# OSCI User Study

**The Getty Foundation thanks Frankly, Green + Webb digital consultancy for granting permission to share this report on the firm's evaluation of the OSCI catalogues produced by SFMOMA and the Walker Art Center. Originally presented at 2016 Museums and the Web conference by Laura Mann.**

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MWXX

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Laura Mann

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# Online Scholarly Catalogues: Data and Insights from OSCI

MWXX
April 2016

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# Rauschenberg Research Project

Robert Rauschenberg at work in his Lafayette Street studio, New York, 1968. Courtesy the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation; photo: Shunk-Kender; © the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation

The Rauschenberg Research Project provides free worldwide access to a wealth of scholarly research and documentation relating to artworks by Robert Rauschenberg in SFMOMA's permanent collection. The museum's holdings span the artist's career from 1949 to 1998 and include Combines, sculptures, paintings, photographs, and prints and other works on paper. A rich range of materials surrounds the featured works, including newly commissioned essays, numerous images, interview footage, artist's statements, conservation reports, and archival materials, which together provide new insights into the artist's work. These resources may be accessed through the orientation points below. The Rauschenberg Research Project was produced by SFMOMA under the auspices of the Getty Foundation's Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative, with the support of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

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The Getty Foundation

RAUSCHENBERG

Leadership support for the Rauschenberg Research Project is provided by The Getty Foundation. Generous support is provided by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

**About the Project**
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Why Rauschenberg?
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Acknowledgments
More Links and Info

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## Works in the Rauschenberg Research Project

# LIVING COLLECTIONS CATALOGUE

Each volume of the *Living Collections Catalogue* includes media-rich essays on broader themes as well as in-depth investigations of specific works of art. Featured works link to records in the Walker's collections database, where additional information about the artists and artworks is available. Implicit in the concept of a "living catalogue" is the dynamic nature of an online volume about the Walker's collections. Information in the database is updated as new research and presentations occur, while essays are versioned and citable with assurances of a permanent address to the information referenced.

MORE

# QUESTIONS

1. Reach
2. Use
3. Impact of digital
4. Audience perception
5. Drivers and barriers to success

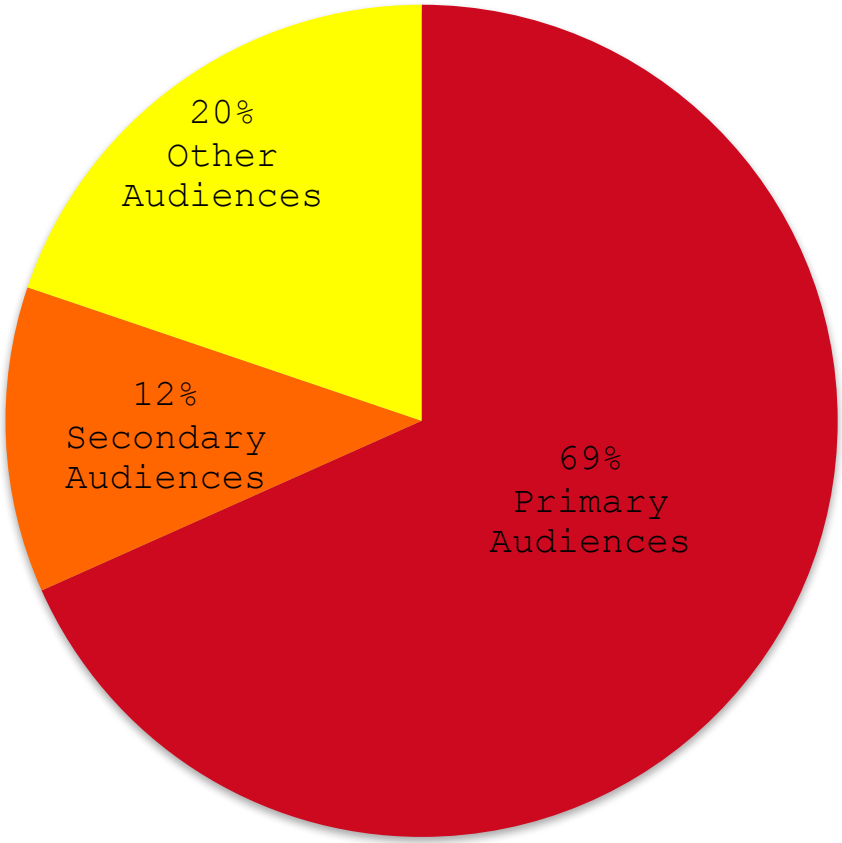
# What We Did

1. Online survey
2. Interviews with users and stakeholders
3. Usability testing
4. Google Analytics

# Good News

1. Reaching the scholarly audience
2. Used for research and teaching
3. A trusted source
4. A new form

# Reaching the target audience of scholars



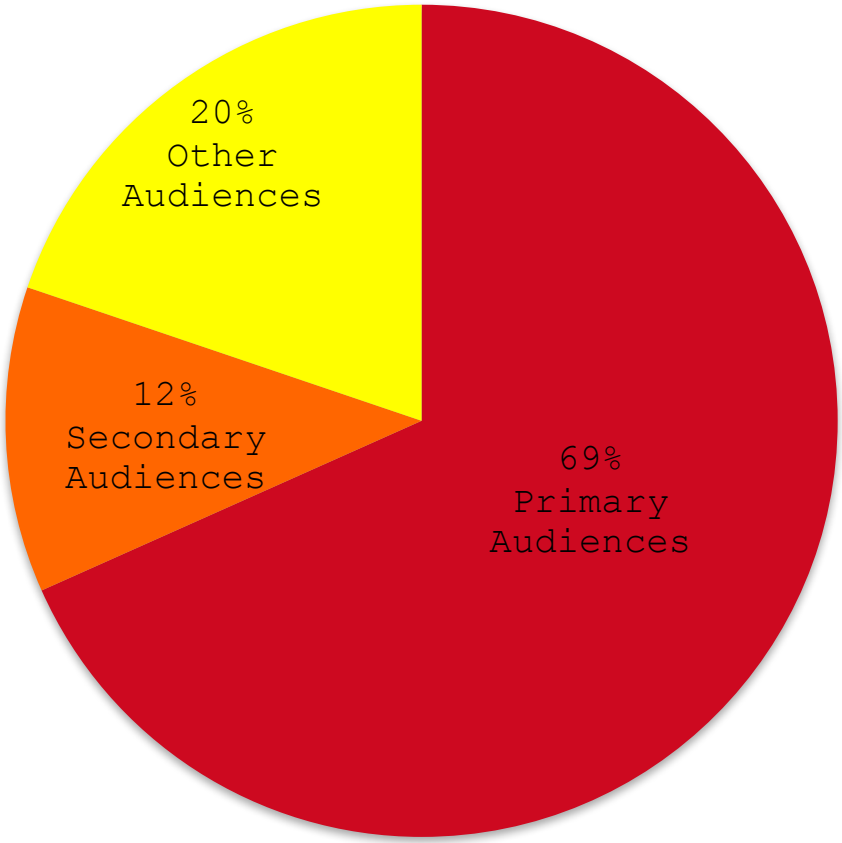

**69% Primary Audiences**

- 25% Graduate students
- 18% Professors
- 16% Curators
- 6% Indep scholars
- 4% Librarians

**RRP - Q: What best describes you?**

N=51

# It's also reaching secondary and wider audiences




**69% Primary Audiences**

- 25% Graduate students
- 18% Professors
- 16% Curators
- 6% Indep scholars
- 4% Librarians

