SPENCER MUSEUM OF ART

2022–2027 DIGITAL PLAN

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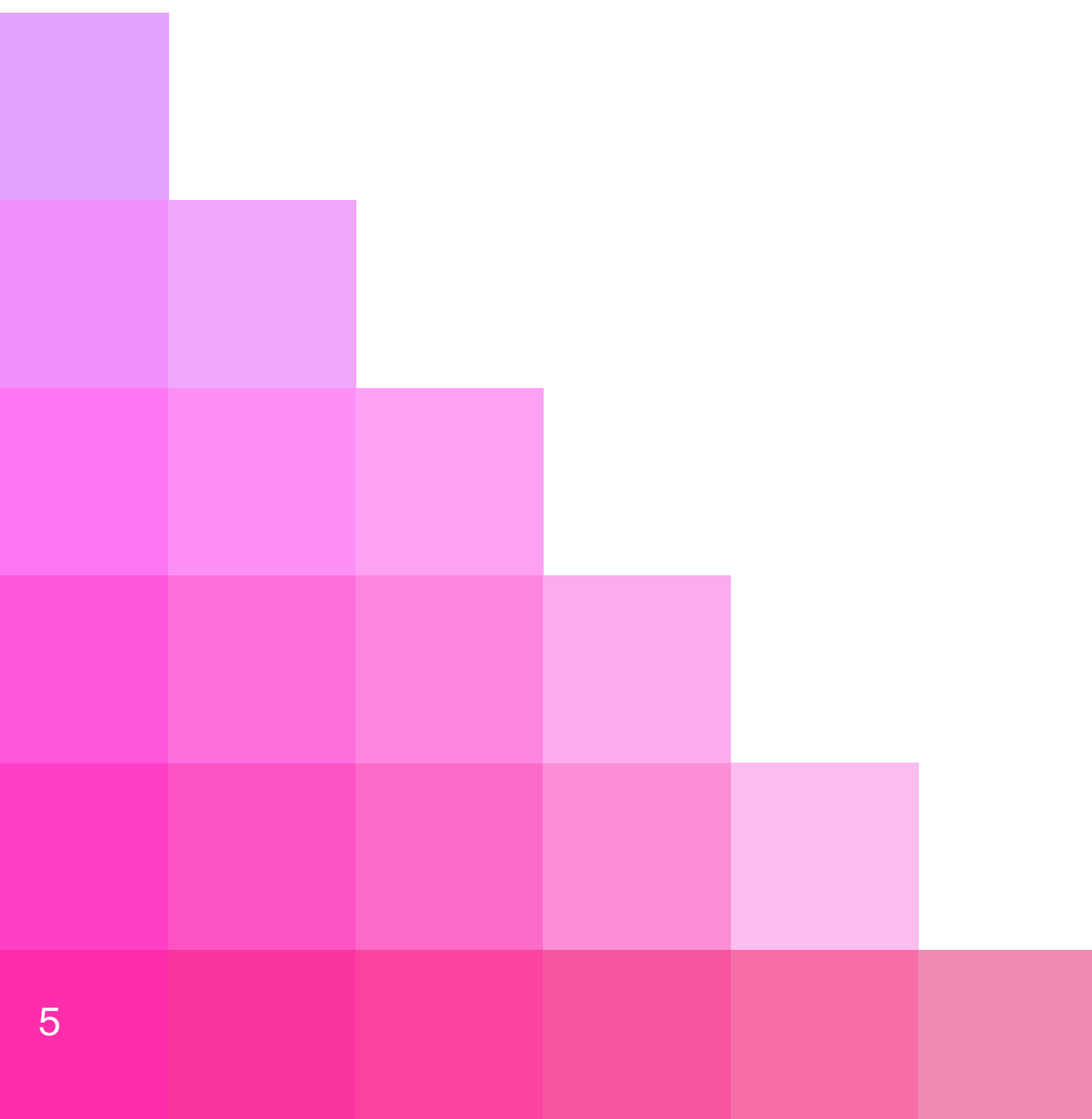
The Spencer Museum of Art (SMA) is an academic art museum located on the main campus of the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. Its mission is to sustain a culturally diverse collection and encourage interdisciplinary exploration at the intersection of art, ideas, and experience. The Spencer strengthens, supports, and contributes to the academic research and teaching of the University of Kansas and is committed