Inspiration practice -
A mixed method investigation of reference practices in art

Master’s theses

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Writing has a peculiar place within higher art education. Students in all three cycles are required to produce written thesis work alongside their artistic work in order to receive a diploma. However, there is no established style or methodological approach to the written thesis work and the information practices of art students are not well researched.

This thesis attempts to discover and explain the information practices of art students by studying master's theses from two Swedish universities using a mixed method. A quantitative study provides data on the types and subject of the references of interest to art students. While a qualitative study of a smaller number of theses is conducted in order to better understand the reference practices in the context of the art field. Results are analysed using a theoretical framework composed of Richard Whitley's theories on the social and intellectual organization of the scientific fields and Björn Hammarfelt's writing on reference practices within the humanities.

Findings confirm the previously documented importance of non-art material and print books, but also highlight the importance of various digital sources to students. It was also discovered that art students are unlikely to strictly follow established references styles in their theses. Instead, reference practices are highly individualized and related to variables such as degree of specialization within the individual program and the stylistic construction theses.

Art students, information practice, information behavior, citation practices
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1. Introduction

Since the mid 1900s higher art education has become increasingly integrated into a university and research context, there is now a growing number of practice-based doctoral programs in art being offered. Lately higher art education in Europe has gone through changes as a consequence of the Bologna process, which mandates that higher art education is divided into three qualitatively different cycles and that a written part is produced alongside the artistic work in order to receive a diploma at the end of each cycle. Altogether, the academisation of higher art education has led to writing becoming an increasingly important part of the curriculum. Writing however still has a peculiar place within higher art education. It is mandated by the educational system, still it is often seen as secondary to the artistic practice and output. The young age and nature of the field means that there is still no established methodology or style of writing (Borg, 2010, p. 5).

Overall, the information practices of art students are less studied than those of students in other fields. There is limited knowledge regarding the type and subject of the material which is sought out by art students during thesis writing as well as preferred methods of access. Many of the previous studies have been concerned with the information practices of art students related to academic art libraries, which might not fulfil the students’ information needs in terms of content (Hemmig, 2008). Altogether, this becomes a problem as information literacy education and information services need to be designed based on the needs of their users in order to provide optimal support.

Previous studies have indicated that art students have lacking skills when it comes to constructing proper references and information literacy education has been suggested as a solution to this problem. However, this suggestion was based on experiences of how reference practices complicated the data collection process during a qualitative bibliometric study of source material used by art students (Greer, 2016). As such, there was no consideration of how the nature of the art field influences reference practices and the question still remains, why do art students reference the way they do?

The goal of this thesis is to discover the reference practices of art students during thesis writing and to understand them in the context of the field. This is done through a mixed methods study, where the type and subject of references are examined by a quantitative method and a qualitative method is used to answer questions concerning the construction of references. Results are analysed through a reading of previous literature on referencing within the humanities and Richard Whitley’s theories on the intellectual and social organization of the scientific fields. Whitley’s theories especially contribute to the understanding of the nature of the art field and how its intellectual organization affects information practice, referencing, attitudes, and the language used to communicate results within the field of art (Whitley, 1984).

My personal interest in the topic stems from my personal experiences of writing a bachelor’s thesis in fine art photography at the University of Gothenburg. This experience in combination with my later studies at the
Swedish School of Library and Information Science, have led to an interest in
the information and reference practices of art students during thesis writing.

1.2 Research problem and questions

While the information practices of art students have been studied, they have
not been studied as frequently as those of students in other fields (Hemmig,
2008). Previous studies into the information practices of artists and art students
have also largely focused on the role of academic the art library (2008). Art
libraries have historically been constructed around the needs of art history
scholars and art librarianship rather than the needs of art students. Studies
indicate that artists and art students use a broad range of materials, which
might not be found in a typical art library focused on art history (Hemmig,
2008). Information practices of artists outside the art library, might thus differ
when it comes to which material is accessed by the students as a consequence
of the actual contents of academic art libraries. While researchers have stressed
the need for interviews or survey studies in order to understand the information
practices of artists (Greer, 2016), an alternative way to gather information on
the source material used by art students, regardless of the way it was accessed,
is through bibliometric studies on theses which students produce. Bibliometric
methods have the potential to reveal unconscious decisions that are hard to get
at using for example interviews or surveys (Chubin & Moitra, 1979). Two
recent studies have been conducted using this method, one on references in
theses written by undergraduate students in an American context (Greer, 2016)
and one on references in master’s theses written by Turkish students (Uçak,
2011).

These studies together with previous literature on the information practices
provide valuable information on the information practices of art students, and
reveal knowledge gaps in previous research. The Turkish study draws
conclusion regarding the type of material used by art students by analysing
material from a wide time period, in which access to digital resources differed
(Uçak, 2011), information on the use of digital sources by art students is
lacking and warrants further investigation (Hemmig, 2008). In the American
study, it is suggested that art students lack the proper skills to reference
according to established reference styles. This statement made on the basis that
the reference practices found in the theses complicated the quantitative data
collection process, as students had difficulties distinguishing between different
types of sources and references sometimes contained incorrect dates, titles, and
names (Greer, 2016). However, art is a humanities field (Hammarfelt, 2012, p.
21) where citing and references have ambiguous roles. Reference practices
typical for fields within the hard sciences are uncommon in humanities
publications (p. 71). Heterogenous reference practices could thus have other
explanations than a lack of skills, as they are influenced by context and stylistic
considerations to a larger degree within humanities fields (p. 78).

This study aims to examine some aspects of the information practices of art
students during thesis writing. Research questions for the study are based on
these knowledge gaps in previous research and the questions they leave
unanswered about the type and subject of material referenced by art students
and the relation between reference practices and the nature of the art field. This will be done by examining the following research questions.

**Research question 1:** What types of sources and subjects are referenced by art students in their theses?

**Research question 2:** How are the reference practices of art students related to the social and intellectual organization of the art field?

Regarding research question number one, the type and subject of the referenced material, will be examined through a quantitative study where references are extracted from theses in order to provide an overview of the material of interest to art students. Research question number two will be examined through the qualitative method of reference studies. Discovered practices will be analysed and discussed using reference personas representing different approaches to referencing. The study uses a theoretical framework based on Richard Whitley’s (1984) theories on the intellectual and social organization of the sciences and Hammarfelt’s writing on a modified bibliometrics for the humanities (2012).
2. Literature Review

Information behavior and information practice are two umbrella terms which are used to describe any human action in relation to information, whether it is actively searching for information, or passively taking information in. In this thesis, the term information practice will be used, as it is generally connected to a sociological, contextual and group-oriented line of research (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 190). Information practices includes the full spectrum of cognitive actions which can be exhibited in relation to information such as needs, opinions, or motives. Information practices are not constant, they differ between groups and over time. For example, information practices differ during two distinctly different activities carried out by the same person, such as watching a movie, or writing an academic paper. In turn, the information practices exhibited during the writing of an academic paper differs at the various stages of the process, as new information is garnered and the nature of the task changes. At a grander scale, information practice changes over time as new technologies for information retrieval or even new types of information, emerges (p. 188).

Information practice is also a subdiscipline of library and information science, where the human relationship to information is studied. Often, the information practices of particular groups or within particular contexts are studied. This novel knowledge can then be used to create information services adapted for the target audience. Studies into the information practices of groups can also be used to spot knowledge deficits within groups and help create information literacy education or programs for specific groups. In addition to this, information practices differ between scientific fields as a consequence of their intellectual and social organization (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 187).

2.1 The information practices of art students

When it comes to the type and subject of material used by art students during the thesis writing literature is sparse, however some things are known about the information practices of artists in general. A recent literature review of writing on the information practices of artists found that the importance of printed books has been consequently reported during the several decades (Hemmig, 2008). A 2011 study in which theses written by Turkish graduate students in art were analysed found that the students referenced primarily printed books and reported a low use of digital sources (Uçak, 2011). However, the analysed material in the study was written between the years of 1983 and 2007. After this time period significant change has taken place in the information landscape as digital sources have become more frequent and accessible. Possibly leading to changes in information practices. The study also draws conclusions about the types of sources used by art students based on material from periods in time where the accessibility of digital resources differed immensely. These findings, indicating frequent references to print books, can possibly be attributed to a large amount of the theses being written before digital sources became as accessible as they are today, as opposed to an inherent preference for print books within the group.
A more recent study on references in theses written by American undergraduate students between 2011 and 2014, confirmed the importance of the print book as a type of source to art students, but also reported that digital material of various kinds made up a large portion of the references. However, students frequently referenced print books and scientific journals in a manner that when examined closely suggested they were in fact accessed electronically (Greer, 2016). Available research is thus inconclusive when it comes to the degree to which art students used digital or print sources during thesis writing, and use of digital sources might be higher than what previous studies indicate.

