridan OAM, Dr Ian George, Franz Kempf OAM, the Marshall family and the combined Rotary Clubs of Murray Bridge.

Software

The collection was fully documented on the MOSAIC collection management system at first, but the Gallery has moved across to eHive.

eHive was chosen because it is free and linked to a larger system connected internationally. The Gallery views eHive as reliable, easy to use and intuitive. Importantly, the Gallery knows it would be easy to make the collection accessible on the internet, when they are ready to do so.

Operational and collection management identification photographs are taken at 300 dpi and used at 75–100 dpi for the website.

Challenges

The major challenge for the Gallery with regard to digital access is time and a dependence on volunteer labour for projects in addition to core operations.

Making the collection live on the internet is not yet possible for the following reasons:

- Busy schedule and limited resources;
- The need for a skilled volunteer or intern to undertake the project;

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GLAM Peak Consultant Rebecca Jones (left)
with Director, Melinda Rankin at Murray
Bridge Regional Gallery

Photo credit: John Petersen

- Council requires a risk assessment which will take some time;
- Potential copyright restrictions to be investigated, including donation agreements by the artists, and the need for low resolution images of the art to deter inappropriate use;
- The need to remove some 40 artworks from frames and mounts to professionally photograph the artworks in high resolution, without glass reflection, and the potential need for an art conservator to avoid damage and remounting the collection;
- Logistics of the working space to take the photographs and arrange lighting during busy scheduling;
- The need for high quality images to reflect the integrity and positive brand of the Gallery and to demonstrate respect for the artists' works; and
- The potential complexity of linking multi-media artwork images to the work of art on the artists' websites through eHive.

Opportunities

The Gallery has ambitions for greater digital access through the internet via its website. It sees benefits for greater digital access and discoverability as including:

- A means to generate greater interest in the works of art in the collection and drive visitor numbers online and to the Gallery; and
- Encouraging artists to exhibit and donate works of art to develop the collection and Gallery's programming.

Conclusion

MBRG is developing a strong profile in South Australia as a regional gallery which is an accessible and welcoming community resource supporting the development of artists and the arts in the region. It has ambitions for digital access, but rather than simply making the collection publicly accessible on eHive, there are still significant steps to achieve this.