**12% Secondary Audiences**

- 10% Museum educators
- 2% Undergraduates

**20% Other Audiences**

- 10% Other
- 8% Personal interest
- 2% Digital Media/e-publishing

**Q: What best describes you?**

N=51

Greater and more diverse reach than a comparable print catalogue

# 9,000 – 25,000

Unique visitors in first 6 months

Greater and more diverse reach than a comparable print catalogue

# 500

Museum, university and library network domains from around the world

Greater and more diverse reach than a comparable print catalogue

**55%**

of traffic to Walker's *On Performativity* catalogue is from outside the US

# How are users finding the online catalogues?

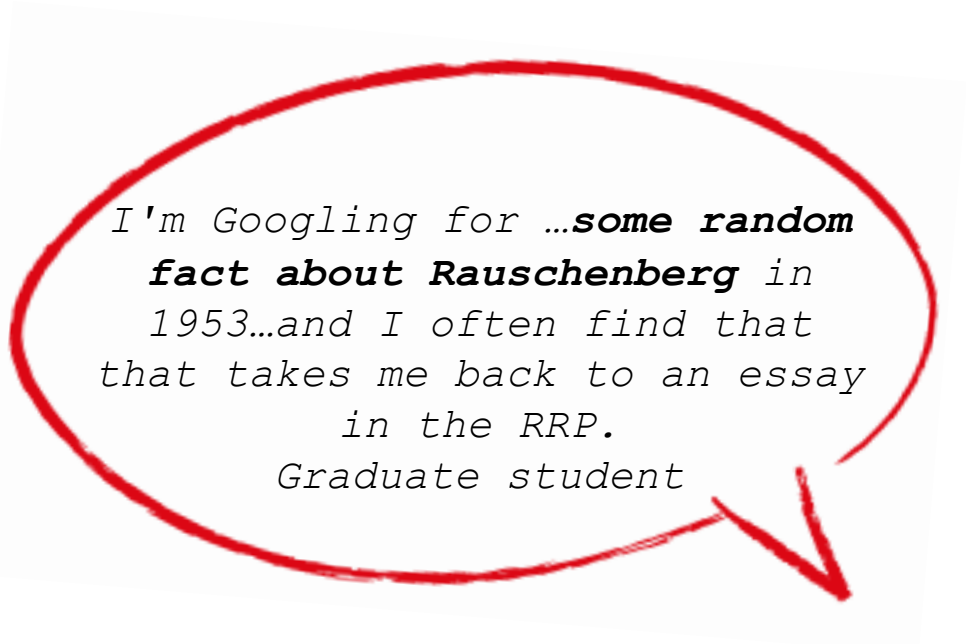
# Google is the key to discoverability

**45%**

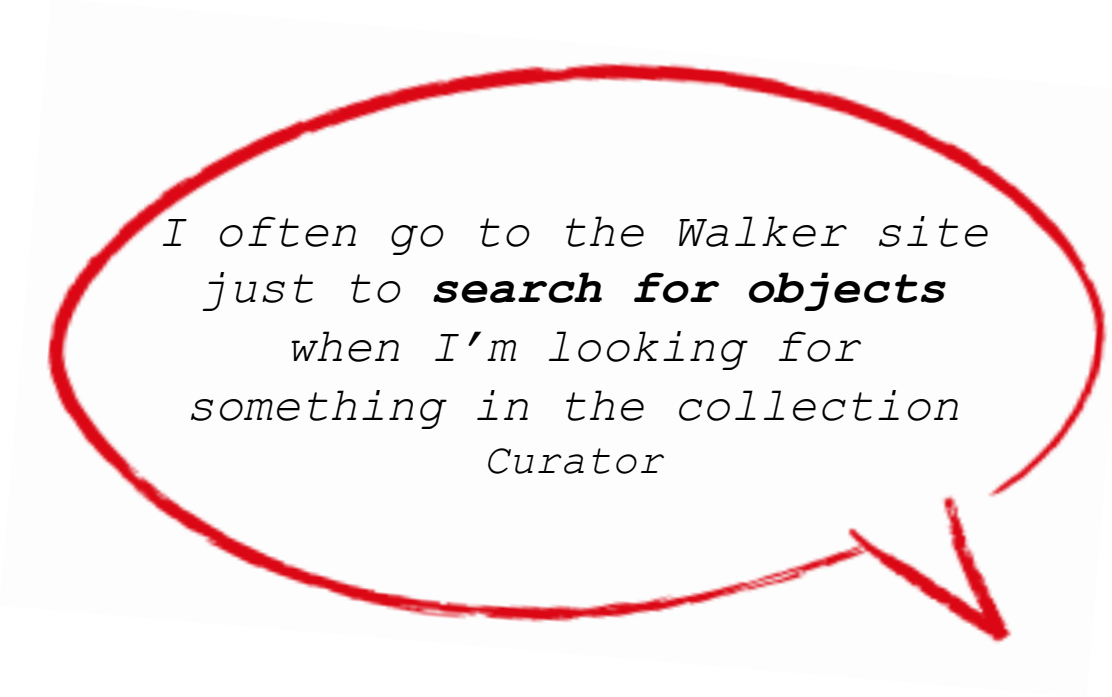
Traffic referred by Google

# Google is the key to the discoverability of the catalogues

1. General research
2. Narrow searches

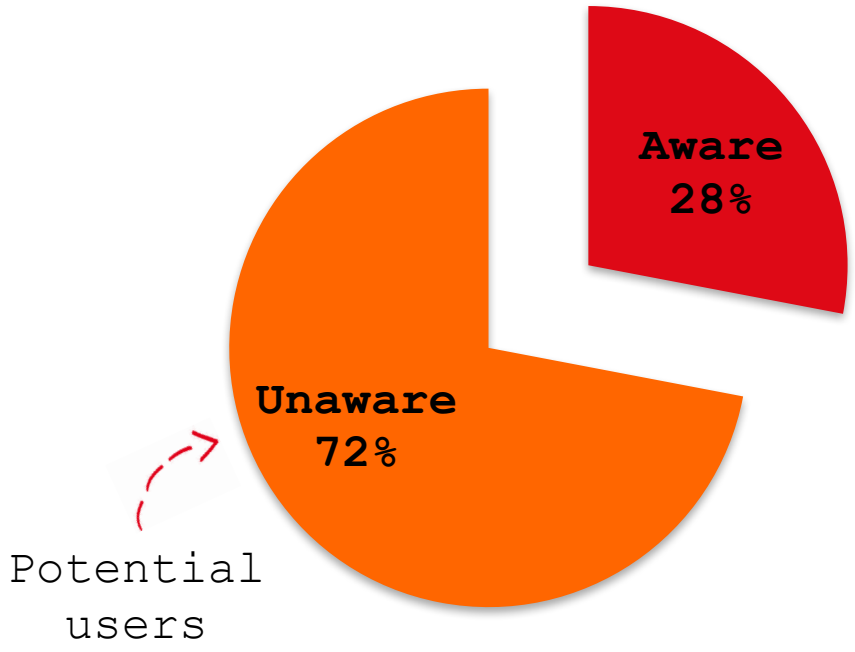


# But the museum website is also key to discoverability



# Potential for expanding reach

**Awareness of Living Collections Catalogue**



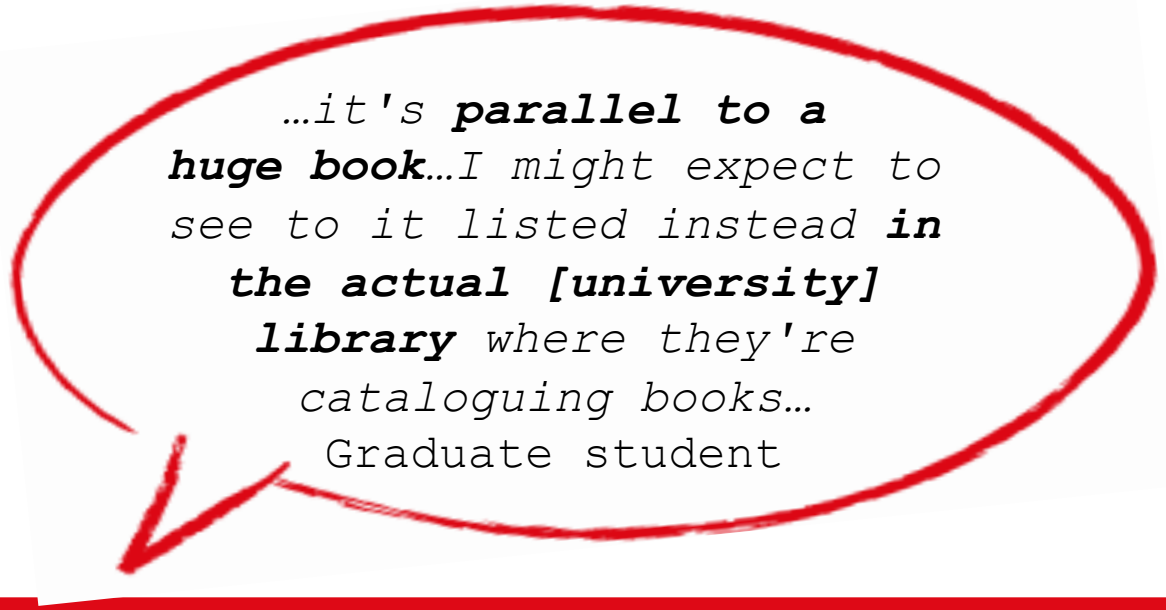
# Where do scholars expect to find online catalogues?

Where do scholars expect to find online catalogues?

…in academic databases?

# Where do scholars expect to find the catalogues?

## …at the library

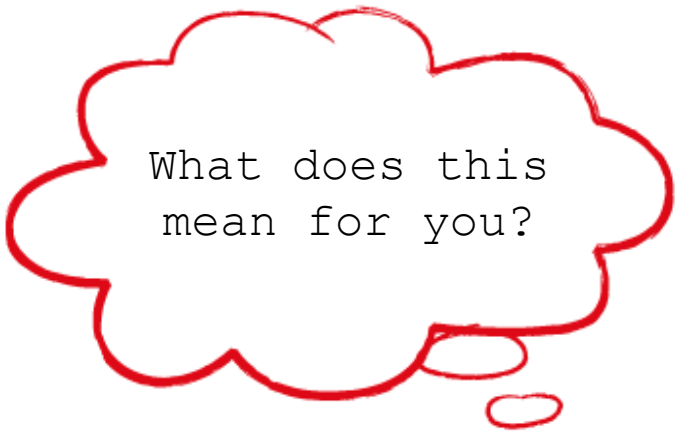


But…there's **no standardized process** for adding digital publications to library catalogues

# A need for an ongoing communications program

*…I would like an email from [the museum]* ***every time a new module is loaded*** *or a new volume published*

