Exploring ‘inspiration’ and the library’s potential role in the creative process

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In his 2008 literature review, William Hemmig identified 5 purposes for which artists seek information:

1. inspiration
2. specific visual elements
3. knowledge of materials and techniques
4. marketing and career guidance
5. knowledge of current trends in the art world (p. 355).

What is ‘inspiration’, and how is it found?
What is ‘inspiration’?

- terminology
- historical
- cultural
- psychological
Csikzentmihalyi’s theory of ‘flow’

- There are clear goals every step of the way;
- there is immediate feedback to one’s actions;
- there is a balance between challenge and skills;
- actions and awareness are merged;
- distractions are excluded from consciousness;
- there is no worry of failure;
- self-consciousness disappears;
- the sense of time becomes distorted;
- the activity becomes autotelic (something that is an end in itself) (pp. 111-113).

How is ‘inspiration’ found?

- browsing
- Information Encountering (IE)
- satisficing
- serendipity
Sessions – including theories of creative thinking in library research sessions, ‘Creative Library Research’ sessions run by librarians and Academic Support

Resources – buying across a variety of domains, encouraging users’ suggestions, using Special Collections as inspiration for studio work

Systems – allow for serendipity virtually, for instance, the new books selection on UAL’s Library Search homepage

Next steps with this research

- upcoming journal article
- potential interview project
- planning more creativity-related library sessions
Thank you for listening!

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