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Report on a Survey of IWU Faculty and Staff Attitudes about Archiving Honors and JWP Works

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Discussion points for the Undergraduate Research Advisory Committee (URAC)

Remarks by faculty and staff participants indicate an interest in amending practices for the John Wesley Powell Research Conference (JWP):

1. Adopt a defined set of learning outcomes for conference submissions.
2. Include only works of faculty-defined quality in DC@IWU.

It is also clear that the access options, whether for JWP or Honors, as well as the purpose for submitting works to DC@IWU are not understood. I would appreciate URAC assistance in promoting workshops to address this need. Details regarding these brief points are in the conclusion.

Introduction

This summer I wrote a book chapter describing the way faculty and staff at The Ames Library use both the University Archives and the institutional repository Digital Commons @ IWU (DC@IWU) in managing collections of works created for Honors and JWP. The chapter includes insights into the partnerships for conducting this work, analyses of the academic divisions in each collection, methods of collecting (including non-text formats), and attitudes of departmental faculty and staff on the topic. The expected publication date is Spring 2022.

This report is a complete account of responses to a survey I disseminated after Spring semester of 2021. That survey purposefully asked more questions than what I needed for the book chapter. Library personnel recognize that the interactions students have with departmental staff and faculty advisors influence the views students may form about self-archiving in DC@IWU. We have tried at various points to educate our colleagues about our work, but until this year we have not formally sought to understand if our goals match those of our departmental colleagues. I also added survey questions specific to the 2021 virtual conference because of a question raised by a colleague at a Spring Faculty Meeting.

This report contains two main sections. Most of the content here covers survey responses about faculty/staff experience with both Honors and JWP in their roles as advisors, reviewers or observers. A shorter section reports on questions about the 2021 virtual JWP conference. Immediately following is a brief observation faculty workload that emerged in the comments. The report concludes with suggestions for changes or areas needing further dialogue in the ways the library's work intersects with campus expectations and the faculty goals for their students' experiences.

This report does not describe the history of Honors and JWP programs and library practices in collecting these works[1] but in brief, the factors that are external to the library and were foundational to the workflows we use for archiving student research in DC@IWU are:

- The stated interests expressed in faculty meeting minutes, campus press releases and administrators' remarks that emphasize "student-faculty collaboration" in terms of opportunities for student research.

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[1] The book chapter contains a detailed discussion, including citations, which I will share on request.

- Admissions staff showcasing student research as a recruiting tool for prospective students.
- First-year IWU students consistently indicating that they expect research opportunities during their IWU experience.

Survey Methodology and Response Rate

The survey link was sent to over 200 people on the "all-faculty" email list I obtained from the Associate Provost's office. I did not attempt to edit this list to current faculty or staff and instead relied on survey participants self-identifying as being knowledgeable about Honors and JWP projects in the following ways: Honors Project Advisor or Review Committee member and/or a JWP Conference attendee. As mentioned above, the survey explored both general perceptions of the library's work to archive students' projects and specific data related to the 2021 virtual JWP Conference.

There were 52 complete survey responses. Of those, 43 respondents have been involved with both Honors and JWP, four with Honors only, and five with JWP only. Each respondent indicated their affiliation by academic division, if they were project advisors, or their roles as Honors reviewers or conference attendees. Some questions were applicable to all participants but I constructed the questions in Qualtrics so that participants were directed to different questions depending on their responses about the type of involvement they have had. Readers should take into consideration the relatively smaller response rate for the Fine Arts (4) and Interdisciplinary programs (3) in the following discussion. Representation for the other disciplines was eleven each in the Humanities and Social Sciences and sixteen in the Sciences. Seven respondents indicated they have been a reviewer or attendee but have not directly advised student projects.

