

The Humanities in Our Lives

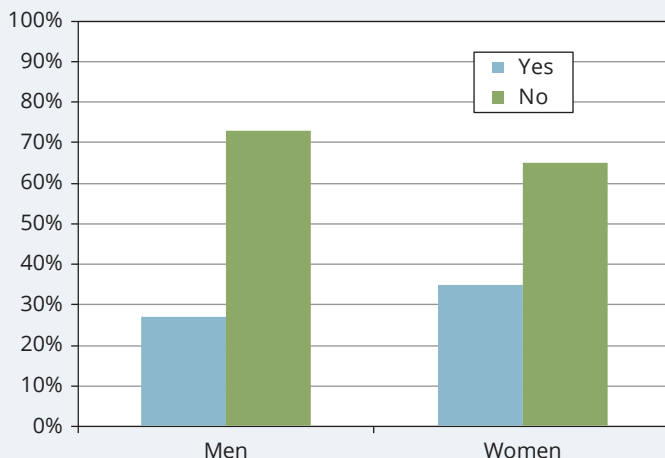
ART HISTORY

Surveys in the 1970s and 1980s found that art history courses were among the 30 most popular courses offered at colleges and universities, but they suffered a substantial decline in the 1990s. Today, art history is increasingly looking to use digital technology to enhance teaching and research, with many innovations coming from outside academia.

KEY FACTS

- A little over 20% of U.S. adults have learned about or taken a course in art appreciation or art history.
- In 2016, 4,333 students received bachelor's degrees in art history, theory, and criticism.

Share of 18–24-Year-Olds Reporting They Took Art History or Music Appreciation Lessons



THE VALUE OF ART HISTORY

Art history is increasingly being used in the field of medicine. Studies show that medical school classes that include an art history component help doctors improve diagnostic skills, and art history training helps doctors contextualize problems with patients to provide better care. While art therapy has been used to improve patient well-being, the use of art history can also improve patient outcomes.

INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

Both art historians and the general public have benefited from a recent explosion of websites sharing digital art collections. Google's **Cultural Institute Art Project** includes over 45,000 digitized artworks from around the world, many in super-high-resolution "gigapixel" format that allows users to zoom in on details beyond the scope of the naked eye. Even more impressive, **Artstor** was launched in 2004 with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and contains over 2.5 million images that are "rights cleared" for scholarship or teaching.

Researchers from New York University's Center for Data Science realized that users of digital artwork had no integrated tools or software. So they created the **ART Image Exploration Space (ARIES)**, which enhances the ability of art historians to conduct research by allowing them to efficiently compare and contrast digital artworks. It has unique features such as a "pixel heat map" that can help track the progression of a piece of artwork over time and even identify forgeries. Finally, the tool has been set up to allow for collaboration; art historians can use ARIES to share their work and solicit feedback from others.

The Humanities in Our Lives series (#HumInOurLives) highlights the many and diverse forms of humanities activities in the nation, and key facts about the health of the field.

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For more on the broad trends that mark American engagement with various forms of the humanities, visit humanitiesindicators.org or email humanitiesindicators@amacad.org.

 **HUMANITIES INDICATORS**
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