

# The Impact of Virtual Exhibit On Promoting Collaboration Among Regional Partners

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## Background

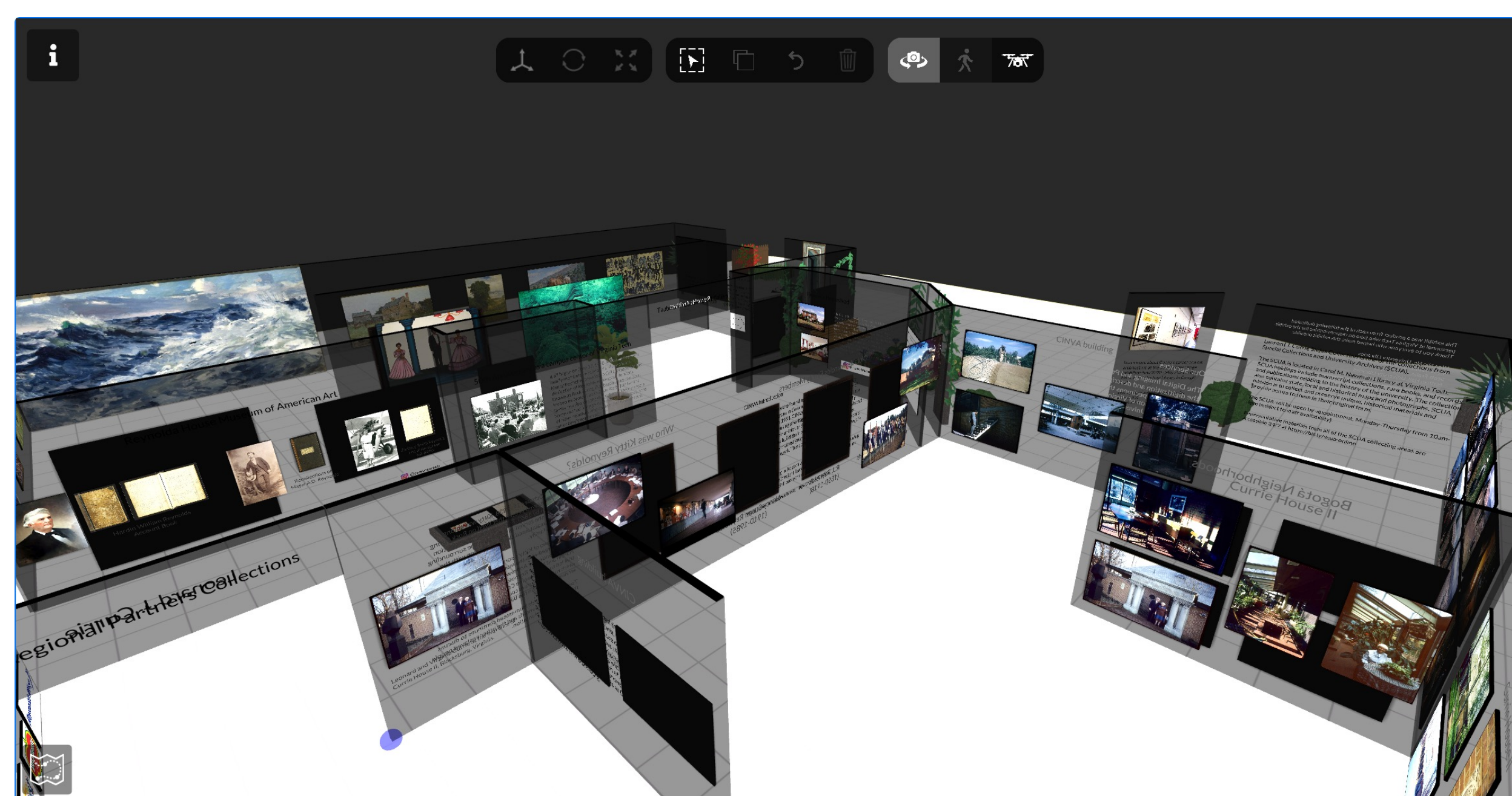
In an era defined by adaptability, the Virginia Tech University Libraries responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by pioneering an inventive hybrid exhibition. This hybrid exhibit combined in-person and virtual elements to feature and promote an array of digital collections. This initiative, initially planned as a physically interactive experience spanning across multiple campus libraries, quickly responded to the pandemic and evolved into a predominantly virtual exhibition, marking an

innovative stride in response to unprecedented global conditions.