Responses about Promoting/Collecting Honors and JWP works

1) Depending on the affiliation(s) they chose, respondents were asked *Do you believe Honors projects (or JWP works) should be promoted as examples of student-faculty collaboration?* Responses for *Both* and *Honors only* are grouped for the first graph and responses for *Both* and *JWP only* are grouped in the second.
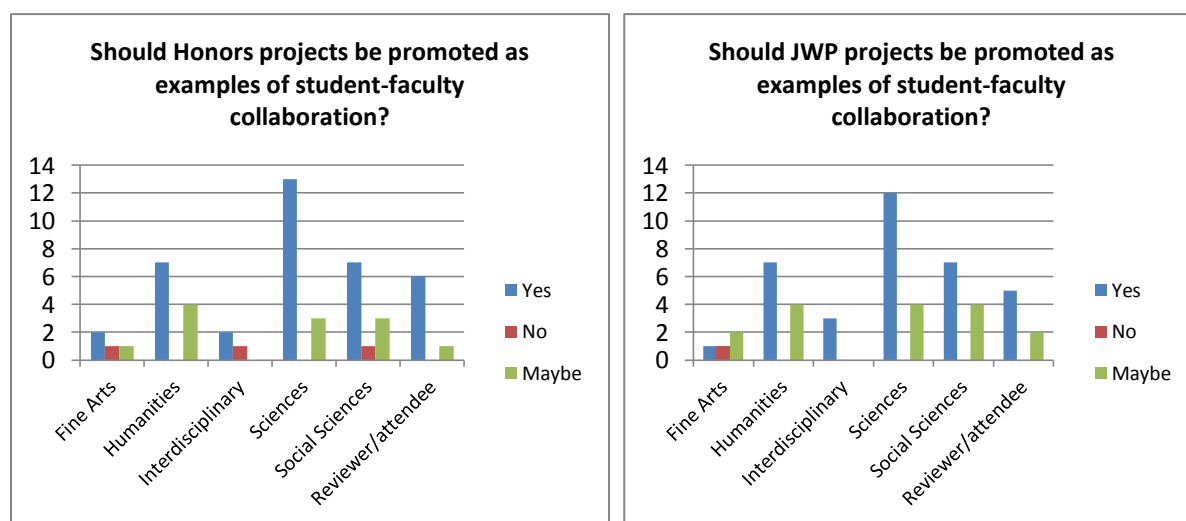
Respondents who chose *Maybe* were offered an opportunity to explain in a comments section. Most of these comments indicated there were too many variables or too much variety in student projects to provide a simple Yes or No response. One interpreted the word *collaborate* as a relationship closer aligned to being a co-author; that person and one other respondent felt that "guiding" or "mentoring" students were more accurate terms. One respondent in the Sciences who works with

students on both types of research felt that "most are excellent examples of collaboration," but added that "Occasionally, however, independent projects are conducted/presented with little faculty oversight or involvement."

In the Sciences, one commenter cited a resistance to being too closely tied with student works due to the implications for their own work if flaws were identified in students' findings. One respondent in the Social Sciences felt that "Perhaps there need [*sic*] to be some specific guidance as to how much time and guidance is expected in order to claim faculty-student collaboration." Two Humanities respondents cited variability in projects and one felt the focus should be on what students gain out of the work rather than faculty involvement. In the Fine Arts two respondents felt that faculty should make that determination.

2) Survey respondents were asked about *the extent to which they agree that the products created for these two programs achieved the goal of showcasing faculty-student collaboration*. They were given a scale of 0-10 and responses were grouped by Qualtrics for the charts below as 0-6 *Disagree*, 7-8 *Neutral*, 9-10 *Agree*.
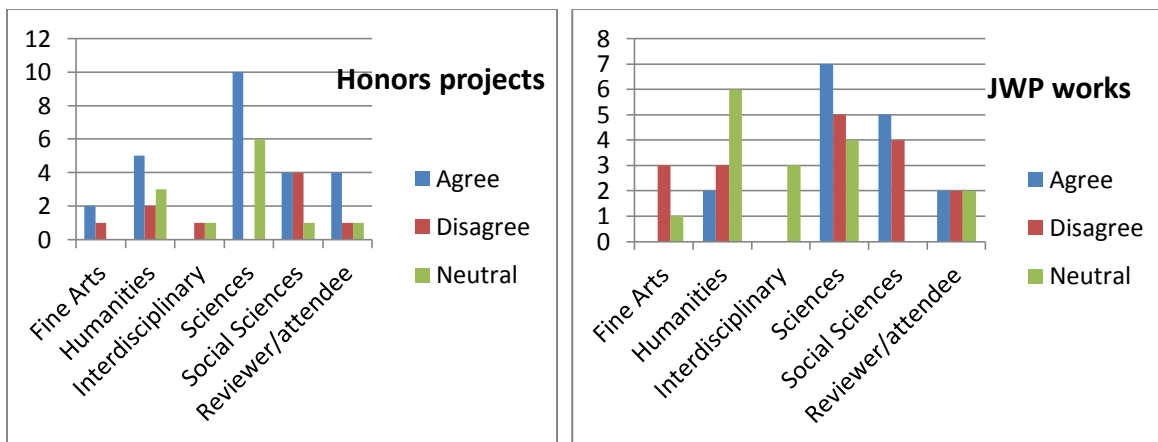