2.2 Subject of material used by art students

Literature on the subjects of interest to art students is more conclusive, as use of heterogenic source material has been reported in several studies since the 1970s. Overall, an interest in a large variety of topics has been well documented as several studies indicate that art students make use of sources relating to a broad range of topics outside of the art field spanning virtually every subject imaginable (Hemmig, 2008). A 2016 study showed that for print books, the most commonly referenced subject is fine art. Perhaps unexpectedly, as art is main subject of art education and thus it is shared interest between students. However, this category did not make up the majority of book references, as only 26% belonged to the fine art category. This means that references were largely made up of literature on other non-art topics. These non-art references were spread over a variety of subjects, however some subjects seem to be of special interest to art students. Outside of fine art, the most referenced subjects were found to be fiction literature and poetry, books on philosophy, psychology, religion, and social sciences. Aside from print books students also referenced other non-art material such as peer reviewed journals on non-art topics and websites (Greer, 2016).

2.3 The reference practices of art students

Literature on the reference practices of art students is sparse. A recent study into the types of material referenced in theses written by American undergraduate art students reported that it was difficult to extract data on referenced material because of the heterogenous and often incorrect reference practices found in the analysed material. Overall, the students had difficulties distinguishing between different types of material and rarely used an established reference style such as APA, Chicago, or Harvard. Students failed to construct references correctly in relation to the type of the referenced material and dates, names, and titles were sometimes incorrect. Information literacy education focused on providing students with the skills to identify different types of sources and construct proper references was suggested as a solution to this problem (Greer, 2016).
2.4 Referencing within the humanities

As previous research and literature on the reference practices of art students is sparse, one way to understand the reference practices of the art field is to look at the function and practices of referencing within the humanities at large and how they differ from the hard sciences. As the borders between the humanities and the hard sciences is not a well-established and clearly drawn line, an explanation of what is meant by the term humanities is warranted. *Humanities* here is used in the same manner as in Hammarfelt’s dissertation, as a way to describe a group of fields which are different from the “hard” fields, such as natural or social sciences, when it comes to organization and research practices. Humanities denotes fields such as literature studies, music, philosophy, and art (2010, p. 21-22).

Overall, the role of the author or researcher in the hard sciences and the humanities is different. In the hard sciences the image is of the author is that of an objective reporter of facts. Within the humanities the act of writing is a creative and performative act of authorship (2010, p. 74). This has consequences for the way that references are used in the two groups of fields. Within the hard sciences references function as a means to integrate new findings within the already existing body of knowledge, placing new findings in the context of known facts. Accepted knowledge is built upon and recognition is given to the predecessors whose work is referenced. References in the hard sciences are fact-making, used in order to demonstrate that the new work which has been done is scientifically valid by backing it up with previously accepted facts (Hyland, 1999). In humanities fields references play a more ambiguous role, functioning to a larger degree as rhetorical devices, than to back up statements or to indicate scientific validity. Using references to give recognition and acknowledgement to previous scholars is unusual within the humanities and older works are generally not referenced for facts or methods, and instead they are put into new contexts, interpreted differently, or used to provide a context for the interpretation of artistic output (Hyland, 1999). While scholars in the hard sciences rely on the scientific validity of references in order to validate their findings, humanities scholars tend to make little or no difference between fiction and scholarly material (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 70).

These differing purposes of references within the hard sciences and the humanities also affect the way which references are constructed. References in the hard sciences are commonly non-integral, meaning that the name of the author is not mentioned in the text. References within the humanities most often integral, meaning that the name of the author being referenced is included somehow within the body of the text. Direct quotations are also seldom used within the hard sciences but are commonly seen within humanities fields. Hedging statements, such as *says*, *claims*, or *writes* are more common when referencing in the humanities. Another reference practice typical of the humanities is the use of footnotes to provide the reader with additional information which is not absolutely necessary for the understanding of the text (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 77). Together these habits lend references within the humanities a more personal and subjective feel, while rendering them less convincing than those of the natural sciences (Hyland, 1999). Referencing within the humanities thus sets itself apart from the hard sciences in three main
ways. Authors within the humanities are given greater freedom when evaluating the source material. In humanities fields, references are more strongly connected to the original author. Finally, within the humanities, references are to a larger degree used as a part of the construction of the individual writer’s identity as an author (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 70).

While references function to a lesser degree as fact-making within the humanities, scholars here are more heavily dependent it, since they lack most of the fact-making devices that scholars in the hard sciences have. Some have suggested that this is the reason that scholarly writing within the humanities have a comparatively large number of references (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 74). Another explanation which has been given for the high number of references within the humanities is the importance of bisociation within humanities research. Bisociation is the act of connecting two seemingly unrelated topics or phenomena – the connection between them resulting in originality. As topics within the humanities have frequently been studied before, scholars often introduce new concepts from other fields in order to provide new context or perspective, leading to a higher number of references (p. 75).

2.5 Citation analysis and reference studies within the humanities

Scholars generally differentiate between a citation and a reference - a citation is received, an academic article can receive a citation from subsequent article. A reference is something which is given – an academic article gives a reference to a previously written article. The study of references within bibliometrics is also divided into two areas, citation analysis and reference analysis. Citation analysis is primarily quantitative and uses citation indexes and databases to study co-citation and conduct social network analysis. In application, citation analysis is used to improve the understanding of document collections and academic disciplines, and to inform the development of collections and services (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 176). Reference studies instead focus on how references are constructed and the reasons for giving references. Within reference studies, references are seen as rhetorical devices and textual functions, as opposed to parts of a system of knowledge creation, attribution, and validation (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 65). In Hammarfelt’s dissertation, citation is used when discussing citation on a conceptual level. Reference is used when textual and rhetorical aspects are in focus. The two terms are used in the same manner in this thesis (2012, p. 65).

Referencing and citation are important parts of all scientific fields and by studying their patterns it is possible to obtain knowledge on the structures and trends of fields (Bawden & Robinson, 2012, p. 177). There is a consensus between scholars that references and citations are an important area of study and the amount of, quantitative studies on citations is growing steadily, partly because of increased access to citation databases and indexes. However, there are a number of factors that make citation analysis difficult for the humanities fields and traditional citation analysis insufficient, which have led to there being a lack of such studies which focus on writing within the humanities.
These differences stem from the nature of the fields themselves, and the writing and publication traditions within them as a consequence. Citation analysis within the humanities is complicated largely by the way results are published. While research in the hard sciences is generally written in English and published in peer-reviewed journals, which enables quantitative studies of citation habits and patterns through online databases and citation indexes. Humanities scholars often publish in the scholar’s mother-tongue, in anthologies or monographs, on which citation information is not readily available in databases (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 65)

2.6 The social and intellectual organization scientific fields

Whitley’s theories provide the theoretical framework which the results of this study will be analysed and discussed through. In the book The Intellectual and Social Organization of the Sciences, Whitley presents a framework for understanding the differences and similarities of scientific fields through a number of contextual factors (1984). In this thesis, Whitley’s theories mainly contribute to the understanding of the relation between the organization of a scientific field, the language used to communicate results, reference practices, and attitudes towards changes within the field. Previously, Hammarfelt has used Whitley’s theories to explain the differences in reference practices within the humanities and the hard sciences, and how these are a consequence of specific differences in the organization of the fields (2012, p. 47).

Whitley’s theory has its basis in that, within any scientific field, there is a tension between creating novel knowledge and gaining acceptance and reputation among peers by convincing their community that the new knowledge fits in with previous accepted truths. The strength which is exerted by these two forces differ between fields, hence the tension between production and validation of novel knowledge can be used to create two axes along which scientific fields are positioned. Mutual dependence, which measures the degree to which the researcher is dependent on other researchers within the same field (Whitley, 1984, pp. 87-95). Task uncertainty, which describes the degree of uncertainty a researcher faces when producing and evaluating novel knowledge. Whitley divides both of these axes into two and further elaborates upon them. Mutual dependency consists of functional and strategic dependency. Where functional dependency indicates how dependent a researcher is on the results and methods of their peers. Strategic dependency on the other hand describes how important it is for a researcher to argue for the importance and validity of the research to the field they act within. Task uncertainty is divided into strategic and technical uncertainty. Technical uncertainty describes how common conflicts are about the interpretation of results and choice and success of methods are within the field. Strategic uncertainty describes how much of a consensus there is regarding the priorities and goals of research within the field (pp. 131-173). There are sixteen possible combinations with the four different criteria. However, only seven are likely to develop and to be stable over time and one of these seven is of special interest when it comes to understanding reference practices within the art field – fragmented adhocracies (p. 168).
Fragmented adhocracies are fields with high strategic task uncertainty and low strategic dependence. Denoting a field with scattered focus and priorities, and a low degree of specialist control. Within these fields, individual scholars have a high amount of freedom. Scholars are likely to use of a wide variety of methods and exhibit a high degree of individual specialization (Whitley, 1984, pp. 168-176). Task uncertainty is also connected to mutual dependence, as a degree of high task uncertainty means that results and methods are difficult to co-ordinate, evaluate, and compare across multiple locations (p. 87). Fragmented adhocracies thus lack a centralized formulation and ranking of problems and methods. Instead these practices are influenced by a large variety of factors such as goals from employers, cultural trends and preferences. In addition to the individualized and de-centralized nature of fragmented adhocracies, their audiences are made up of combination of scholars and laypeople. Something which prohibits the emergence of advanced and standardized symbol systems for communication, the language used to present results lies closer to everyday language compared to fields where strategic dependence is higher and task uncertainty lower (Whitley, 1984, p. 135).

