This script was used as a guide for the Proposal Defense that occured on Apr. 5th at 4pm.

Background

In this information age, we are confronted with the tension of an abundance of data but a scarcity of what is being used.
Technology has allowed us to index and catalog almost anything anywhere, of course limited to those with access and the ability to.

Curation is the process of collecting, organizing, and displaying information in a way that can be disseminated and used. I am planning to work with digital curation, a newer discipline that does this process with more technological assistance and results with a digital artifact (a website or database).

However these practices are not without consequence. At their core, they feature intermediation, curators act between the information and those that consume it with the ability to add meaning and improve interpretation or skew information and insert bias. This practice, if done improperly, can cause ramifications on the well-being of those represented and those who view the work.

There is a lack of standardization in this new discipline, allowing for more potential harm and human error. Allegheny does not yet have a standard for digital curation on campus

An opportunity to curate arose with the donated Indonesian bis pole sculpture. This tall cylindrical wooden sculpture features Asmat wood carving and other natural elements such as grasses, shells, and pigments. From its physical features, we have confirmed that this piece is an art-for-export — meant for tourist consumption. Though this discussion of repatriation is crucial to working with this item, Allegheny College needs a proper workflow to apply to items such as this to ethically archive these pieces and potentially

utilize them for the classroom.

Research Question

So thus my research question is —.

Methods & Final Products

To answer this question, I have planned my work into three thematic sections: information gathering, application, and documentation.

I will first gather information about the best practices for curation with a literature review. However, as I have already mentioned, the lack of universal standards has led me to pair this literature with a Information Architecture analysis that looks at published digital archives and their current practices.

Leading to Application, I will be creating the archive, applying the knowledge I just gathered and adjusting this workflow to meet the needs of the institution, while making the structure, example item, and a template.

This will then need to be documented, I will write out the process into a workflow that is both replicable and sustainable, flexible but guiding for future curation on campus. Along with this time of writing, I will be dedicating time for reflexivity. I will need to continue to do this process as I try to minimize the potential effects of intermediation and shed awareness on the colonial history of collection and where this work is in that conversation.

Global Health Context

Though this project may be easily noticed as an informatics comp, this project has also

been crafted for global health studies. This project will mostly be reflective of population-level health and seen largely in the curation of the item. The sculpture is an art-for-export which reflects tourism, and participation in a global economy. This piece also represents commodification of culture and resource extraction as this piece was made out of the endangered ironwood trees, native to Indonesia. These three facets of the object : the economic role of tourism, commodification of culture, and environmental resource extraction – greatly affect the well-being of the creators of this sculpture as they sell these as their livelihood.

Curation as a whole continues to work with tensions of power and privilege as it collects and preserves information while making contributions to conversations on social justice in the process of dissemination, educational and otherwise. Unethical curation can whitewash history, erase cultures from narratives, or spread misinformation. It is the social responsibility of curators to attempt to prevent these improper practices. By using reflexivity, a practice crucial to my global health training, is the start to the solution of proper curation.

Personal Statement

Beyond highlighting the connections of this project with my fields of study, I can speak towards my preparedness for this project. I truly believe that all of my work at this institution has led me to be able to complete this work. I especially wanted to highlight a few positions I've held outside of normal classwork elaborating on the skills I've already noted on the slide. My work as an Ethics Technical Leader my first year allowed me to engage with web development and holistic project displays as well as how ethics is being taught in the classroom. Then my work as the program coordinator for Teach Global Health and acting as an instructional designer for the global health department has allowed me to enter many conversations of how to decolonize education and teach interdisciplinarily.

I am not only ready, but also excited to work on this project. I look forward to reading

more about the methodologies of curation, a feeling I know some of my peers do not share when we have needed to read about methodologies in the past. I am also excited to create the deliverables. I am excited to apply my abilities to create something functional and practical for the needs of the college.

When speaking towards challenges and limitations I may have, it is obvious that I am not an expert in the context surrounding the item. Curators are not often experts in all of the collections they work with anymore in this overabundance of information. I am planning that this highly collaborative process of curation will also assist in my ability to overcome this challenge.