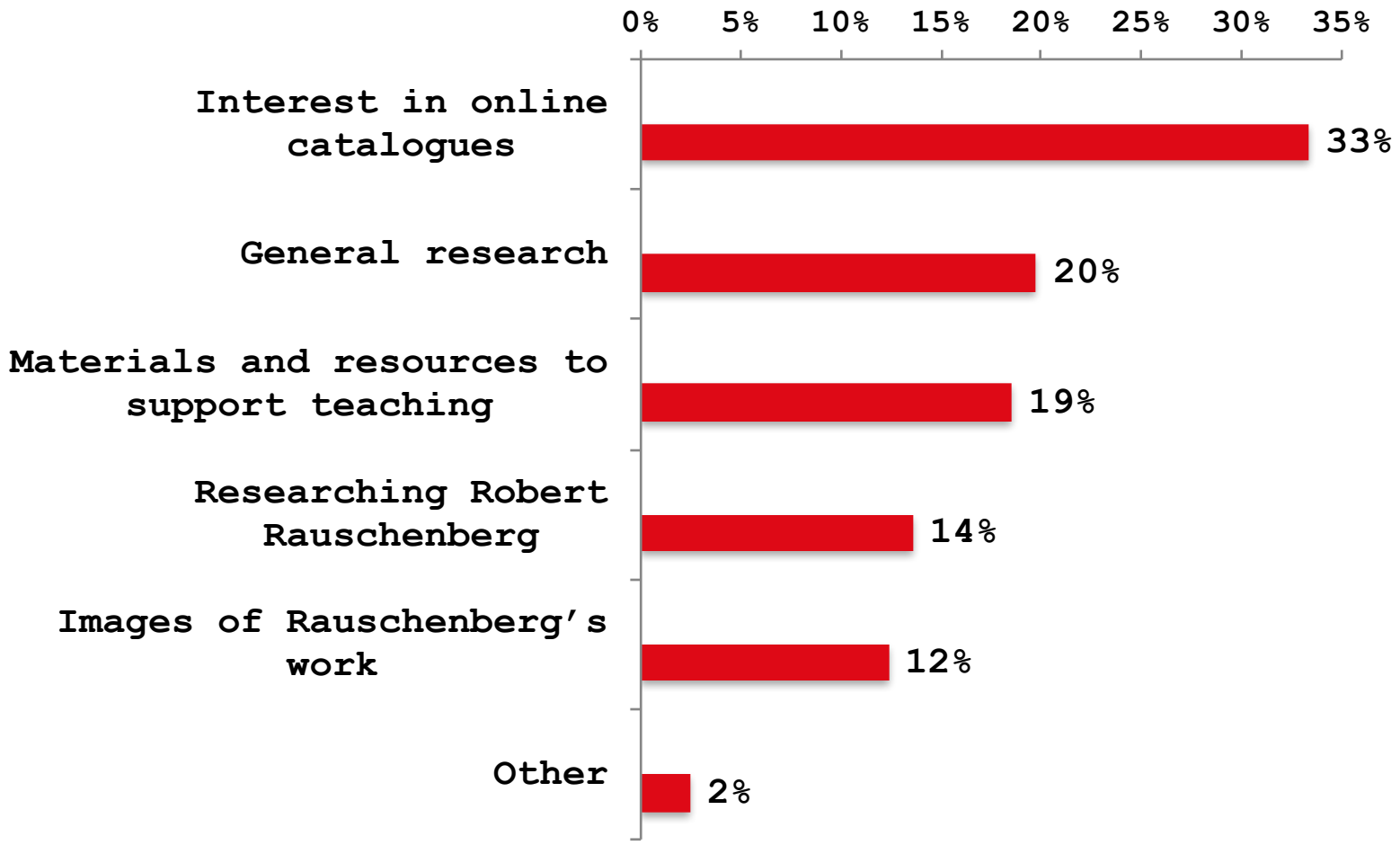
Art Librarian




- SEO is critical to the findability
- Get an ISBN number
- Art librarians are a target audience
- Generating awareness and traffic requires an ongoing communications program
- Promoting online publications may be a new museum role

# How are the catalogues being used?

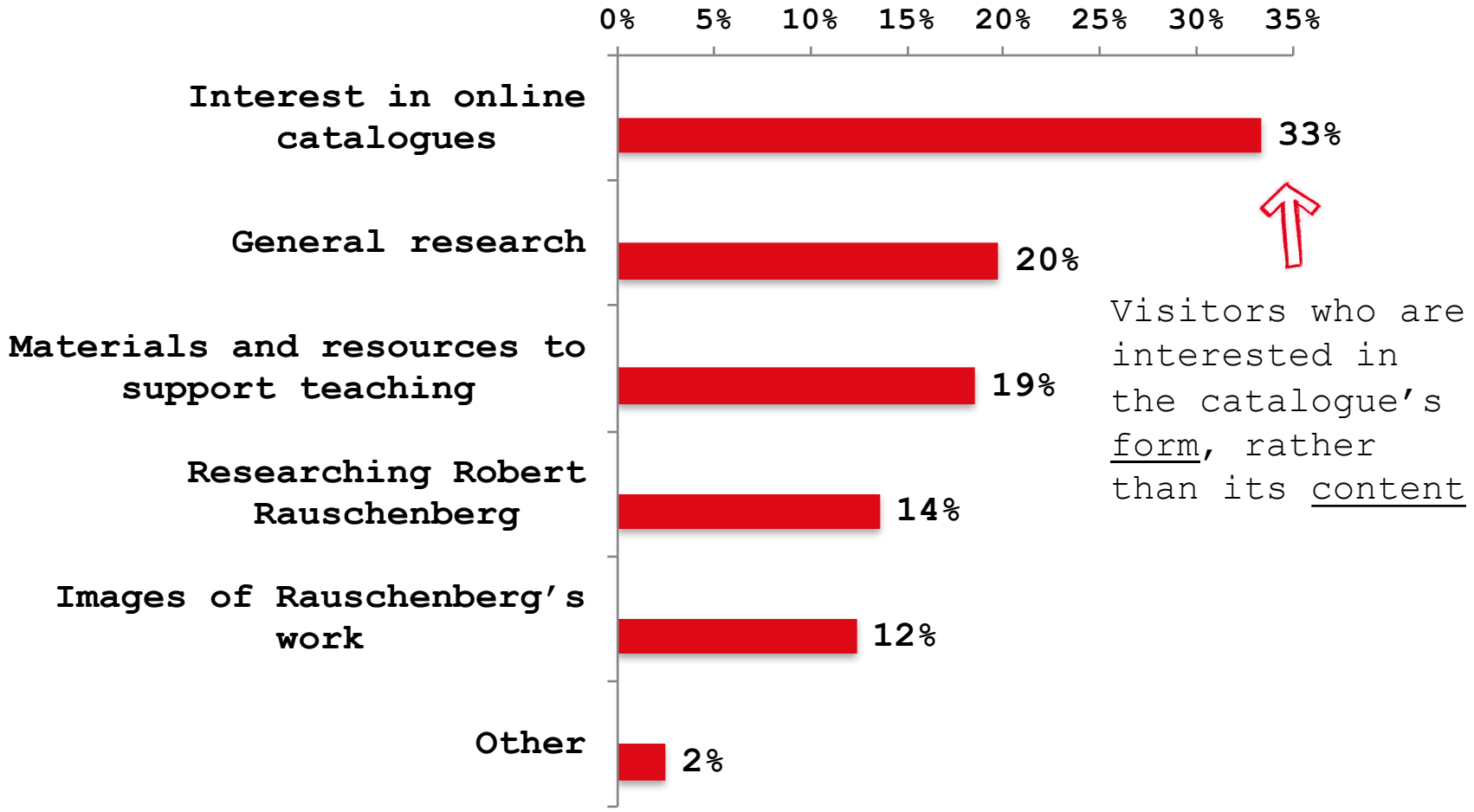
# How are the catalogues being used?




Q: What were your reasons for visiting/using the Rauschenberg Research Project online? (Please select all that apply)

N=81

# How are the catalogues being used?




Q: What were your reasons for visiting/using the Rauschenberg Research Project online? (Please select all that apply)