2.7 The academisation of art

Historically, fine art has gone through a shift from being mainly a craft learned through apprenticeship outside of universities to becoming an academic discipline. Throughout the 1900s, art became increasingly theory-driven with the rise of conceptual, idea-based art. A shift which accelerated in the latter half of the 1900s as English art and design colleges became integrated into universities. Shortly thereafter, in the 1970s, doctoral programmes in art began being offered and the number of PhD programmes in art has increased over the decades since (Borg, 2010, p. 4). Lately, policies in higher art education in Europe have gone through changes as a consequence of the Bologna process. Starting in 1999, the Bologna process is a centralized initiative which guides collective efforts in the 48 participating European countries towards the goal of increased compatibility between their respective educational systems. The rationale behind the initiative being that wide differences between countries’ educational systems made it difficult to use qualifications from one country to apply for further education or employment in other countries. In order to increase compatibility between educational systems, the Bologna process has made the three-cycle structure the general model of higher education in Europe. Higher art education has thus become divided into three qualitatively different parts, the bachelor, master, and doctoral cycles. With the introduction of the three-cycle system comes an increased importance of formal writing within higher art education, as students are required produce a written thesis work, alongside the presentation of their artistic work in order to receive a diploma at the end of each cycle (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 116).
2.8 The art field as a fragmented adhocracy

While Whitley places most fields belonging to the humanities within the category fragmented adhocracies, the art field is not specifically mentioned or categorized (Whitley, 1984, pp. 168-176). This is likely because of the fairly recent entry of practice-based art into the academy, and because its’ status as a research field differs from that of other fields (Borg, 2010). However, art and artistic research, can without doubt be placed within the group of fields given the label fragmented adhocracies.

The Swedish Research Council’s committee on artistic research’s description of the discipline, gives an indication of why the art field should be categorized as a fragmented adhocracy. Artistic research is described as a practice-based research field encompassing all art forms, where results are presented in both artistic works and text based meta reflections. Artistic research is said to give knowledge about and develop complex creative processes, to examine and developing methods, theoretical concepts and materialities. Finally, artistic research is said to further the understanding of challenges and possibilities specific for the art field and how art, often in collaboration with other disciplines, contributes to a greater understanding about the grand societal questions (Swedish Research Council, 2019)

This description indicates that task uncertainty is high within the field of artistic research, as the ranges of relevant problems and methods are large and broad and there is no consensus on which methods are the most appropriate when approaching problems. Artistic research is published as artistic works and text based meta reflections upon the work, however any connections between practical methods and theoretical outcome is weak compared to other fields, taking on the form of meta-reflections. Altogether this is a field which gives individual practitioners much freedom when formulating a research strategy, it is also characterized by interdisciplinarity, all of which are characteristics of fragmented adhocracies (Whitley, 1984, pp. 168-176).

2.9 The academisation of art and the intellectual organisation of the art field

Seen through the lenses of Whitley’s theories on the intellectual and social organization of the scientific fields, the academisation of art can be seen as an increase in mutual dependence for the art field. Increasing mutual dependence is associated with a number of changes in the inner organization of a field. Local or individual deviation from established methods become less tolerated as extra-local control over problem formulation and research methods increases. Language used to communicate research stray further away from the personal and become more abstract and specialized (1984, pp. 98-99). An increase in mutual dependence also brings with it a growing specificity of task outcome, as work procedures and training become more standardized. Increasing mutual dependence heightens the pressure for individual scholars to argue for the importance of their contributions to the field as a whole. Whitley writes:
“For high reputation to be awarded in these circumstances, scientists have to persuade colleagues of the overall significance of their work for collective goals and so be able to trace its connection with other problems and approaches.” (1984, p. 101)

Attempts to increase the mutual dependence in a fragmented adhocracy, such as the art field, is bound to be met with resistance and criticism as high value is put on the autonomy and independence that the nature of the field allows them (1984, p. 172). Individual art academies experience a loss of independence when required to adapt to a centralized model of education. Art students are increasingly expected to contextualize and justify their artistic work in writing in order receive diplomas and reputation.

2.10 Referencing within humanities and the intellectual organization of the art field

Taking into account Whitley’s theories on the social and intellectual organization of the sciences, the reference practices within the humanities are linked to the humanities fields having lower degrees of mutual dependence and higher task uncertainty. Scientific journals are a part of the structure for validation of novel knowledge as well as a big part of constructing and conversing priorities and accepted methods within a field. References are also a part of the same system for validating novel knowledge. Within the humanities, the degree of mutual dependence is lower, task uncertainty is higher, and these systems are not in place to the same degree.

Whitley’s theories also provide an explanation for why art students use material from a wide range of subjects as the fragmented adhocracies are characterized by intellectual fragmentation and a high degree of individual specialization. In fragmented adhocracies, the topics of examination lie close to the everyday, problem areas and questions within the humanities are not as easily answered by following a single path, as such sources from a wide variety of fields are bound to be used (Hyland, 2011). Where scholars in other humanities fields such as sociology, pedagogy, or literature studies are limited to topics by the bounds of their field there is practically no limit to the type or subject of material which can be useful for art students. At the same time, there is a low demand to argue for the choice of references, methods, or the scientific validity of the novel knowledge which has been produced. Additionally, the dual nature of the audiences of fragmented adhocracies is suggested as a reason for the high use of footnotes to provide additional information, as footnotes allow for clarification or introduction of facts of interest to the scholarly audience, while keeping the body of the text approachable for the non-academic audience (Hammarmfelt, 2012, p. 78). Information practices which are related to high task uncertainty and low mutual dependency may thus exhibited to a higher degree by art students compared to other fields within the humanities.
3. Method

In this study, a quantitative citation analysis study provided an overview of types and subjects of the referenced sources. While a qualitative reference analysis study, together with a theoretical framework, provided information on the more subtle aspects of reference practices. This section contains a detailed account of the quantitative and qualitative methods individually, as well as an argument for the use of mixed methods.

As the nature of the art field allows great individual freedom when it comes to choosing topic and method work, many of the analysed texts do not resemble academic thesis. Instead, they are more akin to essays, diaries, or works of fiction. However, for simplicity reasons, the analysed material will be referred to simply as thesis singular or theses plural going forward.

3.1 Mixed methods

Art is a humanities field (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 21) and the purpose and practices of referencing within it differs from those of the hard sciences and special consideration should be paid to the effects that stylistic, epistemological and local organizational differences have on reference practices, as this freedom often leads to reference practices which are unsuitable for strictly quantitative analysis (p. 78). Because of the ambiguous nature of referencing within the humanities, qualitative methods are necessary when studying information practices using bibliometric methods within the humanities (p. 76). In a mixed method study, a qualitative approach can illustrate and improve the understanding of the quantitative results (Bryman, 2016, p. 641). When examining references within humanities, a qualitative analysis of reference practices is especially important as reference practices differ from those within fields typically analysed by quantitative bibliometric methods (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 78).

Bibliometrics is used to study actions and artifacts of communication, however, a qualitative analysis combined with theoretical tools is necessary in order to contextualize and achieve an accurate account of the structures of the field. (2012, p. 10). Where the quantitative study provides data necessary to answer the question of which type and subject material is referenced by the students in their theses. The role of the qualitative study is to illustrate the results and improve the understanding of the quantitative study in order to answer research question number two - how the reference practices art students are related to the social and intellectual organization of the art field. Additionally, the qualitative study provided valuable information necessary to select theses for the qualitative study.