to serving communities of learners across Kansas and beyond. In 2018–2019, the SMA convened a cross-departmental team of staff to coordinate a study of its digital tools and practices with support from the Mellon Foundation. Through conversations with all staff, convenings with peer advisors, and guidance from two consulting firms (Design for Context and One Further), the SMA identified five overarching priorities for its digital work, which it continues to advance.
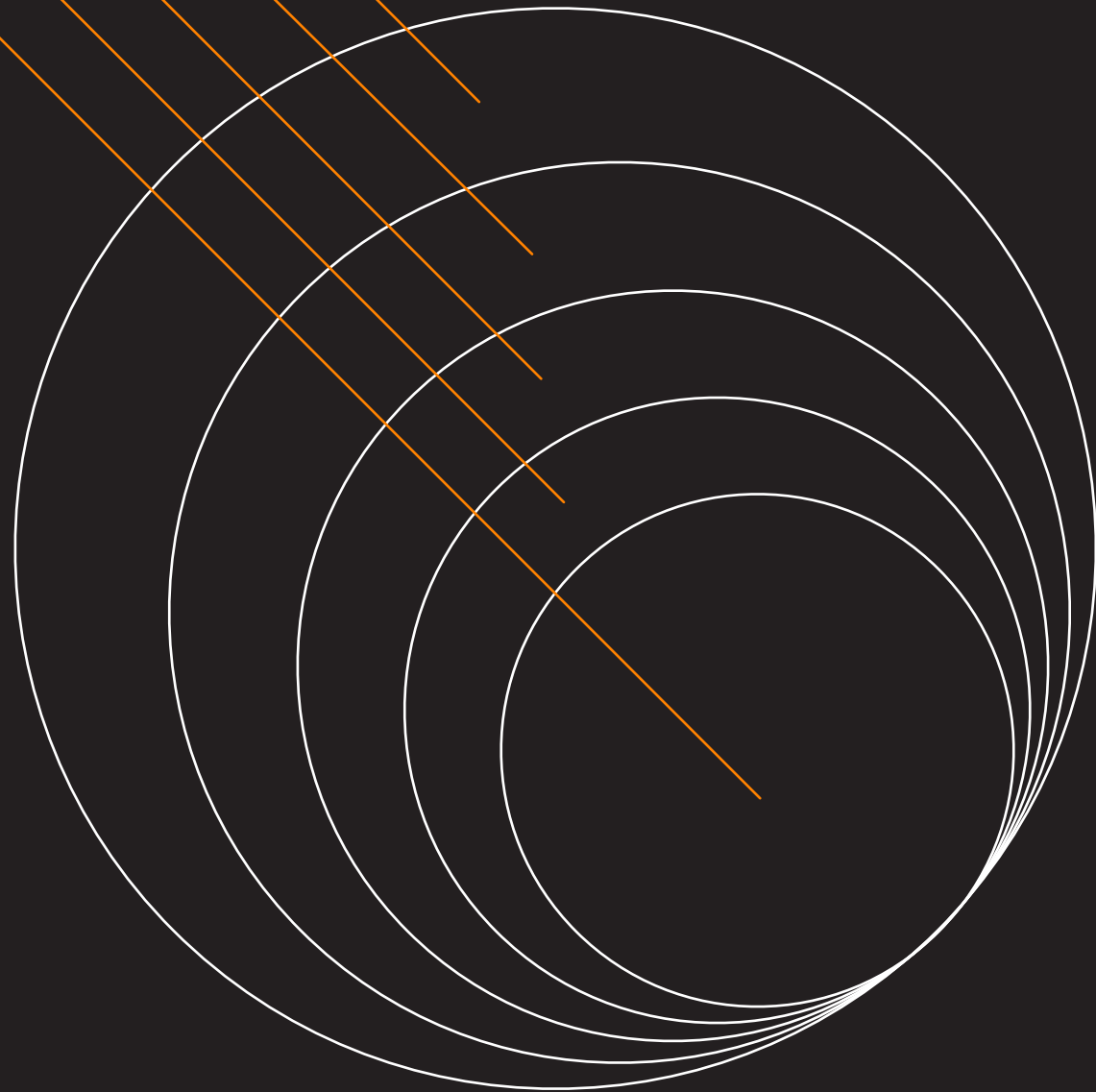
Priority 1: Increase Internal Communication and Participation