N=81

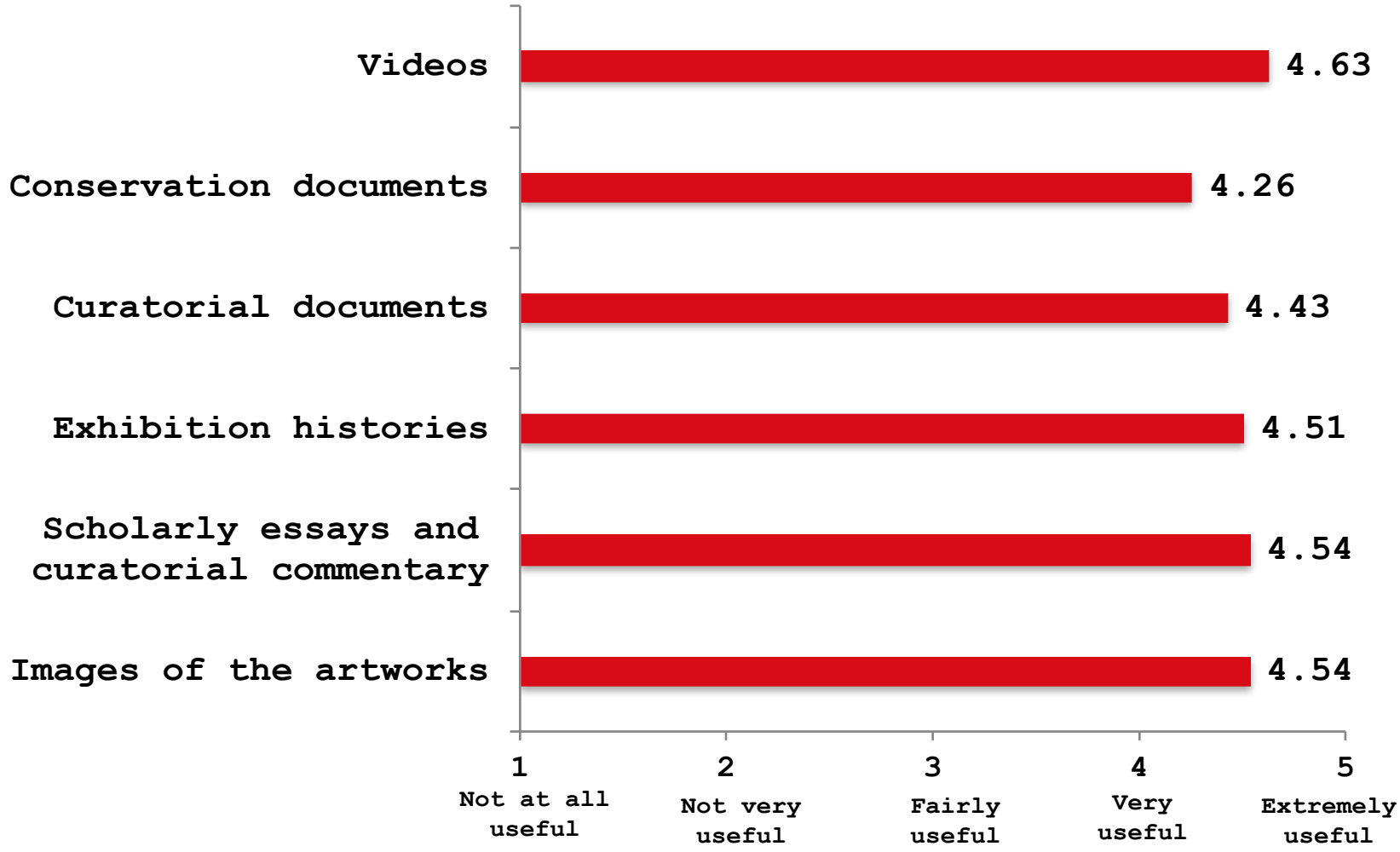
Deep engagement

# 15%

Of RRP visitors have made more than

# > 9 visits

# Scholars rate catalogue content very highly




Q: "How do you rate the content of the Rauschenberg Research Project on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is extremely useful?

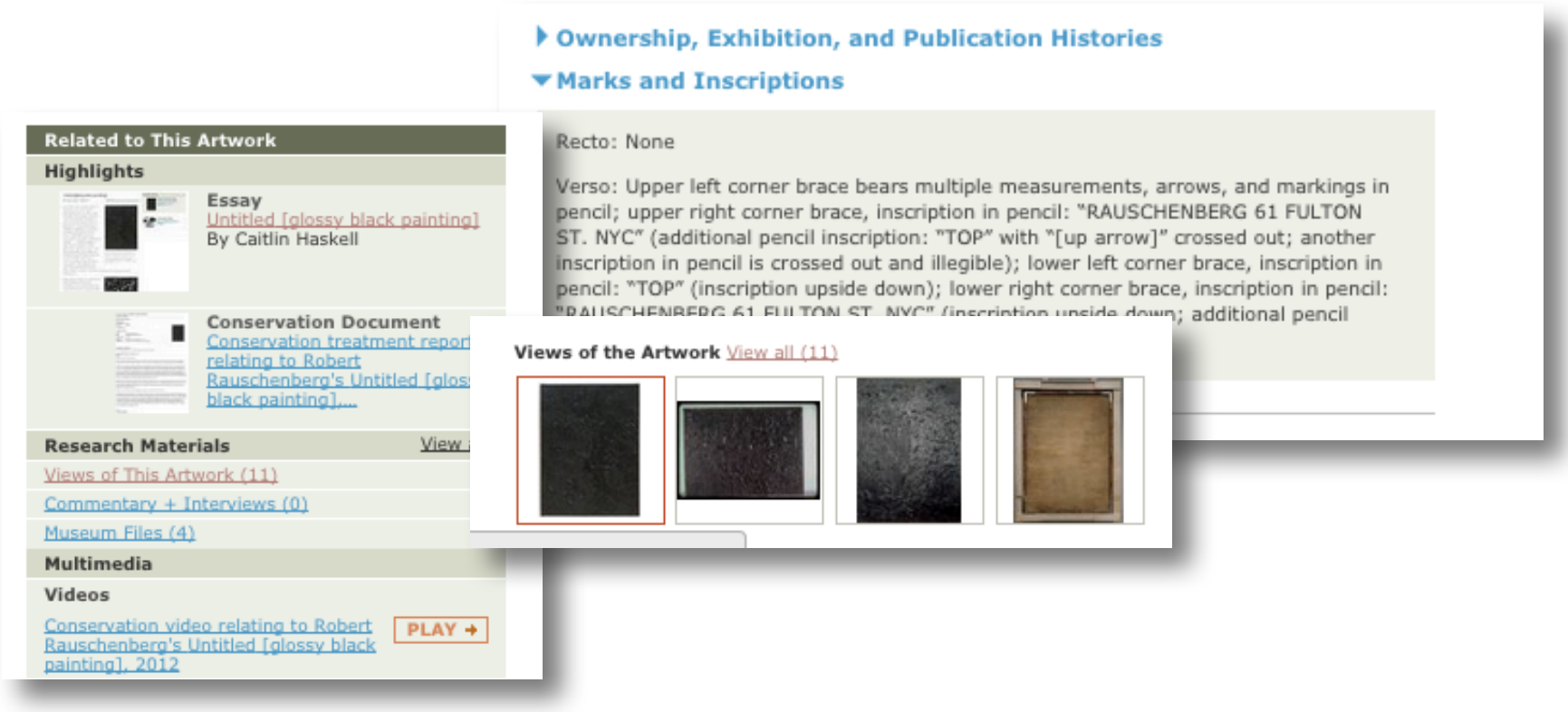
N=35

# Praise for usefulness, quality, depth and breadth of catalogue content

**98%**

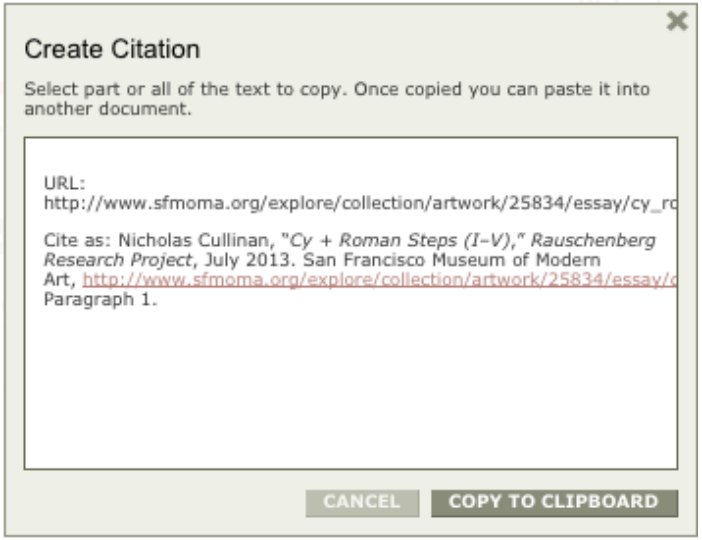
of the primary audience said they were likely to use the RRP for any future research on Rauschenberg

# A deeper level of access to museum information



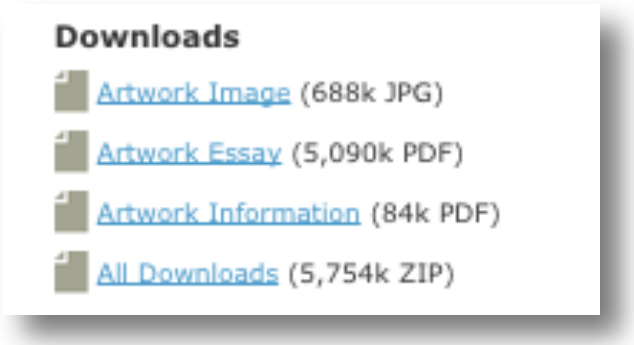
# Features for the academic audience

1. Citation tools
2. Downloadability




*[Recommended format for citation is] super super important…in terms of* ***training our students*** *in research and documentation*
Professor