3.2 Quantitative Method

The purpose of the quantitative study is to answer research question number one, about the types of material and subjects referenced by art students. In order to provide an overview of the material of interest to art students, Master’s theses from two Swedish art universities were analyzed. The material was retrieved from two public databases of student theses. Sampling was random,
all available theses were numbered and selected using a random number generator. Since there is no citation database or index for the material, the theses were manually treated to extract references. In total, 70 theses were analysed, 35 from each university. A total of 64 bibliographies were extracted as six theses did not have any extractable references. The process of extracting references during data collection was greatly influenced by the fact that reference practices varied between theses. In several cases references in theses were hard to pin down to a specific source due to a lack of information in the references, or erroneous information. Some reference practices entail decisions in categorizing and data recording, which are not readily answered using more traditional bibliometric methods. Methods which presuppose the use of more standard practices than those found in this body of material. Reference practices will be analysed and discussed in detail in the presentation and discussion sections of the thesis.

Initially, theses were analysed in a pre-study, using a bottom-up approach inspired by grounded theory, where the properties of the data guided the data collection and coding (Bryman, 2016, p. 575). Categories for types of sources identified by Greer’s 2016 study were used as a starting-off point. As a result of the discoveries made during the pre-study and the initial coding carried out, three of Greer’s categories; artist site, gallery site, museum site, were combined, into one category titled website (art). Maintaining the original intention of the categories as holders for art related material found on websites, while simplifying the categorization of art related websites that do not fall into any of Greer’s categories, for instance personal art blogs, or news websites dedicated to art. The category Newspaper (print or online) was also changed to News article (print or online) in order to include news articles found on websites such as the BBC news page, or other news websites without print editions. The remainder of Greer’s 13 categories were kept as-is.

The following categories for types of source were used during data collection:

Book, e-book, Peer reviewed journal (non-art), Magazine (non-art), News article (print or online), Art periodical, Website (non-art), Website (art), Video, Image, Other.

This data was entered into a Google sheet, a separate Google sheet was used to record bibliographic information on referenced monographs and their respective Library of Congress broad subject classification (Library of Congress, n.d.). The Bibliographic data was entered into the Google sheet through a Google form.

The study uses the same method as Greer’s to assign a subject to monographs, Library of Congress broad subject headings from OCLC WorldCat (WorldCat, n.d.) were assigned to each monograph. Where a subject heading was not obtainable from OCLC WorldCat, the Dewey Decimal classification was used to assign a suitable Library of Congress subject heading. After this, IBMs SPSS software was used for statistical analyses and creation of tables and diagrams.

Employing largely the same methods as in Greer’s 2016 study enables comparison between the two studies. However, there are some differences
between this study and Greer’s. Greer only assigned print books subject headings, while this study also assigned e-books subject headings. Any directly referenced URLs were also recorded in a field named URL. This allows the identification of digital sources which are not immediately identifiable as such, for instance the videos, images, and news articles. Greer’s study focused on the use of unique monographs, while this thesis focuses on individual use of monographs, this entails some differences in how data was collected and displayed. In Greer’s study, unique monographs only appear once in the data, here a monograph can appear multiple times if it is referenced by more than one thesis. Additionally, Thesis IDs were used in order to keep the connection between the reference and the thesis was extracted from. This was done in order to avoid the issue of data losing the connection to the context where it was gathered and to allow for changes in coding later on (Bryman, 2016, p. 583).

During the data collection, references that did not belong in any of the eleven categories were coded in the other category together with a comment describing the type of source. These types of sources include but are not limited to: song lyrics, video games, lectures. References were difficult or impossible to pin down to a certain single source were also placed in the Other category together with a comment explaining the nature of the references. The two Google sheets documents thus contain the following fields for data entry:

**For reference types**
*School, ThesisID, ThesisYear, ReferenceType, Comment, URL*

**For monograph data**
*School, ThesisID, ThesisYear, MonographAuthor, MonographTitle, MonographYear, LCSH*

3.3 Qualitative method

Performing a qualitative analysis of the entire body of 70 theses is not feasible due to time considerations as it requires actual reading of the texts. Additionally, it not necessary to analyze the entire body of the material to identify the reference practices present. For the qualitative study, a sub-set of the theses was purposefully selected as random sampling might not give a conclusive view of the reference practices present within the material. Theses were selected based on their dissimilarities in order illustrate the diversity of reference practices present. Hence, sampling was purposeful and based in a bottoms-up, grounded theory approach, labels were kept open during analysis and sampling continued until the sample was saturated, when no new distinct reference practices could be found (Bryman, 2016, p.575). As stylistic choices must be taken into consideration when performing bibliometric analysis of texts from the humanities, some theses were also sampled as a because of their stylistic construction (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 78).

In the end, eight theses were sampled for the qualitative study. During analysis, the focus was the rhetorical construction of references, when it comes to features such as integral or non-integral references (Hyland, 1999), use of direct quotes and the purpose of the reference, i.e. is the reference fact-making, or used to illustrate or provide context (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 71). After this,
reference personas were constructed which illustrate different patterns of reference practices present in the analysed material. In addition to this, qualitative analysis provided novel findings about how art students relate to other academic formalities such as cover sheets, spelling and grammar, and the archiving and legibility of theses.

3.4 Sample

Masters theses were sampled from two Swedish schools, Konstfack and Kungliga Konsthögskolan (KKH). The theses were written between the years of 2007 and 2018. Both master programs require a bachelor degree in fine art and base admission on submitted work samples, written artist statements, and interviews. The syllabuses of both programs highlight the practical and individual nature of the respective programs and that focus lies on the student’s individual artistic output. It is also made clear that there are theoretical portions involved, such as courses on art theory and the role of art in society at large. Both master programs are media non-specific, meaning that students can choose to work in whichever media they prefer (Konstfack, 2016; The Royal Institute of Art’s, 2012). As such, the syllabuses of the two programs are largely similar and provide little explanation for any differences found in reference practices.

In total, eight theses were selected for the qualitative analysis. Each program is represented in the sample, however the distribution is somewhat uneven. Five of the eight theses were written by KKH students, two by students in the non-specialized Konstfack master program and one by a student at the master program at Konstfack specialized on art in the public realm. There are two main reasons for KKH being over-represented in the qualitative study, it was the largest group in the study, it was also the group which displayed the most variety in terms of reference practices and stylistic construction of theses. As sampling was purposeful, the sample was considered saturated when no new major practices were discovered and analysis of additional theses would not contribute to the understanding of reference practices.

3.5 Personas

A scientific or scholarly persona is a concept used to describe set of characteristics which are typical for a group of scholars or researchers. By constructing and naming personas, practices which are unusual relation to the number of individuals can be discovered and analysed. With this approach, the different reference practices and writing styles of the students can be considered as the students exhibiting different personas (Joelsson, 2017, p. 29). In the discussion section of this thesis reference personas will be used to distinguish between different reference practices and to discuss and analyse them in relation to the nature of the art field, inspired by thematic analysis (Bryman, 2016, p. 584).
3.6 Limitations and ethical considerations

All the material analysed in this thesis is published and available in public databases of student works from two Swedish universities. As the data is publicly available, students were not informed of their texts being used as a part of a study. No names or other personal data is presented in this thesis and in order to minimize the possibility to identify the authors, quotes from the material was avoided. This thesis examines the end product of a specific task mandated by the educational system in order to get a degree by bibliometric methods. Bibliometric investigations cannot make statements about the phenomenological or private processes behind a particular reference. In order examine these processes, the authors would have to be asked, either by interviews or surveys or diary studies. However, were the authors of the theses to be questioned directly variations in memory and sincerity are likely to affect the validity of the results (Chubin & Moitra, 1975). Instead, the qualitative method of reference analysis, utilizing a theoretical framework, was used to understand reference practices in the context of the art field.
4. Analysis

This section contains the results and analysis of the study, beginning with the results of the quantitative study. Following this, the results of the qualitative study are presented and analysed, the focus of the qualitative section being the analysis of the subset of theses selected for qualitative study.

4.1 Quantitative analysis

In this section, key results are presented and analysed on the number of references used, type of material referenced, distribution of monographs between Library of Congress subject headings, and frequently referenced monographs and authors. Finally, an alternative breakdown into four general categories is presented which highlights the importance of non-art material to art students.

4.1.1 Number of references

A total of 1061 references were extracted from 70 master’s theses, 35 from each of the two schools. During initial coding, theses and references were categorized into two groups, KKH and Konstfack. Theses written by Konstfack students had higher number of average references, as well as a higher range and standard deviation. The lowest number of references found in a thesis written at Konstfack is one, while six thesis in the KKH group had zero extractable references.