The successful implementation and reception of this hybrid model signify a promising direction for future exhibits. As we continue to navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the experience gleaned from this project provides a template for successfully incorporating innovation, technology, and interactivity into exhibitions, indicating a transformative direction for academic and cultural displays in the digital age.

### SVDA VR Exhibit

The virtual reality (VR) exhibit contains six collections contributed by campus and regional partners, featuring over a hundred interactive digital objects, including photographs, journals, paintings, 3D geology minerals, and various 3D insect specimens



Screenshot of the exhibit editor's view while navigating the Southwest Virginia Virtual Exhibit on the Artsteps platform.

Visit our Southwest Virginia Virtual Exhibit at <https://bit.ly/vt-vr>



## Project Details

**OBJECTIVES**  
Promoting Collections

**THEMES**  
Technology  
Innovation  
Fun

**101** Unique Digital Objects  
**6** Collections  
**21** Contributors

### Virginia Tech Collections

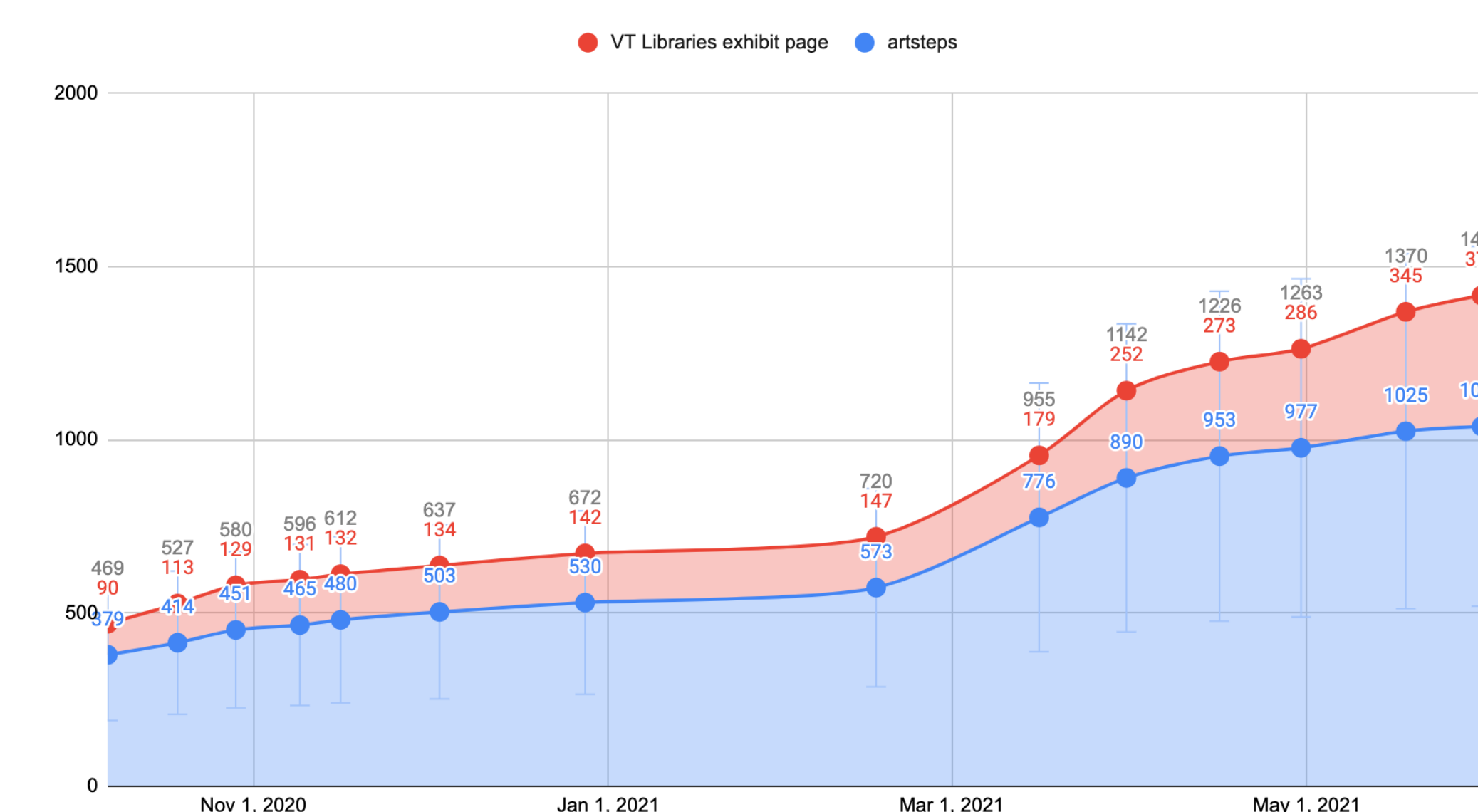
1. University Libraries
2. Department of Entomology
3. Department of Geoscience