3) *Do you believe entries for John Wesley Powell Research Conference should be limited to high quality, Honors-level research/creative works in the future? Please explain your choice if you select Maybe.*
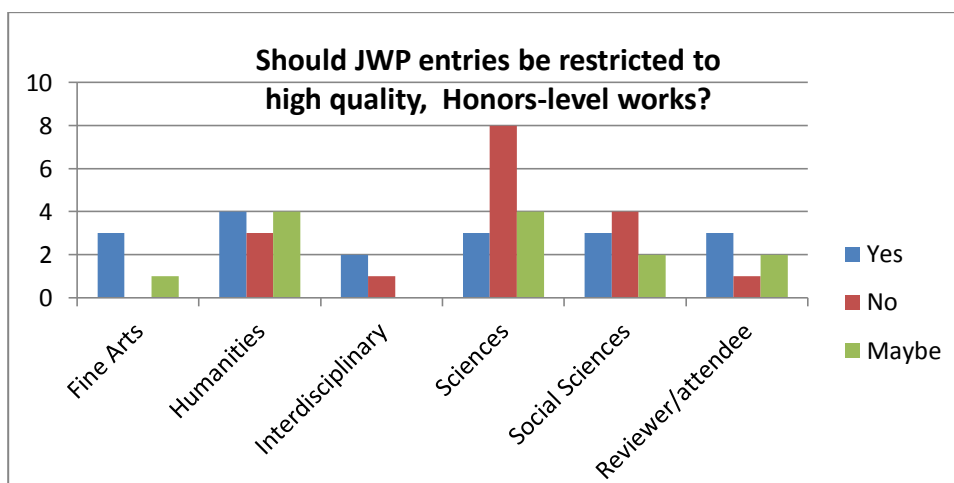
More detailed comments for this question follow due to their specificity and more distinctive disciplinary differences:

- One respondent in the Fine Arts thought Faculty should decide what works are presented at JWP. A similar comment was also offered by one of the Reviewers/attendees.
- The following direct quotes come from respondents in the Humanities:
    - "Student work can be outstanding in many ways - we should lift up all examples of students being exceptional."
    - "There should be some jury to pick projects, but they need not be Honors level because the latter involves more research and an independent study."
    - "Work at different stages have a place at JWP as well."
    - "Honors-level, sure. But it does not necessarily have to be an honors project."
- In the Sciences, one of these respondents felt the experience of presenting was valuable for students in and of itself and the same comment was offered by one of the Reviewers/Attendees. Three others felt the quality should be high but not necessarily at the Honors level. One comment was more specific, "Entries should be original research generating new knowledge or creative work. All levels (1st-4th year) of students should be allowed to participate. Projects where a students simply learned about a topic (I researched XYZ) should be excluded."
- Only one comment was offered in the Social Sciences: "I do believe the entries should be high quality, but what is considered high quality may vary from discipline to discipline, depending on accepted research practices. If this stipulation is in place, there may need to be some rubrics to guide the decision as to whether a given project should be included."

