

What is cARTalog ?

cARTalog is a community based art project intended to honor the UI Libraries retired public card catalog and offer a rebirth to the long-loved system which would otherwise be headed for the recycle bin. Project organizers were able to salvage only one fifth of the Libraries' public card catalog for the cARTalog project; that's approximately one million cards.

Participants—from Iowa, across the country and around the world—were invited to adopt cards and recreate a home for them in whatever way was most meaningful to them. Cards were requested by a well-rounded demographic: from preschoolers to retirees, students and teachers, children and parents, and among these participants immersed artists, writers, librarians, comedians and musicians, to name a few.

The cARTalog Project involved several non-juried satellite projects including an online gallery, a K-12 Exhibition, a Mail Art Project and the General Exhibition, the latter of which is on display here in the North Exhibition Hall.

The success of the project is due to the participants and their enthusiasm. While the individual pieces provide a diversity of artistic vision and intent, as a collective whole they speak to the spirit of collaboration, the connection of people and community, the importance of stories and memory, and how libraries play a role in all of these phenomena. The art offered here is evidence of our curiosity, nostalgia for the “material familiar,” and aspirations for the future.