# Content + Downloadability = Value



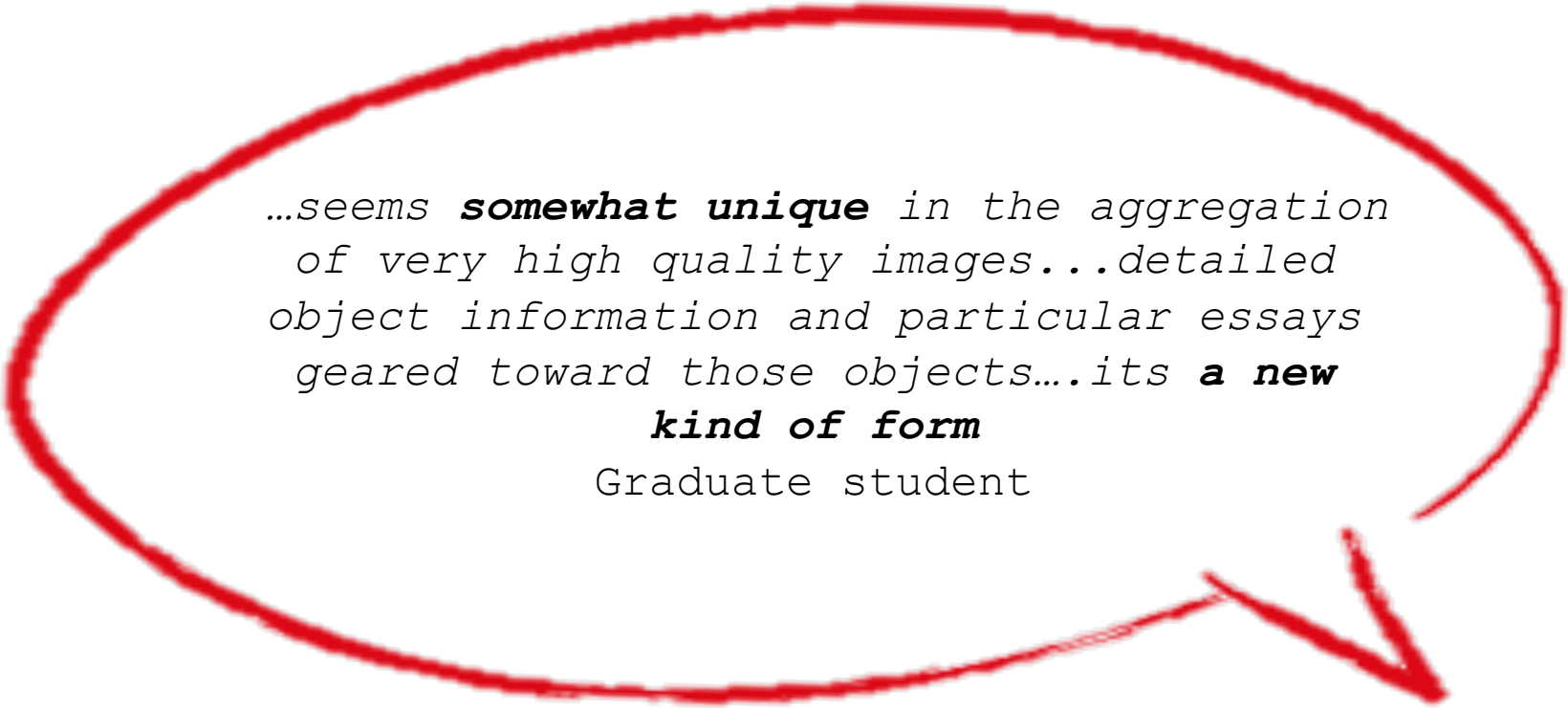

*Allowing **scholars access to all of the "extras" is amazing**…curatorial and conservation documents, interviews, multiple views… personal photos, etc. Perhaps the most useful aspect…is …that users can **download these resources** to their own computers.*
*Independent scholar*

# Distinctive vision and voice

*There can be a tendency on the web for museums to strike a kind of neutral,* ***very bland quasi-bureaucratic tone*** *when they talk about their work. These* ***texts had a lot of personality to them*** *more so than you usually see in a museum frame and a kind of* ***independent scholarly seriousness*** *that I appreciated.*

*Professor*

# And new types of scholarship



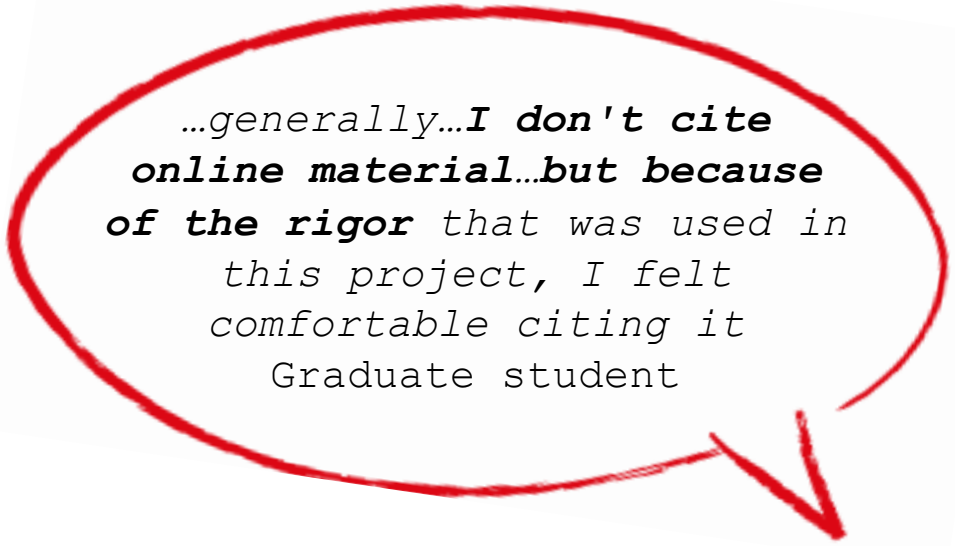
*…seems **somewhat unique** in the aggregation of very high quality images...detailed object information and particular essays geared toward those objects….its **a new kind of form***

Graduate student

# The audience trusted the catalogues as scholarly sources

**30%**

indicated that they were very likely or extremely likely **to cite the *LCC*** in future research or publications



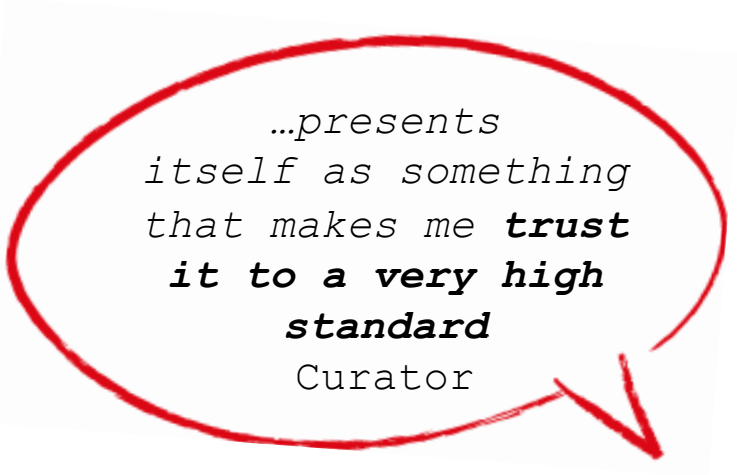
# The audience trusted the catalogues as scholarly sources

**85%**

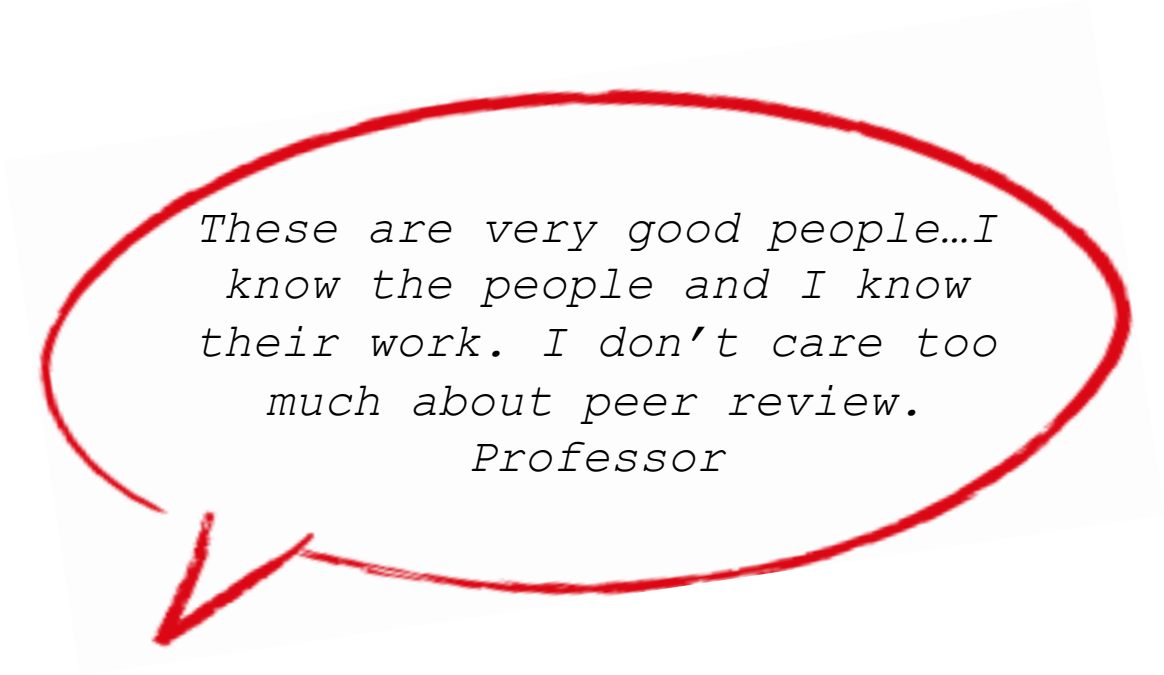
of the primary audience that had used the LCC rated it as a very credible or extremely credible place **to have their own work published**