4) There were more *Yes* responses than I expected to the question *Do you advise students about including their works in DC@IWU?* More than one response and an open comment field were allowed in the follow up question about what types of advice respondents give. Respondents were not asked to distinguish between Honors or JWP works this time.
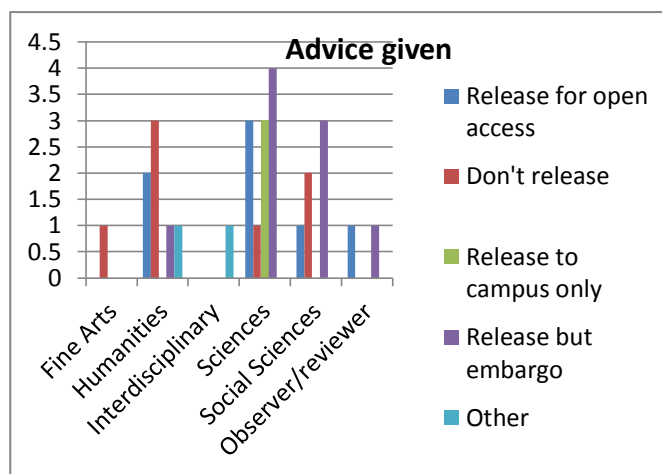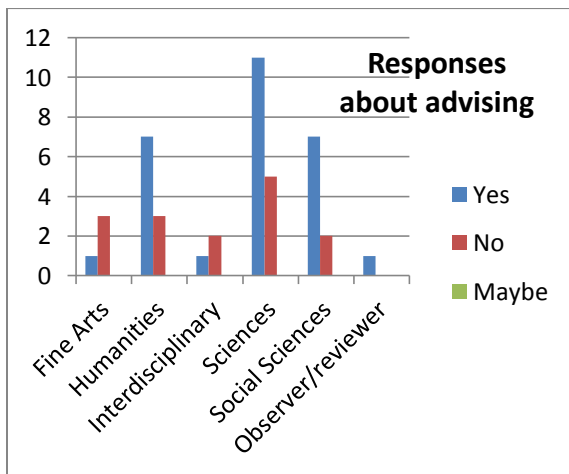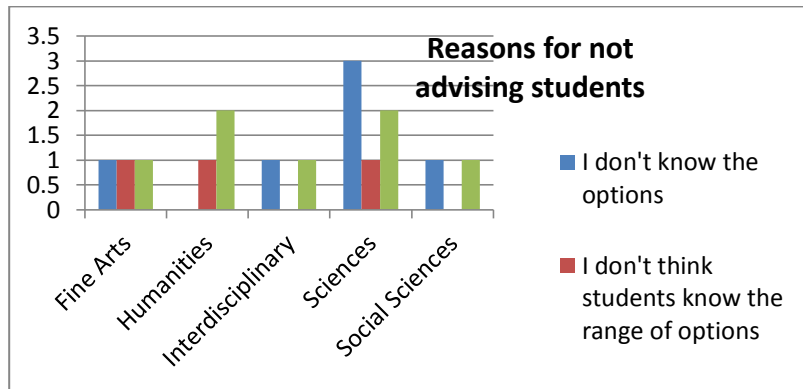
Comments again are grouped by discipline**:**
- One person in Interdisciplinary programs believed that deposits happened automatically.
- In the Humanities, three respondents indicated that they advise not to release works due to the belief that it will inhibit students' ability to publish later. The possibility for works being plagiarized and that releasing online is "bad for the students, and bad for knowledge creation in general" was also cited.
  - To varying degrees, comments from individuals in the Sciences and Social Sciences echo these concerns.
- In the Fine Arts, advice against releasing is due to a perceived violation of the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA).[2]
- One in the Sciences didn't think students would care if their works were online. Two additional comments in the Sciences are:
  - "[M]any of the projects were good learning experiences for the students, but not sufficiently developed to showcase externally; I don't want 'half-baked' work to make IWU look bad."
  - "It is not my decision to 'showcase' work on the Digital Commons. Some work is of sufficient quality that it should be available to anyone. Other works, in contrast, have limited scholarship value and are not, in my opinion, helpful as a recruiting tool."