See table 1 for details about the average, range, and standard deviation of number of references per school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No. of Thesis</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Total no. of References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Konstfack</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>76 (1-77)</td>
<td>15.558</td>
<td>22.23</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKH</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42 (0-42)</td>
<td>8.929</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77 (0-77)</td>
<td>14.467</td>
<td>15.16</td>
<td>1061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data was later re-categorized as it was discovered that a significant number of the theses from Konstfack were written by students enrolled in a master program specialized on art in the public realm (APR), 19 of the 35 theses from Konstfack were written by students enrolled in the specialized program. A need for re-categorization is also indicated by the considerably larger standard deviation in the Konstfack group. References and theses from Konstfack were thus split into two groups, dividing between those enrolled in a fine art
program without specialization and those enrolled in the program specialized on art in the public realm. This program shares many similarities with the other programs such as the focus on the student’s individual artistic practice, the admission process and being media nonspecific. It sets itself apart from the other two by focusing on the artist’s role in the public realm, examining the artist’s role in both virtual and physical public spaces. There are courses on the structure and importance of art institutions, as well as on topics such as public opinion, ownership, and public property (Konstfack, n.d.).

After the theses from Konstfack were split into two groups it was found that the new group used a mean of 29.26 sources. Students in the master program without specialization at Konstfack used a mean of 13.88 sources. The thesis with the highest number of references also belongs to the new APR group. Table 2 shows total number of theses, range, standard deviation and mean of the three groups arranged ascending by the mean number of references.

Table 2
*Ranges and Averages of Number of References per Program*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>No. of theses</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Std. dev</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>No. of references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APR</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>72 (5-77)</td>
<td>16.993</td>
<td>29.26</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konstfack</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31 (1-32)</td>
<td>8.065</td>
<td>13.88</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KKH</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42 (0-42)</td>
<td>8.929</td>
<td>8.09</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>77 (0-77)</td>
<td>14.467</td>
<td>15.16</td>
<td>1061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the range of references, APR has a higher standard deviation compared to the other two groups and explorative analysis in SPSS to detect outliers shows that there are outliers in the APR group, as well as in the KKH group which have a significantly larger number of references while a majority of the theses in the two groups in which the outliers are found reference a notably smaller number of sources. When it comes to number of references, the division of theses from Konstfack into two groups based on program, seems fruitful as theses from the APR program sets themselves apart when it comes to number of references. Those enrolled in the specialized program use a notably higher number of references than those written by students enrolled in the two non-specialized master programs. Differences in number of references thus seems to be more related to program, rather than the school. However, a noticeable difference between the two non-specialized programs is that while KKH students and non-specialized Konstfack students reference a similar number of sources, the eight theses which had zero extractable references were all written by KKH students.
4.1.2 Type of references

Out of the 1061 individual references collected, the most common reference type is books, this category accounts for 40.9% of the total references, or 434 individual references. The rest of the references are spread out more evenly over the remaining types. Website (non-art) is the second most referenced type of sources followed by video at 10.6%. These three most frequently referenced type of sources make up 63.8% of the total sources. See Table 3 for the division of references between the different types of material.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Source Material</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website (non-art)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News article</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website (art)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art periodical</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Journal (non-art)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-book</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine (non-art)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1061</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Breaking down the data on type of sources into the three groups shows that print books are the clearly dominant type of source in all three groups and that Website (non-art) is the second most referenced type of source in all three groups, excluding the other category. When it comes to video, students in the non-specialized Konstfack program reference a lower percentage of video. Instead, the third most referenced type of material is image material. Overall, there are no major differences in the type of material referenced. Figure 1 displays the division between type of source material sources per program.
Figure 1
Referenced Type of Material Per School

4.1.3 The “other” category

For each resource in the other category, a comment was recorded to provide insight into the nature of the referenced source and to allow for the creation of new categories for coding if deemed necessary, however no new categories were deemed necessary as the type sources placed in the other category were varying in nature. In total, 93 out of 1061 references were placed in the other category, these were made up of a variety of different sources such as: PDF-files, government/agency/authority reports, video games, attended lectures, conducted interviews, personal correspondence, and architectural plans. Out of these 93 sources, 25 have an URL provided in the reference. It is difficult to further assess these resources due to the fact that many URLs linked to personal websites hosting PDF-files which are no longer available.

4.1.4 Subject of References

A total of 448 references to books, including e-books, were extracted from analysed theses. Each book and e-book reference was assigned a Library of Congress broad subject classification (Library of Congress, n.d.) using cataloguing data from OCLC WorldCat (WorldCat, n.d.). Print books is the most frequently referenced type of material at 434 references and 40.9% of the total references. The e-book category was however the second to least used category, to which only 13 references were recorded in the 75 theses analysed. Table 5 displays book references by Library of Congress classification, note that each count represents a unique reference to a book within a single thesis, thus if a book title is referenced in two or more different theses, it will occur in the table more than once.
Table 5
*Book References per Library of Congress Subject Heading*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library of Congress Subject Heading</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A - General Works</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - Philosophy, Psychology, Religion</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C - Auxiliary Sciences of History</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D - World History</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E - History of the Americas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F - History of the Americas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G - Geography, Anthropology, Recreation</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H - Social Sciences</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J - Political Sciences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K – Law</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L – Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M – Music</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N - Fine Arts</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P - Language and Literature</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q – Science</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R – Medicine</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S – Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T – Technology</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U – Military Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V – Naval Science</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z - Bibliography, Library Science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>448</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A majority of the 21 subject headings are represented in the material, with the exception of three categories, K – Law, U – Military Science and V – Naval Science. Four categories are notably more reference, N – Fine Arts is the most referenced category, at 23.9% of total references, P – Language and Literature which holds fiction literature as well as poetry, is second at 22.1%. The two remaining categories which stand out are B - Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and H – Social Sciences which both make up around 15% of the total references. In the remaining 15 categories, the most used one is Q – Science which comes in at 5%. Notable is also T - Technology at 4.8%, the prevalence of this category is explained by Greer by the fact that that T holds books on photography this is true also for this study as most referenced books in this category are on the topic of photography (2016).

When it comes to book subjects, the most prominent differences between the three groups are found in the categories of H – Fine Art, H – Social Sciences and P – Language and Literature. In the theses written by the students in the program specialized on art in the public realm, the category H – Social Sciences makes up twice the percentage of book sources compared to the other fields. Theses written by students at KKH reference a noticeably larger percentage of books from the category P – Language and Literature. The percentage of sources to N – Fine Art is nearly three times as high in theses written by students in the non-specialized Konstfack program, compared to the specialized program at Konstfack. Figure 2 displays the division of book references between Library of Congress subject heading per group.

Figure 2
*Percentage of Library of Congress Subject Headings in Book References per Group*
4.1.5 Frequently Referenced Authors and Books

While most authors and titles are only referenced a single time, some authors stand out by receiving multiple citations across several theses and four authors received more than four each. The most cited author is the French philosopher Michel Foucault whose work is referenced eight times, spread across four theses in two groups, APR and KKH. A collection of Foucault’s essays translated to Swedish titled *Diskursernas Kamp* was referenced a total of three times and is the most referenced book by Foucault and the second most referenced book in total. Another French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, received the second most citations. However, these six references were spread out across five theses and is thus referenced by one more student than Foucault. Swedish artist, author and current vice principal at Konstfack, Magnus Bärtås, was five references across five theses, thus being referenced by more individual theses. Table 6 contains the names of the authors who received more than 4 references and the number of theses in which they were referenced.

Table 6
*Frequently Referenced Authors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>No. of References</th>
<th>No. of Theses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michel Foucault</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Merleau-Ponty</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham Harman</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus Bärtås</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.6 Division of Non-Book Referenced Material into General Categories

As a way to get an overview of the subjects of references which are not books, non-book references were divided into general categories. Each reference was placed into one of four categories, three based on the topic of the material and a fourth group holding audio visual material. Table 7 displays a breakdown of non-book references into four categories, see the note in table 7 for details on the categorization process.

Table 7
Breakdown of non-book References into General Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Category</th>
<th>No. of References</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarly</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public (non-art)</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (AV-media)</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>520</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Scholarly: PR journals (non-art). Art: Art Periodicals, Website (art), News articles (art) Public (non-art): Website (non-art), Magazines (non-art), News articles (non-art). Other (AV-media): Audio, Video, Image*

This breakdown indicates that when it comes to textual sources, the most common type of material outside print books is Public (non-art). Seen as a part of the total of 783 textual references, this category makes up 24% of the total references, indicating that students make frequent use of public non-art textual material, such as news- and magazine articles, and non-art websites. The importance of non-art material for art students during thesis writing, is thus highlighted by both references to books and other sources.