Priority 2: Restructure and Standardize Records Management

Priority 3: Strengthen Online Presence

Priority 4: Enhance and Expand Community Engagement

Priority 5: Fundraise for Sustainability

Collectively, these priorities will advance the SMA's already robust digital practices by pinpointing data-informed changes that will improve access to SMA's collections and other resources for the many communities of learners it engages across its physical and virtual spaces by strengthening its digital infrastructure, expanding staff-wide participation in digital practices, providing additional structure to workflows for digital projects and record keeping, and analyzing audience studies and engagement data to hone resources and practices. As an operational plan, the document includes specific, measurable goals with action steps and indicators of success as a roadmap to achieving each priority and will be achieved by participation from all SMA staff. The staff will continue to revisit the Digital Plan and update priorities as new opportunities arise and goals are accomplished.

Alignment with other Institutional Priorities

In addition to its Strategic Plan, the Spencer Museum of Art's (SMA) vision is reflected in its Interpretive Plan, the Culture Shift Plan, and this current Digital Plan. As the Museum looks toward its next strategic planning process (Fall 2024), it anticipates weaving together these more focused roadmaps into a comprehensive document.

As such, the cross-section of staff who developed and continue to update the Digital Plan priorities do so with these other guiding documents in mind. Key points of connection between the Digital Plan and the other plans are outlined here.

Intersection with the SMA Strategic Plan

→ Careful management of records and ongoing development of the SMA website ensures capacity to share the collection and other resources in ways that stimulate broader audience interaction with SMA resources, fulfilling the strategic direction to *activate art*.

→ Data-informed improvements to social media, advertising, and the SMA website are critical for engaging virtual audiences in alignment with the *stimulate engagement* strategic direction.

→ Records management contributes to improved documentation of research about the collection (exhibitions, publications, events, and more) and ensures that content is managed in ways that supports sharing and dissemination to advance the goal to *inspire inquiry*.

→ An established system of internal digital practices, including consistent, thorough, and well-kept records, serves as the foundation for both current and future work, toward fulfilling the strategic direction to *enhance organizational adaptability*.

→ Building staff proficiency with internal digital practices and standards generates space for and openness to emerging digital methods and technologies, positioning more staff to contribute to the SMA's efforts to *inspire inquiry*.

Intersection with the SMA Interpretive Plan

→ Improving record keeping and the SMA's online presence will result in more accurate and complete data that is widely accessible, directly supporting the interpretive priority to *create an interdisciplinary prism* by integrating the SMA's diverse collection across academic subjects and community projects.

→ Continued improvements to the SMA's online presence and social media will further provide different pathways for community members to discover SMA resources, find meaning in works of art, and interact with the Museum, advancing the interpretive priority to *cultivate visitor agency*.

→ Cohesive and thoughtful social media and digital advertising strategies ensure the SMA presents welcoming and inclusive virtual spaces for all visitors, in alignment with the interpretive priority of creating *a place for all people*.