Signifiers of academic authority

1. Institutional brand
2. Well-known contributors
3. Proper academic formatting and citations of scholarly essays



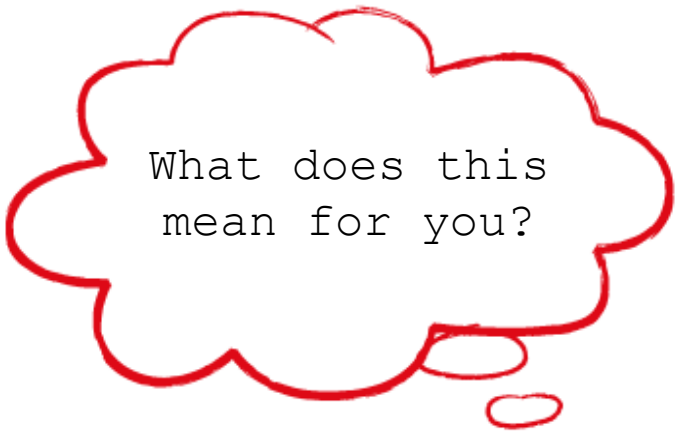
# Prestigious contributors matter more than peer review



# The catalogues are having an impact on scholarship

*The [RRP]* ***was a huge asset for my [Masters] paper****…*
*Graduate student*

*I am writing my dissertation on the work of Allan Kaprow, and although* ***I wasn't planning to write about Mushroom****, I will, since the photographs and especially the letters [in On Performativity] enable me to deal with the happening in a nuanced, substantial way.*
*Graduate student*




- Online catalogues need specialized functionality to meet the needs of a scholarly audience
- The features support working process and signify academic authority
- Online catalogues offer opportunities for innovation in content and form
- Invest your resources in securing well-known contributors

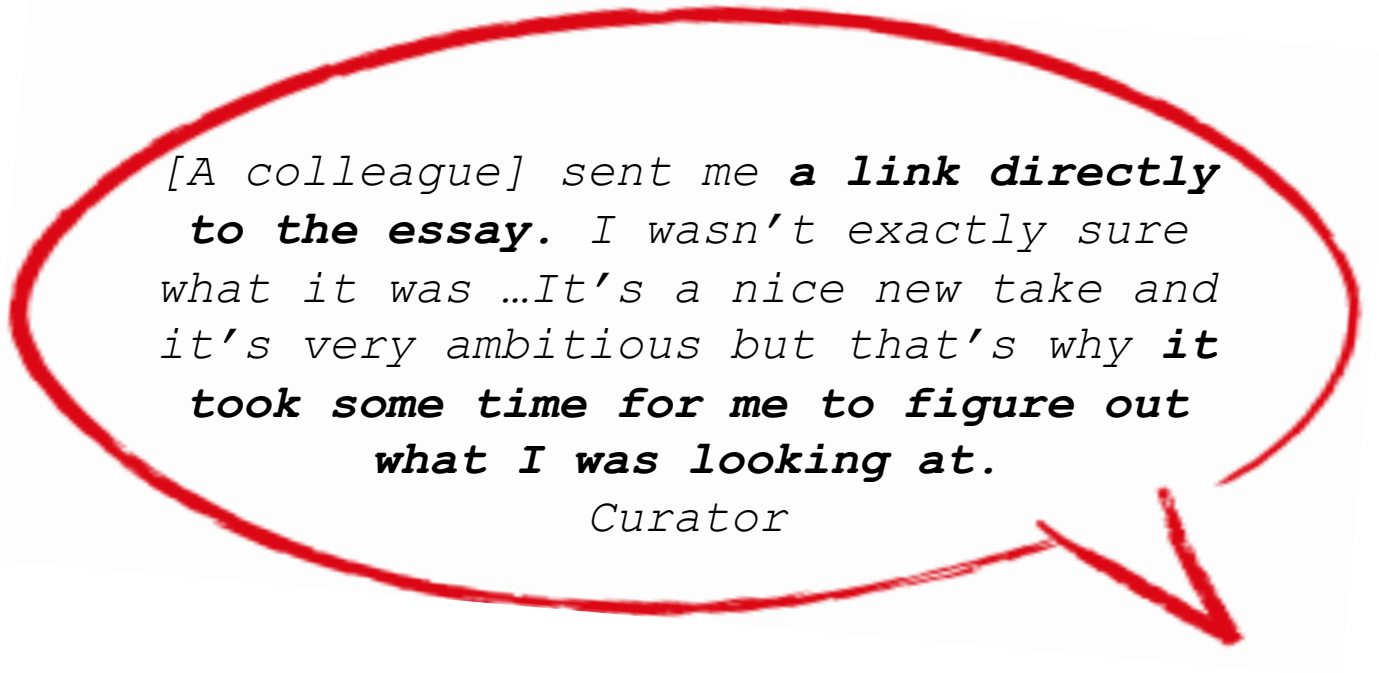
# Challenges

1. Usability
2. Structure and boundaries
3. Permanence
4. Status

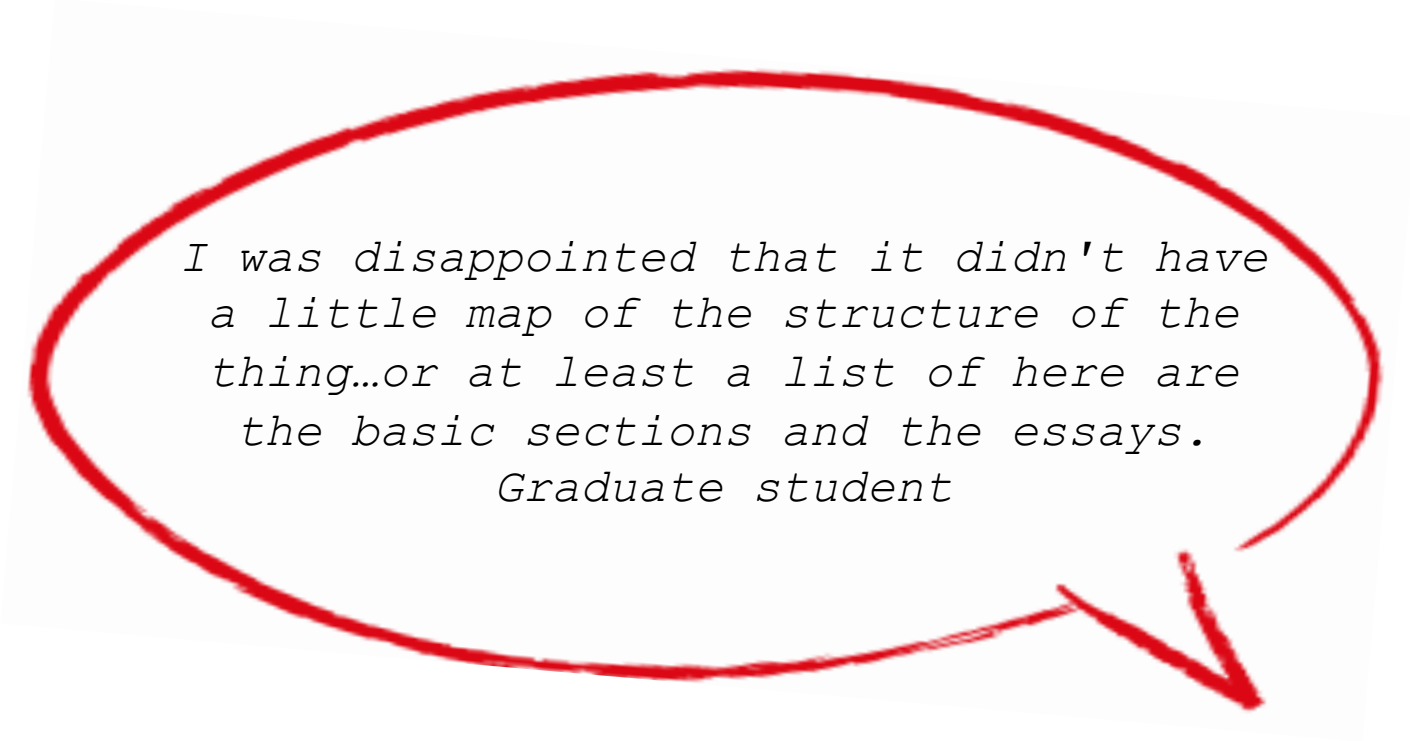
# Usability challenge: Most users don't land on the home page