5) Prior to the efforts made by library faculty and staff to collect JWP works, the Conference abstracts published each year served as evidence of students' work with their faculty advisors. The collection efforts began with the implementation of DC@IWU in 2009 and all JWP Conference program from 1990-2008 were added to DC@IWU in a way that highlighted each presenters' abstract. I included a survey question to gauge respondents' attitudes about the significance of this aspect of student work: *To what extent do you consider students' ability to write informative, accurate research abstracts or artist statements an important learning outcome for JWP works?* Most respondents agreed abstracts are important and some offered the rationale that their disciplines emphasize the ability to communicate in non-technical language. There weren't any stark disciplinary differences in the comments.

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[2] FERPA protects student records and requires explicit permission for their release. I will address this concern in the conclusion.

Views of the value of JWP abstracts
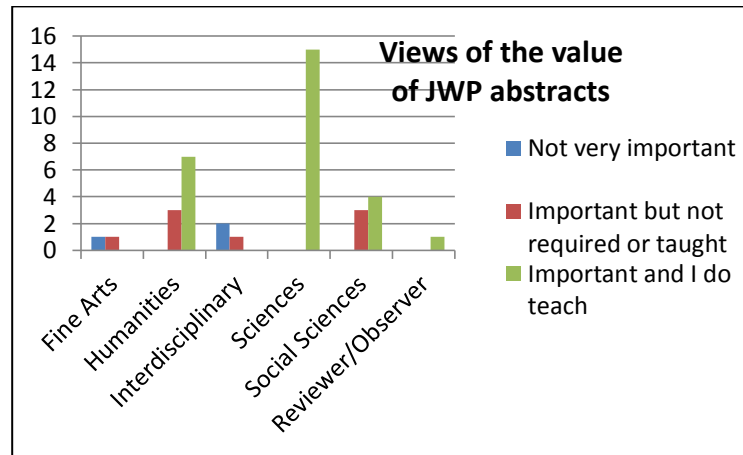
The 2021 Virtual JWP Conference

1) The three final questions in the survey were asked in conjunction with information about the 2021 virtual JWP Conference which was hosted on DC@IWU. Respondents were told that "*all students received information during the registration process about their ability to deposit their work as part of the conference record and 14% chose to do so.*" The question asked them to *share* [their] *thoughts on the use of DC@IWU as a repository for conference works*. They could select one or both of the choices shown in the next graph and leave comments.


Responses to using DC@IWU as repository to JWP works
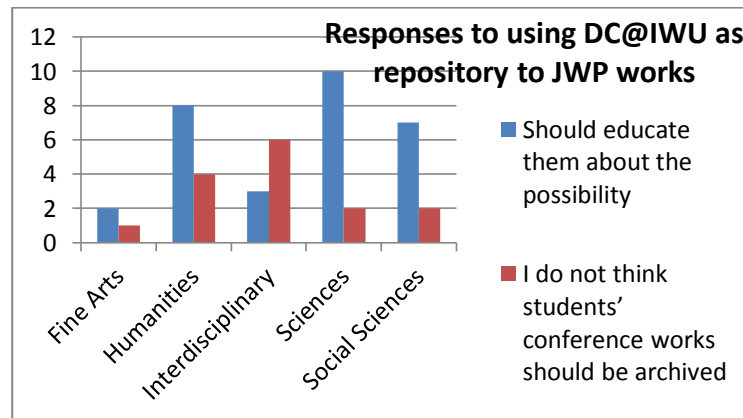
Comments, again, are grouped by disciplinary areas:

- Fine Arts: One of the "should educate" responses didn't know it was possible for students works to be archived. The person who did not think that works should be archived cited FERPA.
- Humanities: Only one respondent chose both options but did not leave a comment; one person who selected "should educate" commented: "They need to be aware of their intellectual property rights." One who did not think that works should be archived stated "students are right to be cautious"; another said "conference presentations are often even more rough and inchoate than a polished honors project." That respondent also expressed concern over protecting works for later revision and publication.
- Sciences: One respondent who did not think works should be archived was concerned about faculty members' ability to publish and offered that student work for JWP was really incomplete; several comments were offered with the "should educate" choice:
  - Restricting access to IWU only.