4.2 Qualitative analysis

This section begins with a presentation and analysis of the theses selected for the qualitative study. It then continues with a summary of the various reference practices found in the material. Ending with a summary of qualitative findings on the way students approached other academic formalities, such as cover sheets, spelling, and grammar. Finally, a short summary on the various topics, reference practices, and stylistic constructions of theses is presented.

4.2.1 Analysis of theses

In this section, the qualitative analysis of the sub-set eight theses selected for qualitative analysis is presented. Each thesis is presented together with a brief description of the topic of the thesis, reference practices, stylistic construction, and the reasons for selection.
This thesis was selected on the basis of being the theses with the highest number of references in the KKH-group, which overall had the lowest average of references between the three groups. In the thesis a broad range of concepts and ideas are explored. The main focus of the thesis is the relation between artificial intelligence, pattern theory, human behavior, and indigenous art. In this respect, the thesis uses bisociation, the connection of seemingly unrelated phenomena. This approach could be an explanation for the high number of references as a wider range of sources are drawn upon (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 75).

The thesis is roughly 30 pages long excluding cover page and table of contents. References are mainly given using note identifiers which point to footnotes, where more information can be found on the source. Most sources are non-art related and digitally accessed, either as non-art peer reviewed journals where a URL is provided, or non-art websites. There is a mix of integral and non-integral references (Hyland, 1999). Quotes from literature are used to illustrate new sections of the thesis. Overall the references are constructed a manner which approaches established reference styles, although references the thesis does not fully comply with any established reference style.

This thesis, which belongs to the KKH group, was chosen on the basis of how the bibliography was constructed, in the thesis each reference is assigned a numeral note identifier, referring to a bibliography at the end of the thesis, where each source is represented by an image.

The thesis is roughly 26 pages long and constructed as a script in which the author speaks on their artistic process, topics such as humour, negative energy, and the importance of music and films to their artistic process. There are also statements made about the authors’ relation to the source material. Specifically, in connection to a list of ten romantic comedies, the author states that they consider fictional movies equal to non-fiction books in terms of the facts provided. This thesis does not reference any print books, which is the most common type of sources overall, instead it references mainly AV-material such as movies and song lyrics.

The reference practices in this thesis raised some issues during the quantitative data gathering process, namely if the references are to be coded as images, or as the sources which they represent. In the end, the decision was made to code the references to the sources themselves, as the images in the bibliography were neither the referenced material, or the topic of discussion in the context where the references reside.

This thesis, from the Konstfack program specialized on art in the public realm, was selected on the basis of having the highest number of references of all the theses with 77 references. According to statistical analysis, it is a clear outlier of both the group and the whole body of the analysed thesis when it comes to
number of references. The thesis is roughly 40 pages long excluding cover letter, table of contents and bibliography.

Referencing is approached from a traditionally academic standpoint, although references do not fully comply with any established reference style. References are given using note identifiers leading to footnotes which contain detailed information on the references. Footnotes are also used to provide additional information, sometimes consisting of lengthy quotes or excerpts from interviews, something which is common in the humanities (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 77). A bibliographic section is found in the beginning thesis, after a cover sheet, table of contents and a short introduction to the thesis. Print books is the most commonly references type of source and H – Social Sciences is the most referenced subject heading of book references. However, a majority of the references are to digital sources, as 54.5% of sources have a URL.

What is unique for this thesis is that the bibliography is said to be an edited down version, four URLs to the authors’ personal website are given where a full version can be accessed. However, none of these websites can be accessed any longer. Additionally, the cover sheet does not contain, as one would expect, the title of the thesis and the name of the author. Instead, a variety of different meanings and interpretations of the word cover itself is laid out.

THESIS #2

In this thesis, which was written by a student in the non-specialized Konstfack program, the first half is taken up by a discussion and presentation on theoretical concepts and ideas of interest to the artist, mainly on the ideological nature of language in different contexts such as politics, propaganda, religion, art, and advertisement. The second half is dedicated to more detailed descriptions of the students’ artistic output and the process of creating individual works of art. The thesis is roughly 23 pages long excluding table of contents and bibliography.

Overall the thesis approaches referencing from a traditionally academic approach, where note identifiers point to footnotes which provide more detailed information on the source material. However, footnotes are also used to provide additional information and clarification of statements made in the body of the text, something which is common in the humanities (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 77). A bibliographic section at the end contains a list of all the material categorized by type of material such as, books, films. However, there is also a category of source material titled artists which houses a list of 29 artists without mentioning specific works of art. This practice is the reason that this thesis was selected for qualitative analysis as it is difficult to examine using the quantitative bibliometric methodology of this and Greer’s 2016 study, as there is no specific source material being referenced.

THESIS #30

This thesis was selected on the basis of not having any extractable references at all. The thesis was one of seven theses without extractable references in the KKH group. The thesis is 48 pages long and each page contains a sparse amount of text sometimes only one or two short sentences. It contains short
diary entries on of the authors’ artistic process and writing on the process of note taking and writing itself and the experience writing in different formats such as on computers and on paper. Notably, the student at one point uses an asterisk, pointing to a footnote, to clarify the meaning of the word Magma. Overall, considering the poetic style of the thesis and its’ basis in personal experience, there is little room or need for citing and referencing.

THESIS #60

This thesis, belonging to the KKH group, was selected on the basis of the stylistic construction of the text, it consists of a single page where separate paragraphs of text is spread out over the page and connected by lines. There are several connections between the paragraphs, the thesis thus encourages the reader to read it in a variety of different orders instead of a in a single linear fashion. The type of content in each paragraph differs between prosaic, poetic, diary like, and direct quotes from references. References are given within parenthesis at the end of each paragraph. The name of the thesis and its author is given displayed in a footnote underneath the network of paragraphs. The topic of thesis is the female flaneur and the threat of men’s violence against women.’

THESIS #5

This thesis, written by a student in the non-specialized Konstfack program was selected for qualitative analysis as it relies heavily on direct quotations from the writing of others. The thesis, which is roughly 50 pages long excluding cover sheet, table of contents and bibliography, begins with a presentation of poetry, song lyrics and extracts from novels, mixed with the authors’ own writing, spanning roughly 20 pages. The remainder of the thesis, which the author refers to as an appendix, consists a book of poetry written by the author.

THESIS #22

This thesis was selected on the basis of the stylistic choices made by the author. Additionally, it is one of seven theses without extractable references, from the KKH group. The thesis, which is two pages long, takes the shape of a letter to the examiners responsible for assessing the student’s thesis work. The thesis is on the topic of the authors’ prior attempt to write a number of short stories for the theses work, the reasons they were discarded and how their themes, shortcomings and failures, live on the art of the author.

What is most unique about this thesis is how spelling and grammar mistakes and their corrections are kept in the text. This is done by certain words being highlighted in red, or marked by strikethrough. Choosing to keep these unexpected elements in the text can be seen in relation to the topic of the thesis being shortcoming, failure and mistakes. As the text is based in personal experiences, there is little room or need for citing and referencing.
4.2.2 Summary of reference practices

As is suggested by previous literature and research, the topics of the analysed theses varies greatly, from more traditionally styled thesis on general topics to less formalized thesis of a more personal, or poetic nature. Reference practices also vary and a more traditionally academic approach to the styling of a thesis is usually accompanied by reference practice more resembling established reference styles. These theses do however seldom follow any established reference style, but rather resemble them. Some theses construct references in highly untraditional manners, for example the thesis which presented the bibliography as a list of images. However, these choices seem to be deliberate and related to the stylistic construction of the thesis. Theses which abstain completely from references do so as a consequence of the styling of the thesis.

4.2.3 Other academic formalities

In addition to uncovering the reference practices within the analysed material, qualitative analysis revealed that students frequently position themselves in relation to the idea of references and other academic formalities through the texts. One of the theses has a cover sheet which takes the form of a traditional cover sheet, displaying the title of the thesis together with the name of the author. Below, there are three lines of text, urging anyone who is interested in further information on the examination process and contextualization of references and methods to call a phone number during weekdays between 09:30 and 16:00.

One thesis, which takes the form of a letter to the examiner, has spelling and grammar corrections visibly preserved, as parts of the text is coloured red, or marked by strikethrough or underscores. One thesis uses an illegible wingdings font on the cover pages. One thesis has a cover page which consists of a description various meanings of the word *cover*. A last, and perhaps most extreme example is the thesis which was made available as a series of flash photographs of a computer screen. This thesis was excluded from the study as it was almost completely illegible.
5. Discussion

This section contains the discussion of results in relation to previous studies and literature. Findings are discussed in connection to each other, compared to previous studies. Possible explanations for the results found in previous literature is presented. This is followed by a presentation and a discussion of the reference persona and a discussion of their relation to the nature of the art field and previous literature.