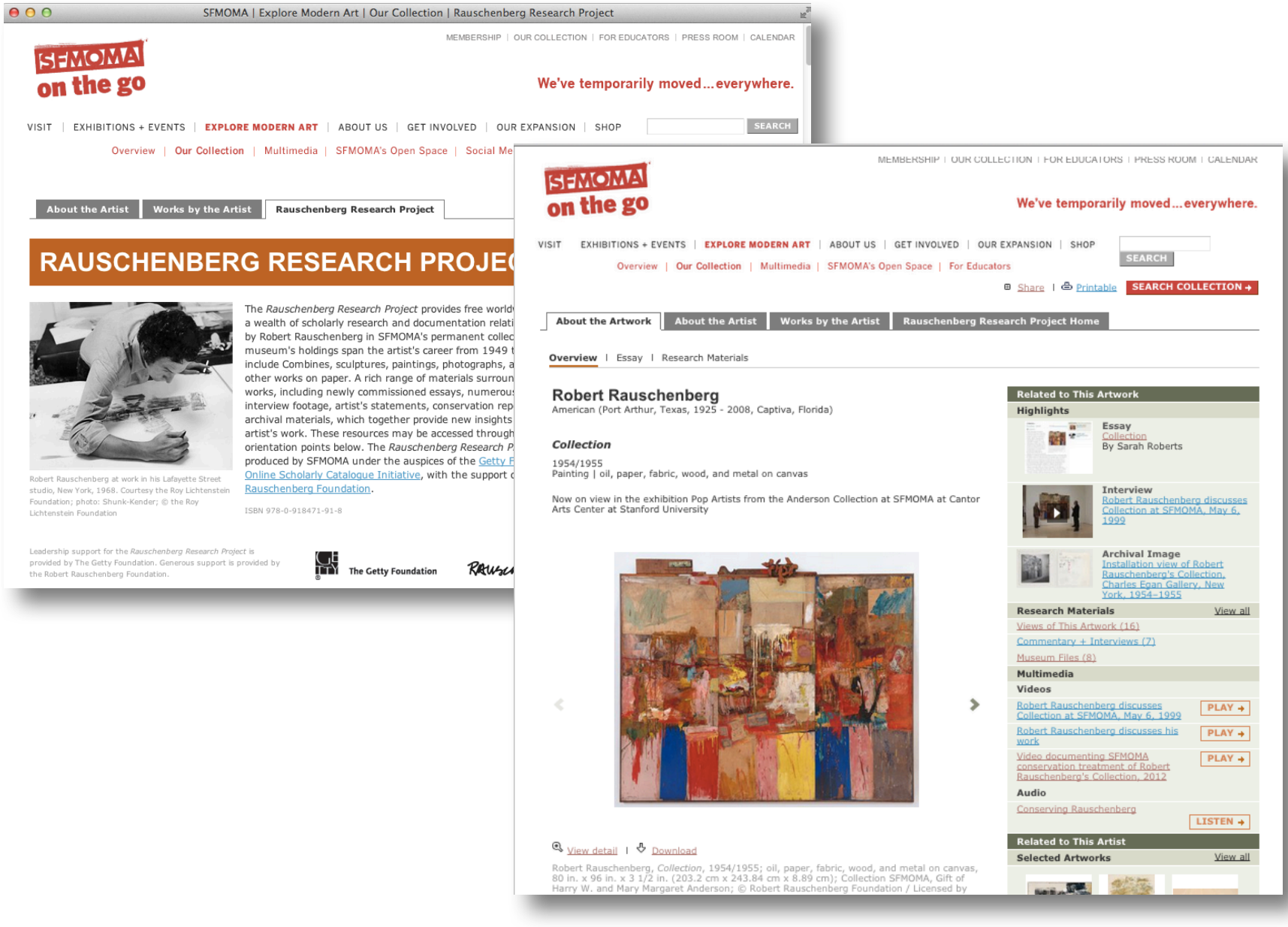
**75%**

Enter through an essay



# Usability challenge: how do we communicate the scale of an online publication?

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Robert Rauschenberg
American (Port Arthur, Texas, 1925 - 2008, Captiva, Florida)
Collection
1954/1955
Painting | oil, paper, fabric, wood, and metal on canvas
Now on view in the exhibition Pop Artists from the Anderson Collection at SFMOMA at Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University
View detail | Download
Robert Rauschenberg, Collection, 1954/1955; oil, paper, fabric, wood, and metal on canvas, 80 in. x 96 in. x 3 1/2 in. (203.2 cm x 243.84 cm x 8.89 cm); Collection SFMOMA, Gift of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson; © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation / Licensed by
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Robert Rauschenberg discusses Collection at SFMOMA, May 6, 1999
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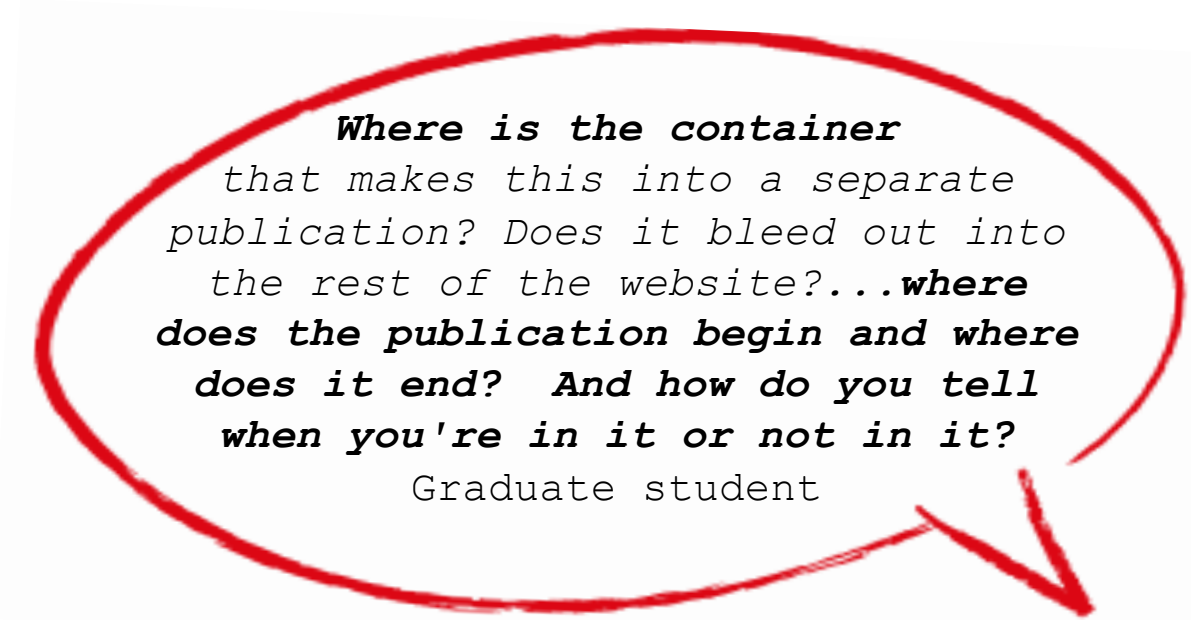
# Boundaries and structure: where does an online publication begin and end?



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Permanence: will this be here in 20 years?

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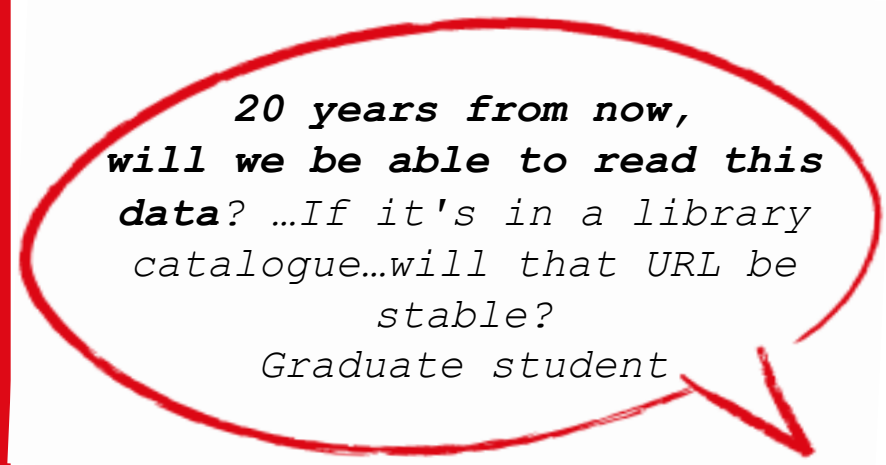