- o "Every now and then it might be valuable for a student to be able to show their work to someone, so having the option to archive it in DC is good. I wouldn't push most to do it, but providing the option and educating students about it is worthwhile."
      - o "Students should discuss this option with their advisors and archive the work if it is ready and they are not concerned about being 'scooped.'"
      - o "It's difficult to provide a clear answer to this question. If the project is meritorious, then the student / faculty should pursue publication of the work in a reputable journal or other publication."
  - Social Sciences: One respondent who chose "should educate" stated that "more students opt to when faculty discuss it with them."

2) Respondents were directed to the last two questions based on their answer to which, if any, of the synchronous and pre-recorded sessions they attended. Twenty two attended at least one of the synchronous sessions and eleven of those also viewed pre-recorded content. Eleven others viewed pre-recorded content only. When asked about the quality of the synchronous and pre-recorded sessions, most felt they were the same.
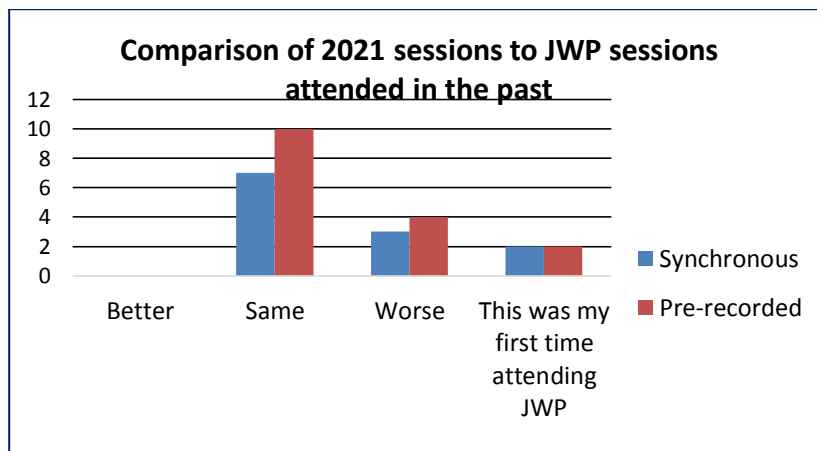
The following contains all comments that were offered:
Comments specific to attendees of synchronous sessions
- "I wasn't expecting them to be as professional but the students did a great job."
- "Time is short so not a lot of time to interact with the presenter."
- "It was confusing that some were pre-recorded but presented as live."
- "[Presentations] in EdStudies weren't really synchronous."
- "Some were better, some were worse, and some were no different. For me it was easier to hear the presenter speak and, for the most part, I was able to easily ask questions."
- "Better and worse depending upon session."
- "I saw positives and negatives. The presentations themselves were less interactive, but because the platform was virtual, I was able to attend other students' presentations that I might have missed otherwise."
- "[V]irtual presentations are just different."
- "Same as in the past. The big change was the lack of informal interactions."
- "[M]ore interaction opportunities would help!"
Comments specific to attendees of pre-recorded sessions
- "The system required presentations be downloaded as large .mp4 files to my computer, which was a barrier vs. an embedded viewing experience."

- "Same quality, but the lack of interaction was a shame."
- "Some were better, some were worse, and some were the same. It, as always, depends on the investment and commitment of the student and their mentor."
- "As before, the presentations were less interactive but I was able to attend more presentations. Perhaps an option is to allow students to present in person for the interaction/questions/comments, but also upload a video for others to view."
- "Dependent upon the session."

Observation on faculty workload

There was only one comment in the survey that looked beyond the focus of the questions. In answer to the questions noted in number one above, one respondent in the Humanities reflected beyond a benefit to the student or the institution's reputation by commenting on implications for faculty workload:

> I'm conflicted. I see them [the collaborations] as potentially good for faculty and students, but I also see them as yet another expectation of faculty that goes uncompensated. Students put a lot of pressure on faculty at times to advise them on their projects. For faculty in the sciences who include students in their already-ongoing work, that may be less of an imposition, though it is still one. For faculty in the humanities, though, it can be a huge burden. Untenured faculty are especially susceptible to believing they need to yield to the pressure.