5.1 Number of references

The recategorization of theses from two groups based on school, into three groups based on program, led to a more meaningful understanding of the results. Number of references seems to be more related to which program the students are enrolled in rather than being influenced only by the school. Students who are enrolled in the master program at Konstfack specialized on art in the public realm stand out by giving a larger number of references in their theses compared to those in the two non-specialized master programs, at KKH and Konstfack respectively, who give a lower and more similar number of references. A possible explanation for this is that students enrolled in the specialized program are expected to focus on the role of art in the public realm to some degree. This expectation does not exist at the non-specialized programs. According to Whitley’s theories on the intellectual and social organization of the sciences, the specialized program thus has a lower task uncertainty compared to the non-specialized programs. As lowered task uncertainty is related to a heightened mutual dependence, an increasing pressure to argue for the importance and relevance of the novel knowledge that has been produced and an increasingly formalized language of communicating results (Whitley, 1984, p. 95). Lowered task uncertainty, and heightened mutual dependence in combination with the limited arsenal of fact-making devices within the humanities, citing being one of them (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 74), could explain the higher number of references in theses written by students enrolled in the specialized program.

Additionally, as the qualitative study revealed that regardless of group, a larger amount of references seems to be associated with a more traditional academic approach to referencing, both in terms of the construction of the references and the fact-making nature of them. These theses also more closely resemble what would typically be referred to as a thesis in an academic context. Because of the specialized nature of the art in the public realm program, these enrolled might be more inclined to produce theses with a more traditionally academic approach. Greer’s 2016 study also discovered a considerable difference in number of average references between schools ranging from 7.4 to 24.4 references per thesis. However, there is no information or discussion regarding the differences between schools, and the average number of references (Greer, 2016).
5.2 Type of material

The quantitative study seemingly confirms the importance of the printed books across all groups which was found in previous studies (Greer, 2016; Ucak, 2011), as this category makes up 40.8% of the total references. When combining all sources where an URL was provided, digital sources make up a total of 32.4% of the sources, this indicates that digital sources are also highly important to the students. However, as reference practices vary greatly, at times being ambiguous, it is possible that a portion of the references recorded as books were in fact accessed digitally. Use of digital sources where references could reasonably be constructed as referring to printed books, such as e-books, or book chapters in PDF format, might thus be higher than what the quantitative results indicate. The reverse however is unlikely as it would require looking up a URL which was not previously used to access the source material. The problem of reference practices complicating the extraction of references has been previously documented (Greer, 2016) and the varying reference practices found within the humanities at large is one of the reasons that Hammarfelt suggests that quantitative methods are insufficient when conducting bibliometric studies on texts written within the humanities (2012, p. 168). Although reference practices make it difficult to assess with full certainty how the referenced books were accessed, and the extent to which students use digital material cannot be fully ascertained. The sheer dominance of print books over the remaining categories, means that it can be considered the single most referenced category. However, the results indicate that digital sources are highly important to the students as well.
5.3 Subject of books

Although there are some differences in method when comparing the recording of references to books in this study and Greer’s, which recorded references to unique books not unique references, the results are comparable as a vast majority of books in this study are only referenced in a single thesis. With this in mind, what is striking about the subjects of the referenced books is how similar they are to the results of Greer’s study. Both studies have the same top four frequently referenced sources, in the same order. See Table 8 for data for a comparison of percentages of the top four most frequently referenced Library of Congress subject headings in the two studies.

Table 8
Comparison most common Library of Congress Subject Headings with Greer (2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library of Congress Subject Heading</th>
<th>Greer, 2016</th>
<th>Current study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N - Fine Arts</td>
<td>26.08%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P - Language and Literature</td>
<td>18.21%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B - Philosophy, Psychology, Religion</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H - Social Sciences</td>
<td>8.88%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>68.55%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While N – Fine art is the most frequently referenced Library of Congress subject heading, this category only makes up roughly 24% of the total book references, this indicates that a majority of references are to non-art books. In both studies, the five most referenced subject headings represent closely the same percentage of the total book references. References to B - Philosophy, Psychology and Religion are expected as frequently art theory relies heavily on theoretical concepts from these fields (Greer, 2016). Overall, art students in both the context of this study and the previous study share an interest in these subjects, as references are concentrated around them and the remaining book references are spread out more evenly over the remaining subjects. When it comes to differences between schools, Greer does not provide much information which could explain the differences in subject material used by the different schools, although there are differences. One of the schools uses a considerably larger amount of material from the N – Fine Art category, another one quotes mainly from the category P – language and literature, which holds fiction literature and poetry (Greer, 2016).

One of the main differences found between the programs is that theses from the program at Konstfack specialized on art in the public realm reference a considerably higher percentage of books from the category H – Social Sciences. An explanation for this is that the program focuses on the artists role in the public realm. Concepts such as public opinion, ownership and public
property, are highlighted in the description of the program. Likely contributing to more material belonging to the social sciences category to be referenced by these students, as this is the category where such topics are explored.

Additionally, it was found that theses written by KKH students reference a higher percentage of sources from the category P – Language and Literature, which holds poetry and fiction literature. The quantitative analysis also revealed that this is the only program of the three in which theses completely lacking extractable references were present. Qualitative analysis of two of the theses without references revealed that they were personal, or poetic in nature. While it is not true for all the theses in the group, the theses written by KKH students tend to be more personal in nature, rather than treating general concepts. As an increasingly formalized language is connected to a departure from personal and subjective topics, the personal nature of the theses could be related to the low number of references in the program overall (Whitley, 1984, p. 95).

Finally, students at the non-specialized Konstfack program referenced a larger percentage of books from the category N – Fine Art. Qualitative analysis of thesis from this category revealed that theses from this group is generally concerned with the contextualizing the students own artistic output in relation to work by other artists and theories. This and the fact that there is no outspoken focus for the program, could be an explanation for the fact that book references are concentrated to a larger degree around literature on the topic of art, something which all students likely share an interest in.

5.4 Relation to source material

Previous studies indicate that scholars within the humanities make little difference between fictional and non-fiction texts (2012, p. 70), an observation which rings true in the material analysed in this thesis. Similar to previous studies (Greer, 2016; Hemmig, 2008), quantitative data indicates that students are interested in a broad variety of subjects and types, including scholarly literature from other fields, novels and poetry, as well as AV material such as music and films. As references within the humanities do not act as tools for convincing fact-making in the same manner as within the hard sciences, all source material can be treated as equals (2012, p. 71). There is a particular sentence in one of the theses analysed in the qualitative study which illustrates this tendency. Here, the student writes that they equate the knowledge gained from watching rom-coms, with reading non-fiction books. In a sense, this student has made a statement about their own information-seeking practices and, in extension, about the nature of the art field and references within it. Here, scholars have great freedom when choosing and evaluating their source material, as a consequence of the low mutual dependence within the field there is little need to argue for the relevance or validity of references. As task uncertainty is high and there is no established methodology, references can be drawn from virtually any topic for any reason. Sources on different topics and types, as different as rom-coms and peer reviewed scientific journals, are considered as equals and combined through the act of bisociation in order to achieve originality.
5.5 Reference practice persona

This section contains a presentation of the five reference practice personas which have been constructed by a qualitative analysis of the selected sub-set of theses and a discussion of the persona in relation to previous research and literature.

Traditional academic referencing

While several theses reference in a manner which resembles or approaches established reference styles, most do not fully comply with these guidelines. Some theses however approached referencing from a more traditional academic standpoint. In these theses most of the traditional components of referencing, such as bibliographies, footnotes, and in-text references are present. References are largely fact-making, in that they are used to call upon specific facts or theories. These reference practices are exhibited by the persona *traditional academic referencing*.

As this study is limited to bibliometric analysis, no statements can be made in regard to whether the intent of these students was to follow an established reference style and subsequently failed, or if the choices were intentional. In some cases where referencing resembles, but does not fully comply with established styles, there may exist an intention to do so which is not successfully carried out. In these cases, information literacy education targeted at providing the necessary skills, as suggested by Greer (2016), could provide students with the proper skillset to reference according to established reference styles if they wish to do so. What is worth noticing is that while using established reference styles is expected in most fields, it is not mandated here. Citing in accordance with an established reference style in this context means that a choice was made to do so, for stylistic reasons or otherwise.