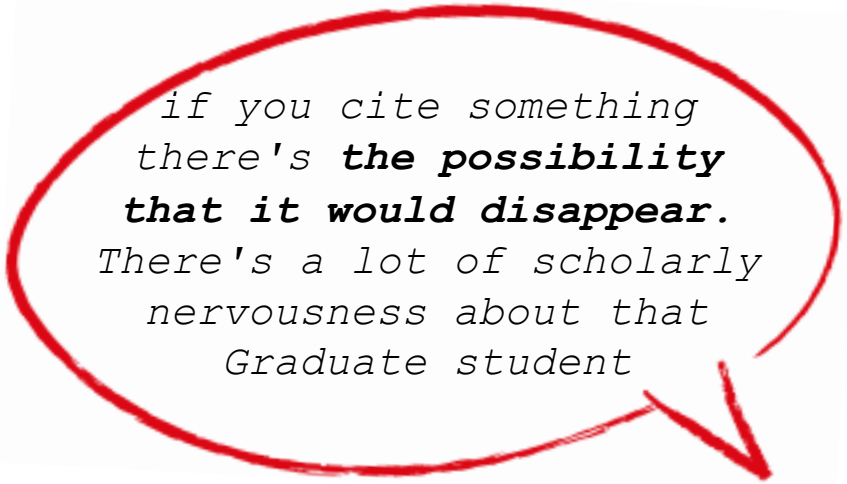

# Status: what is the value of an online scholarly catalogue?

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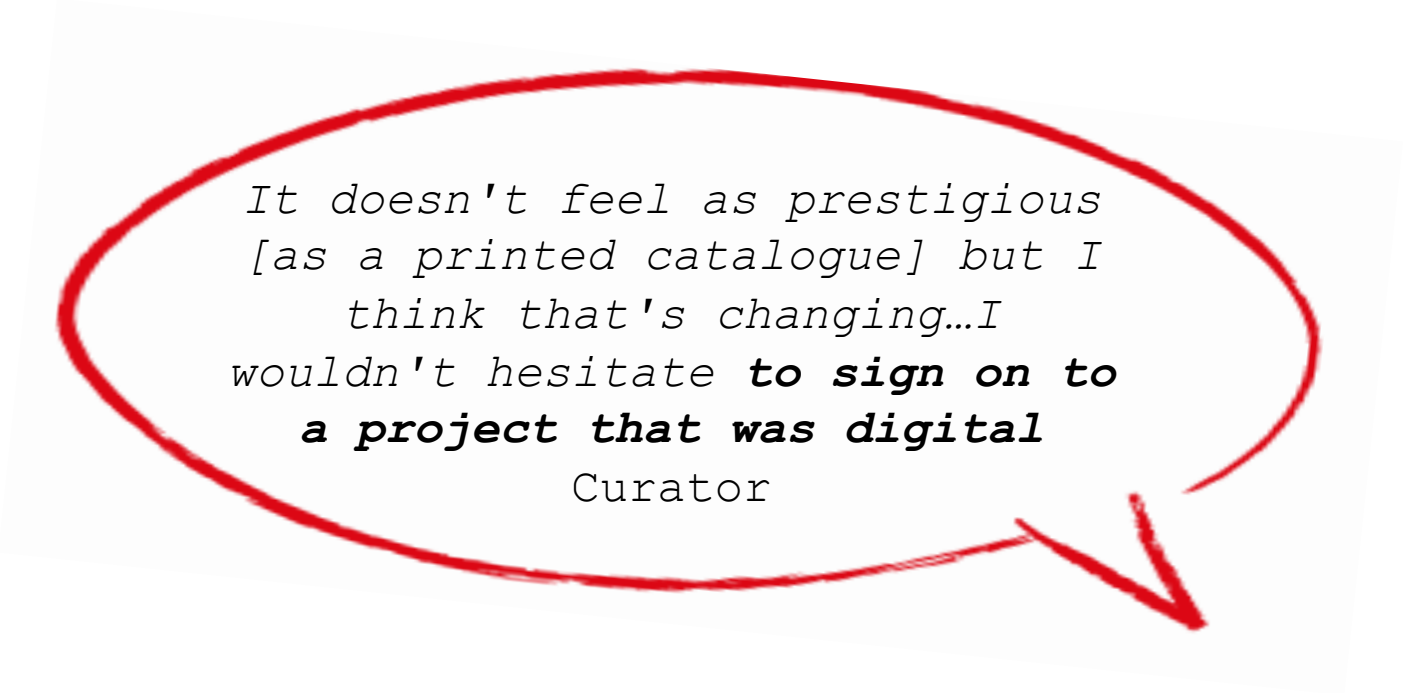

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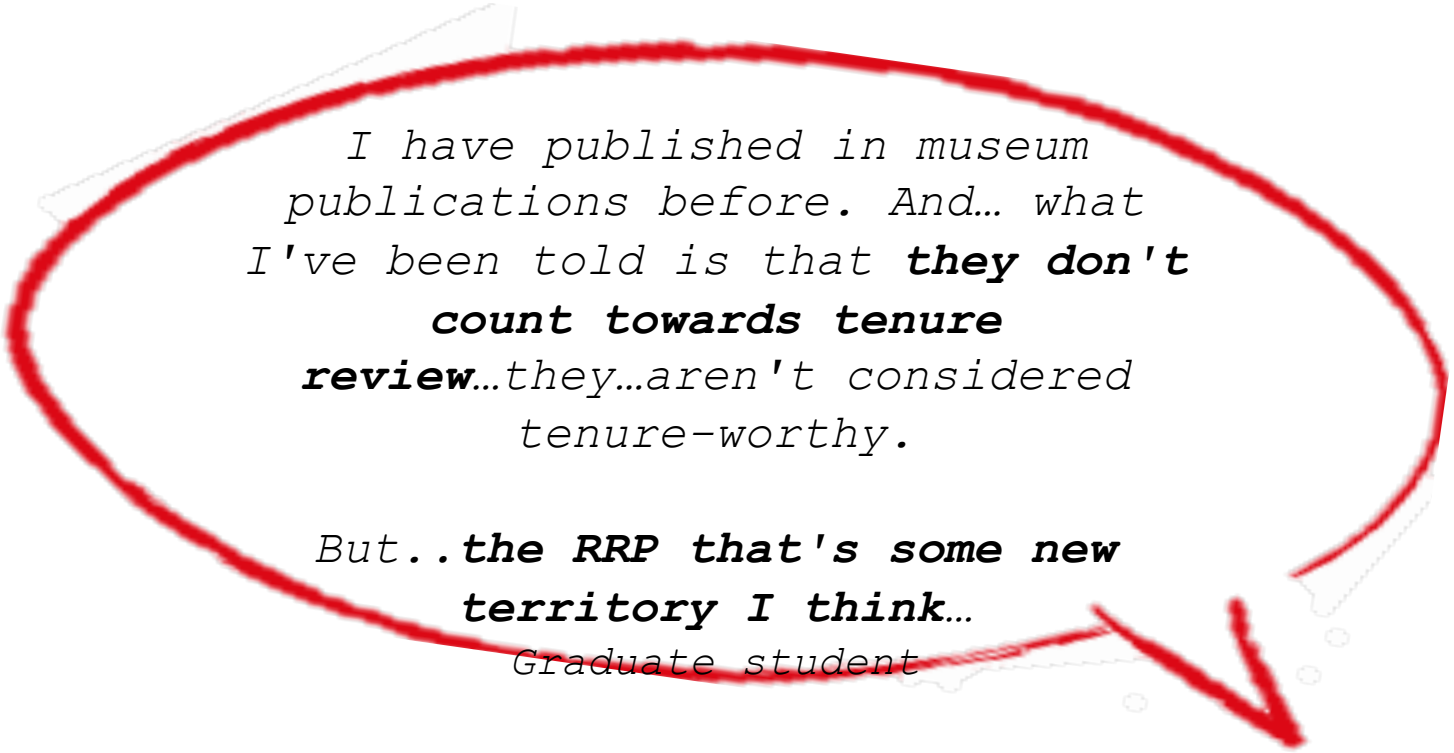
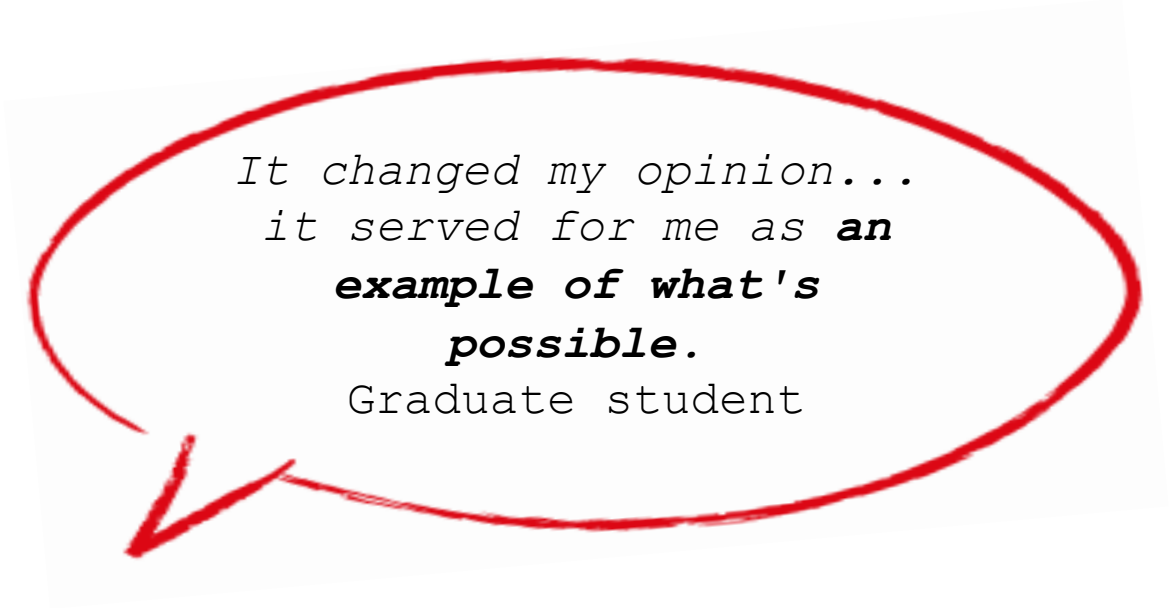


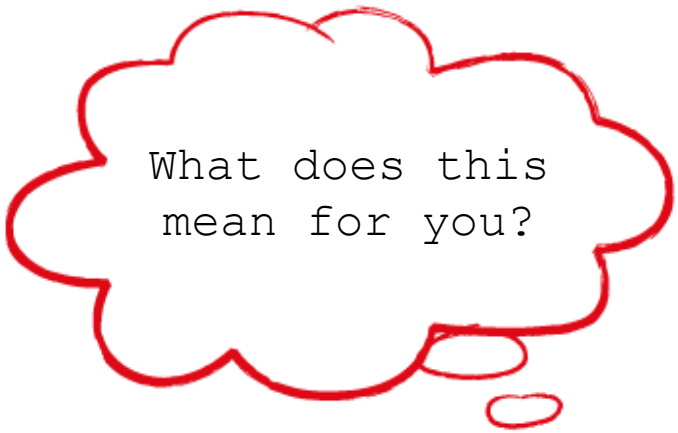
*I have published in museum publications before. And… what I've been told is that* ***they don't count towards tenure review****…they…aren't considered tenure-worthy.*

*But..* ***the RRP that's some new territory I think****…*

*Graduate student*

# Status: what is the value of an online scholarly catalogue?






- Clear boundaries need to be balanced with findability
- Online catalogues need to be permanent, updatable and archival
- Perceptions of online catalogues are shaped by larger issues of status and publication record in the academic community

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