This comment resonates with me due to my analyses of Honors and JWP works for my book chapter. In that work I compared the total number of Honors and JWP works produced to the number collected into the University Archives or in DC@IWU since the beginning of each program. The two charts that follow contain the total number of both types of works produced at IWU since the inception of DC@IWU only.

Total # JWP
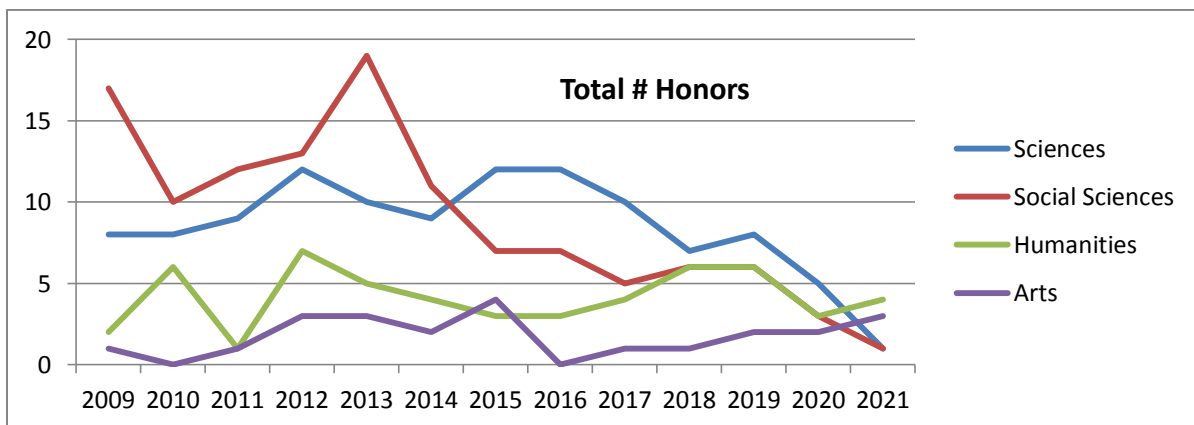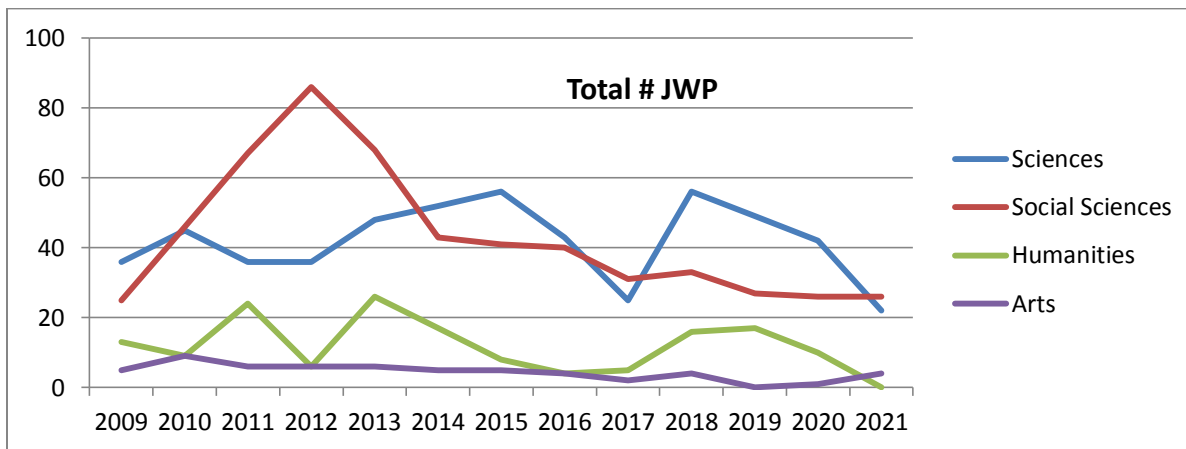
I noticed a decline in undergraduate research participation in most divisions soon after 2015. I attribute these changes to the effects of program closures and departures of faculty and staff. For details on actions taking place at that time, readers are invited to consult data compiled by the IWU AAUP Chapter in 2014.[3] I chose divisional groupings to aid in anonymizing responses, but our campus as a whole may benefit from reflecting on the impact that the declining numbers of faculty and staff have on our ability to support high-impact practices.