→ By strengthening digital records and broadly communicating its resources, the SMA aims to engage global citizens in a dialogue of historical and multiple viewpoints to *advance social action for impact*.

Intersection with the SMA Culture Shift Plan

→ Strategic changes to the SMA's online presence and social media will be audience-centered, drawing on findings from user feedback to engage current audiences more effectively and to reach new audiences.

→ Actions related to recordkeeping and strengthening the SMA's online presence will bolster access to SMA records and increase transparency of data about the SMA's history and archives.

→ Communication and drawing input from staff regarding digital priorities will bring greater transparency and help foster a staff-wide commitment for active digital initiatives.

Priorities & Goals Overview

For each goal, staff have identified a series of action steps as well as indicators of success, methods of evaluation, and resources needed to achieve.

These operational sections follow and can be quickly accessed by clicking on any goal.

Increase Internal Communication and Participation

Goal 1: Communicate regularly with staff about current digital priorities and the process by which priorities are identified.

Goal 2: Clarify digital responsibilities and expectations for each staff member.

Goal 3: Support all staff developing and maintaining digital literacy to fulfill institutional projects.

PRIORITY 2

Restructure and Standardize Records Management

Goal 1: Sustain and improve the SMA's centralized digital records repositories.

Goal 2: Create a comprehensive MuseumPlus records management policy that replaces and improves on previous standards documents.

Goal 3: Train staff to manage the centralized repository of documents in real time and on an on-going basis.

Goal 4: Implement institution-wide workflows for the timely submission of information to data processing staff for entry in SMA databases.

Goal 5: Connect MuseumPlus internally built Application Programming Interface (API) to web-based applications and metric reporting tool.

Goal 6: Purchase and implement a Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) to share and use multimedia assets.

PRIORITY 3

Strengthen Online Presence

Goal 1: Develop a single, unified website that combines existing resources and fully leverages API to feed content.

Goal 2: Deepen staff-wide understanding of how the SMA website represents and further extends the work they do.

Goal 3: Leverage analytic tools to monitor, refine, and report on digital activities.

PRIORITY 4

Enhance and Expand Community Engagement

Goal 1: Extend the reach of the Spencer Museum's digital messaging and communications to grow new audiences.

Goal 2: Use digital communications to increase general awareness of the Spencer Museum's mission and identity.

Goal 3: Develop the uses and implementation of hybrid programming practices.

PRIORITY 5

Fundraise for Sustainability

Goal 1: Secure annual commitments from individual donors for digital initiatives and technology.

Goal 2: Prioritize digital projects and infrastructure costs for grant opportunities.

Goal 3: Generate an endowment for digital initiatives and technology.

Long Term Goals

As the Spencer Museum of Art's Digital Plan is intended to be a living document that is updated annually, the priorities and goals included above reflect activities that are expected to be undertaken immediately and in the next few years. The team of staff who developed the plan also identified several areas of future attention to consider as formal goals and priorities during future revisions.

→ Integrate the Digital Plan action steps into other Museum plans (Strategic/Culture Shift/Collection/Interpretive).

→ Continue to add and improve digital archives to allow greater transparency, access, and discoverability of the Museum's records in all areas of public-facing information. Hire a researcher and data entry specialist as part of addressing the gaps in our historical data.

→ Secure funds for and hire a permanent database manager and a permanent archivist.

→ Establish project management processes in preparation for new software adoption by KU and maintain openness to learning new softwares or processes as opportunities arise and as KU adopts new products.

→ Research and integrate new technologies and practices for accessibility and improved audience experiences.

→ Evaluate new platform opportunities for social media or advertising in alignment with priority and Museum goals, and return on investment. Create a framework for this evaluation that encourages intentional and meaningful digital engagement.

→ Secure ongoing and dedicated funding for advertising.

→ Secure funds to hire a website manager/content creator.

→ Investigate more options for digital publishing feasible within the Museum's current budget and/or as feasible through fundraising efforts.

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