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Guest Editor's Introduction to Special Issue on SoTL-AH

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Guest Editor's Introduction

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In the call for papers for this special issue of *Art History Pedagogy and Practice (AHPP)*¹, I noted the journal's groundbreaking role in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Compared to other disciplines, art history in the United States has been slow to embrace research of its teaching practices. This comes as little surprise since even art historians employed at institutions of higher education still routinely identify themselves first as historical researchers and second as educators. Fortunately, teaching's recognition within the field of professional art history is on the rise. Whereas in 2000 the College Art Association (CAA) annual meeting featured only two sessions on art history pedagogy, the 2019 meeting offered nine panels plus an array of art history pedagogy papers scattered throughout the program and a pair of posters. Our discipline is finally talking about its teaching and sharing its innovations.

This issue of *AHPP* emerged from a 2017 workshop I co-chaired with my colleague, Denise Amy Baxter. Sponsored by the CAA-affiliated society Art Historians Interested in Pedagogy and Technology, the session offered a kind of crash course for budding SoTL researchers. It addressed, for example, securing institutional review board approval for human subject research and justifying this form of scholarship to search committees and deans. And, recognizing that SoTL has questions and methods not common in object-based and other forms of art historical inquiry, half of the workshop was dedicated to designing systematic research projects.

The articles in this issue pick up where the 2017 CAA session left off. They are intended not just to present new research on art history teaching, but to encourage other art historians to follow suit. Equally important is that the articles present an array of scholarly methods that can be used to study teaching. That is, in addition to introducing teaching innovations, these articles model ways to conduct research on the efficacy and reception of art history teaching. To borrow from the title of the summary of our 2017 CAA panel that Denise Amy Baxter and I wrote for *ArtHistoryTeachingResources.org*, the articles here get "beyond the anecdote" with objective, well-designed, and replicable research.²

In conversation with Denise Baxter and *AHPP*'s wonderful editors Virginia Spivey and Renee McGarry, I took an atypical approach to building the issue. Rather than solicit only finished articles, the call for papers invited projects at every stage, from preliminary idea to completed essay. The contributing authors were then paired with a mentor, either to design or hone a research project for this issue's didactic purpose. Because the projects were each at different stages and the authors likewise had different levels of experience with SoTL, the mentor/mentee relationships varied. The process was, invariably, a fruitful series of enlightening conversations

¹ CFP: Special AHPP Issue on Methods in SoTL-AH, August 9, 2018.

<http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2018/08/cfp-special-ahpp-issue-on-methods-in-sotl-ah/>

² Denise Baxter and Kelly Donahue-Wallace, "Getting Beyond the Anecdote: Research and Art History Pedagogy," *ArtHistoryTeachingResources.org*, May 11, 2016. <http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/2016/05/getting-beyond-the-anecdote-research-and-art-history-pedagogy/>

and embodied the best qualities of scholarly exchange. I am confident that we all grew as teachers and researchers as a result.

To help readers new to this area of research, this issue makes a few adjustments to the typical *AHPP* format. Each article has a preface authored by the SoTL mentor. These explain in layperson's terms why the author chose the method(s) and how the author conducted the research. The articles also make generous use of headings in order to make their structure—and therefore the steps of conducting the research—as transparent as possible. Finally, this issue features more articles than usual so that budding researchers can see and be inspired by a broad range of questions, methods, and results. I hope that each reader finds something that sparks a desire to give SoTL a try.