Ad-hoc artistic referencing

At times, the choice to deviate from established reference styles appears to be intentional, in these theses, the construction of references instead take a back-seat to the overall stylistic construction of the thesis. This reference practices persona is given the name *ad-hoc artistic referencing*. Ad-hoc, derived from Latin, meaning *for this*, as references are constructed particularly for the text in question. As the study lacks direct input from students it is not possible to answer with absolute certainty the reason for these styles of referencing, especially as this persona contains a variety of practices. However, as practices are adapted to the overall stylistic construction of the theses, it seems unlikely that students have chosen this approach to referencing due to a lack of knowledge. Especially considering that previous studies indicate that stylistic choices influence reference practices within the humanities (Hammarfelt, 2012, p 78). Additionally, this persona is an example of reference practices which complicate traditional bibliometric methods, as noticed during Greer’s study (2016), and why Hammarfelt argues for a modified bibliometrics for the humanities which includes qualitative methods (2012, p. 168).
Illustratory referencing

This reference persona is distinguished by the trait that they use direct quotes from the source material to illustrate the content of the theses as opposed to call upon specific facts or theories. Neither are the quotes reflected upon or discussed. Instead, their main function is to illustrate the text or to convey a particular mood or feeling. This is often seen in conjunction with the beginning of a new section of the thesis. It is a type of referencing which is not fact-making in nature (Hyland, 1999). Instead it is related to the stylistic construction of the thesis.

Inspirational referencing

Another reference practice found in the material was given the label *inspirational referencing*. These references do not point to a specific source and no data was collected for the quantitative study as the practice was deemed to better be analysed qualitatively. These type of acknowledgements can be seen an example of how referencing within the humanities is used as part of constructing an identity as an author or artist (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 74).

Non-referencing persona

This persona represents theses in which there are no explicit references made. Qualitative analysis revealed that the theses without references are not traditionally academic theses in which facts are presented without providing references. Instead, these theses are personal or fictive in nature, more akin to diaries, letters or poetry. As such, the absence of references is a consequence of their stylistic construction.

5.6 Reference practices overall

As a fragmented adhocracy the art field places high value on the importance of the individuals writing style. This together with a less formalized and standardized symbol system for presenting and communicating results, enables the use of a high variety in reference practices in the analysed material (Whitley, 1984, p. 171). Students sometimes deploy reference styles which align, or serve, the artistic or authorial aims of their written theses work, instead of conforming to established styles. What can be known for certain is that these heterogenous reference practices did not hinder students from receiving passing grades at their respective institutions. This means that all the reference practices observed in this study were satisfactory for the context in which they were produced. Indicating that even though scholarly writing has become an increasingly important part of higher art education, most recently due to the Bologna process (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 35), requirements on academic formalities are still lax enough to allow for a wide range of reference practices which would likely be deemed incorrect, or insufficient, in other fields. Without qualitative analysis one could argue that the reason behind these approaches to referencing and formalities is a lack of knowledge of proper citing and academic formalities. Qualitative analysis reveals that seeing these practices as simply as a failure to adhere to an accepted reference style does not do the authors justice, or give a full understanding of the practices.
themselves.

5.7 Other academic formalities

It has been previously observed that references serve a variety of purposes within the humanities (Hammarfelt, 2012, p. 74). This study also found that students at times approach other academic formalities, aside from referencing, from an alternative critical or artistic standpoint. In these theses, formal elements were co-opted to act as a type of commentary on the more traditionally academic aspects of higher education, such as the requirement of writing itself, correct spelling, or the publication of the theses in public databases. Some theses preserve spelling or grammar mistakes and corrections, others were rendered theses nearly illegible by formatting or publication decisions, thus in a way resisting the archiving and publication of the theses.

These practices can be seen as a consequence of students lacking knowledge of academic formalities. However, it is difficult to argue that the choices are not deliberate when taking the overall stylistic choices into consideration. Some practices can be interpreted as critique of the increased mutual dependence that the academisation of the art field entails. Something which is typically met with resistance within fragmented adhocracies (Whitley, 1984, p. 95). Similar to the varying reference practices, these choices did not stop students from receiving passing grades and they were thus satisfactory for the context in which they texts were produced.
6. Conclusion

This section begins with a brief description of the reference practice personas and their respective key characteristics, then continues into the conclusion and suggestions for future research.

Traditional academic referencing

This persona approaches referencing in a traditional academic manner. Meaning that they use, or approach established reference styles and reference accordingly. They often use footnotes, both in order to offer detailed information on the references and in order to provide additional information or clarifications of statements in the text. They use references to call upon specific facts and construct references to be as convincing as possible.

Ad-hoc artistic referencing

This persona constructs references so that they fit into their authorial vision of the text as a whole and are not concerned with following established reference style when it comes to components such as bibliographies or in-text references. Instead, they have a creative approach to referencing and it is seen as an opportunity to express originality.

Inspirational referencing

This persona references artists and authors by name, without providing information on whether a specific work was accessed. Instead, they provide the reader with the information that the person has been inspired by the person in question and or wishes to be associated with their work.

Illustratory referencing

This reference persona is distinguished by the trait that they use direct quotes from the source material to illustrate the content of the theses as opposed to call upon specific facts or theories. Quotes are not reflected upon or discussed, instead their main function is to illustrate the text or to convey a particular mood or feeling.

Non-referencing persona

This persona does not explicitly reference any source material. However, the absence of references is related to the stylistic construction of the text, which highly personal or fictive in nature.
6.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine some aspects of the information practices of art students during thesis writing. Research questions for the study were based on knowledge gaps in previous research, specifically the questions they leave unanswered regarding the type and subject of material referenced by art students, and the relation between reference practices and the nature of the art field. This was done by examining the following research questions.

**Research question 1:** What types of sources and subjects are referenced by art students in their theses?

**Research question 2:** How are the reference practices of art students related to the social and intellectual organization of the art field?

Research question number one, regarding the type and subject of the referenced material, was examined through a quantitative study where references were extracted from theses and provided an overview of the material of interest to art students. Research question two, regarding reference practices was examined through the qualitative method of reference studies. Discovered practices were discussed using reference personas representing different approaches to referencing. The study used a theoretical framework based on Richard Whitley’s (1984) theories on the intellectual and social organization of the sciences and Hammarfelt’s writing on a modified bibliometrics for the humanities as the theoretical framework (2012).

It was found that average number of references differ between programs, that this seems to be related to the nature of the programs and the style of the thesis. Specifically, a lowered task uncertainty was found to be related to a more traditional academic approach to referencing. While thesis produced in the two programs with higher task uncertainty generally used a less formal language and lower number of references.

The study found that printed books remain most referenced type of source by art students. Print books make up the bulk of the references and are the most commonly referenced type of source in all three groups of the study. For print books, the most frequently referenced topic is fine art. However, the majority of book references were on non-art topics. Outside of fine art, book references were concentrated around fiction literature and poetry, books on philosophy, psychology, religion, and social sciences. However, out of the 21 Library of Congress subject headings used to categorize books by subject, only three remained unused. Indicating that art students are interested in a large variety of topics.

When it comes to digital sources, findings indicate that students use a variety of, mostly public, digital sources, the most common type being websites on non-art topics. E-books however were rarely used and only 13 of the total 448 book references were e-books. However, this study in combination with previous studies on reference practices, indicate that the use of digital material where references could conceivably be constructed as references to print books, such as e-books and PDF-versions of book chapters, might be higher than the results suggest (Greer, 2016).
Similar to Greer, this study found that established reference styles were seldom used by art students. While Greer suggests that the reason for not referencing correctly is a lack of knowledge, and suggests literacy education to solves this problem (2016). This study found that, it was likely not necessary for the students whose theses were analysed in this study to follow any established reference style in order to receive a passing grade and diploma. As these demands are not put on students, reference practices are instead influenced by stylistic choices, leading to a large variety of reference practices, out of which five distinct reference personas were constructed.

Finally, although tentatively, as the study lacks direct input from the students themselves, signs of a criticism of writing and the more traditionally academic aspects of art education was discovered in the analysed theses. Students sometimes seemed to critically approach academic formalities aside from referencing, such as cover sheets, spelling, and the legibility of the published thesis.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

The literature review and limitations of this study, both by method and context, indicate areas for further research. While this study can only hint at the experiences and attitudes of students during thesis writing, as it lacks direct input from the students themselves. Previous studies have examined the experiences of thesis writing in art education at the doctoral level, through a combination of interviews, survey-studies, and text analysis. These types of studies have the additional benefit that they provide deeper understanding on the relation between the artistic and the written components of the thesis work (Starfield, Paltridge, & Ravelli, 2012). Similar studies on students in the two lower cycles, bachelor and master, could provide insight into the various experiences of thesis writing.
7. Reference list


