I work for Alberta Council for the Ukrainian Arts. Our organization provides professional development and educational opportunities to artists residing in Alberta. I hear on a daily basis the struggles artists face to become professional working artists. The type of artist that creates artwork, and makes enough money to pay the bills.

In response to this feedback, ACUA has wanted to develop a space for our artists to connect with each other and develop collaborative working relationships. A space where we can host professional development activities. A space where the artists we serve can learn from each other and participate in these activities.

I designed Arts Learning Circle on my own using WordPress. It was important for me to utilize technology that could be maintained by the people and artists who work at ACUA. The ultimate goal of the tool is to offer a space to host a professional development series with 9 workshops, however, the content for these workshops is still under development.

For this project, I wanted to create a way to communicate with our artists about upcoming news and events. Initially, through a survey I will communicate with the artists to find out what workshops should be developed.

Implementation of the workshop series is likely months away. In the meantime, if artists are providing feedback on the workshops, I wanted to engage with them and start to offer other PD opportunities. With input from the artists ACUA serves, I have developed other ways for artists to connect. Our Feedback page, allows artists to put forward a piece of art they are creating and get feedback in a safe space. You’ll notice throughout, I have also enabled the use of comments so that artists can interact with the activities and resources on the website.

Our Resource page, allows artists to connect to art related funding, national art organizations, art galleries, etc.

Ask an Artist allows artists to connect to each other about virtually anything related to creating and selling art.

Last, I created a way to harvest artist contact information such as their email address, so that ACUA can communicate with the artists we serve and provide them with news and announcements using MailChimp, Facebook, and Instagram.

I created a place for the workshop series content to be stored and developed, as well as, implemented login functionality for workshop participants and created away for learners to register for workshops.

In terms of functionality, Arts Learning Circle is working. If you enter an email to join the community, your email is being stored. If you click a button or link – it works. If you click to login to a workshop, you’re required to enter a valid user name to access the content. If you’ve never created a username, you’ll be required to register and create one.

The key framework that supports the design of my tool is related to social-constructivism. Constructivism is based on the idea that learners actively build new understanding and knowledge, and integrate it into what they already know rather than passively taking on information. Vygotsky argued that learners are able to understand so much more with the support of someone with more expertise though social interactions. The tool I’ve created provides a space for learners to further develop their craft through formal workshops and other professional development activities. The activities will be facilitated by artists, for artists. Throughout the design process, I also used Tony Bates SECTIONS Model to ensure I was making effective decisions in regards to the use of media.

Going forward, ACUA will share our first Post and start to make connections with our artists encouraging them to join our community. We will use the survey results to determine what courses we will develop for our workshop series. Our artists can start to participate in the PD activities we have created. We will have to develop the content for the workshop series.