Conclusion

URAC may be interested to learn about the desire of some respondents to see standards for what students present at the JWP. This could be addressed with a more clearly defined set of learning outcomes for the conference. The Committee could ask for input on this idea from each division and articulate those responses in the information that both prospective students and conference participants see on the JWP main page or where registration details are provided.[4]

URAC might also recommend a nomination process for archiving JWP works similar to what the School of Music (SoM) faculty do for Honors. Years ago, SoM decided to promote exemplars of the work that is possible in their program even if they did not meet all the requirements for a student to receive a University Honors designation.[5] To meet this need, library personnel simply added a tag that specifies which works meet the criteria for Honors. Therefore, the unit can promote work in its own way and also have an additional level of distinction present on the DC@IWU page that displays all Honors works.[6]

Applied more widely, a similar approach could alleviate concerns about the quality of the openly accessible JWP works that we make available in DC@IWU. Where quality or completeness of a work is of concern, a division or discipline could nominate works for inclusion. Perhaps a "best of conference" level of works could create a more competitive atmosphere and so appeal to student presenters who participate.

As a result of this survey, faculty and staff in The Ames Library who collect content into DC@IWU will work at engaging with those who guide Honors and JWP work in a more deliberate, disciplinary-focused fashion. We will examine ways to expand our educational efforts regarding the

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[3] IWU AAUP Chapter, Illinois Wesleyan University, "Discussion Points: From the IWU AAUP Chapter to the Joint Meeting of Board of Trustees Representatives and CUPP" (2014). *Chapter Activities*. 22. Accessed 6 August 2021. https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/iwuaaup_act/22.

[4] See https://www.iwu.edu/research-conference/ or https://www.iwu.edu/research-conference/registration.html. Accessed 6 August 2021.

[5] See https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/music_outstanding_works. Accessed 12 July 2021.

[6] See https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/all_honors/. Accessed 6 August 2021.

role of the permissions form that each contributor to DC@IWU receives. The form is a [non-exclusive licensing agreement](#) (NELA) that was approved by campus legal counsel for use with DC@IWU submissions. A NELA informs contributors about the options available for archiving their works, educates them about their intellectual property rights, and describes their right to revoke permission for including the work in DC@IWU at any time. Since we only release the full text of works in DC@IWU after receiving explicit permission to do so, we are in compliance with FERPA.

This survey also reveals that we need to educate faculty about the different levels of access restrictions available with DC@IWU. The NELAs give contributors options for their submissions from fully open to search engines, anytime and anywhere; and for restrictions that have an automated expiration date for release (aka, an embargo period). In the case of the latter, the title, author name and abstract is still accessible as part of the historical record of IWU activities.

At different points in the survey faculty questioned whether it was even possible to state that all works in their discipline could be considered to have a promotional value. They also expressed a desire for establishing criteria or standards to guide decisions about what should be promoted. These distinctions are not currently used in communicating research activities to external audiences. With guidance from URAC and further discussions with our departmental colleagues, library personnel will engage Admissions and University Communications on ways distinctions might be made about these works for external audiences.

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction, almost half of our students come to IWU because they want to do research and IWU actively promotes this opportunity. There are now six types of research opportunities being promoted to current and prospective students.[7] It could be that the declining activity in the Honors program and JWP shown above is due to a widening of opportunities for student-faculty collaboration. However, the links provided under the additional headings on the website often circle back to either Honors or JWP to show examples of what students accomplish. Other links point to press releases announcing that a work is underway. As an institution, we should examine the drop in activities that have active collecting practices to determine how they are being impacted by declining levels of faculty and staff to guide the work. This is another indication that we should modify our promotional messages for student research, and thus student expectations, in consideration of the changes in programs available and people to support this work.

I would be happy to hear from anyone who has additional questions about this survey or any aspect of the work involved in this specific topic. Conversations about archives activities more generally are also welcome.

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[7] These are University & Grant Funded Opportunities, Conferences, Journals, Research Honors, Independent Research and the Action Research Center. See https://www.iwu.edu/research/. Accessed 6 August 2021.