### Regional Collections

1. Taubman Museum of Art
2. Reynolds Homestead
3. Reynolda House Museum of American Art

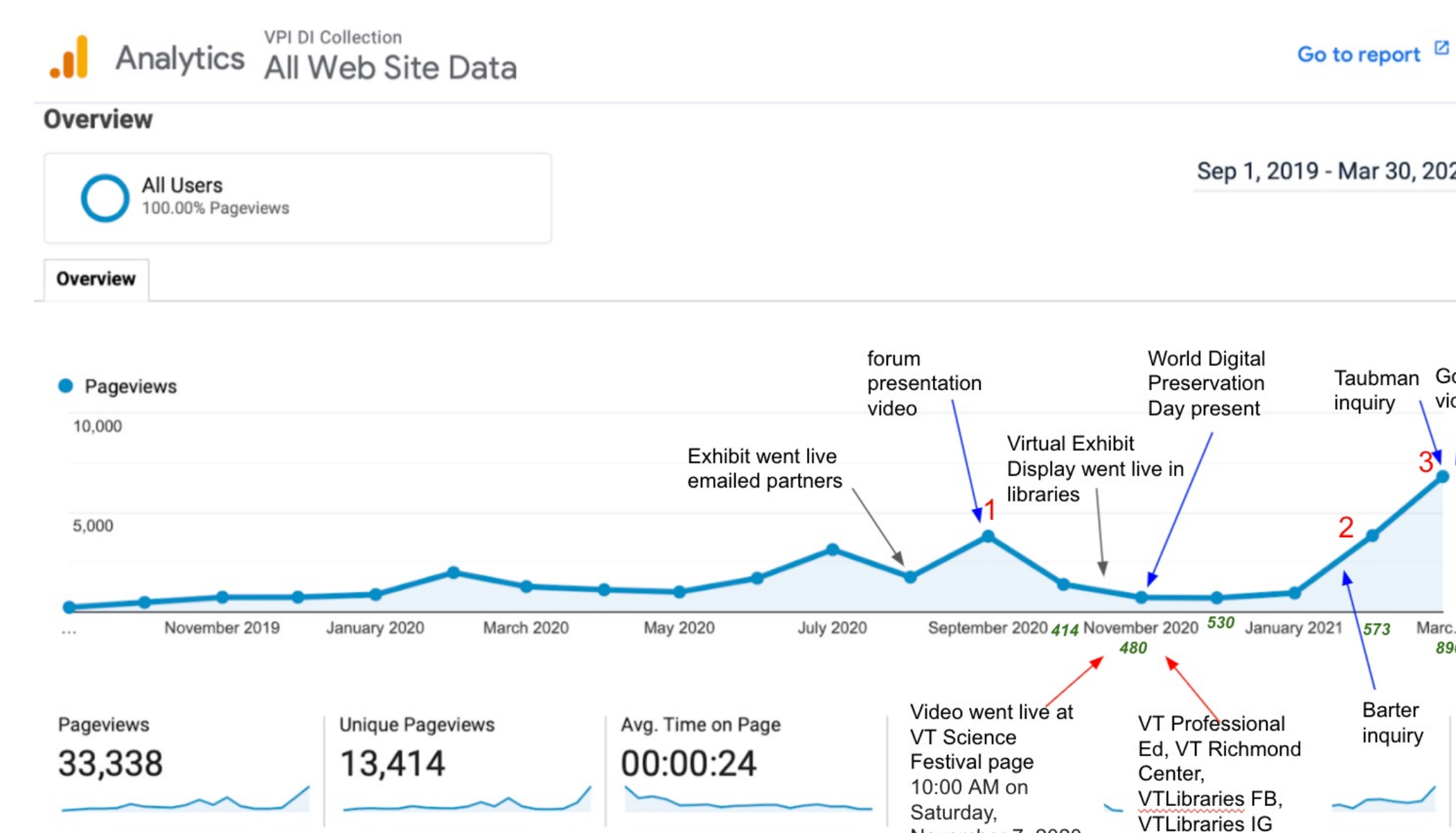
## Impacts

### VR Exhibit Views



This graph provides an overview of visits to the VR exhibit from Oct 07, 2020, to May 31, 2021. Built on Artsteps, direct page visits are tracked. The exhibit is also embedded on the Virginia Tech University Libraries website via an iframe, but these visits aren't tracked by Artsteps. Instead, Google Analytics provides data for these visits. The VR Exhibit debuted on Aug 3, 2020. Subtracting 100 views for staff's QC on Artsteps, the average visits to the Artsteps site and library exhibit page are at 117 and 47 respectively, totaling an average of 164 visits per month.

### Digital Library Visit Number



The VR exhibit positively correlates with increased visits to the digital library. Statistical evidence shows a 62.4% user increase post-exhibit launch. The 'pre-launch' period covers Sept 2019 to July 2020, while 'post-launch' data is from Aug 2020 to May 2021. Bot counts have been adjusted in these numbers. Any uncommon peaks in the graph are attributed to bot counts.

### RELATED ACHIEVEMENTS

- In-person exhibits at multiple libraries
- Documented student research and celebrated Leonard J. Currie's career via blogs
- Featured in two university news articles
- Published book chapter on virtual exhibit creation
- Facilitated job placements through experiential learning
- Enhanced metadata through community engagement
- The project was presented at various national level conferences and departmental events

## Key Insights & Implications

### Ethical Curation through Collaboration

By engaging with multiple partners, the exhibition showcased a model of ethical curation through collective effort. This successful alliance could inspire and provide a reference point for other institutions aiming to engage their communities in ethical archival practices.

### Enhancing VR Accessibility

Even though our virtual exhibit incorporated thoughtful usability design, making it accessible to visually impaired individuals remains a challenge. This underscores the necessity for more extensive research and improvements in VR accessibility.

### Management of VR Assets

A significant challenge we encountered was the absence of a defined repository for storing and managing VR assets. This observation pinpoints an area where development of systematic solutions is required.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the 21 contributors whose diverse skills and dedication made this project a reality. Their roles spanned from planning to publication, and every step in between. Each played a crucial role in this project's success. Thank you all for your invaluable contributions.