Because I am from the West Coast, this East Coast conference was new to me. I was invited to participate by the individual who set up the panel on Teleology, Eric Roberts, a studio artist from Atlanta. He had come across my work on my website, Art History Unstuffed, and extended an invitation for me to join. Although teleology is not a topic that has occupied me recently, I had been working on the topic of the avant-garde for the Heathwood Press. In the process of rethinking the historical phenomenon of avant-garde artists before the Great War, I had come to understand the extent to which the practice of the avant-garde artists was not confined to Paris, as art history books would suggest, but was extended eastward thousands of miles, from London to Moscow. In addition, there was an international art market with was busily distributing and disseminating modern art during the years preceding the summer of 1914. In asking a simple question: what happened to these works when Hitler declared them degenerate? led to a quest for an answer. I had been greatly interested in the operations, conducted mostly by American units, to recover the art lost, looted, and stolen during the regime of the Nazis, and realized how much had been irretrievably lost. If the art was lost, perhaps forever, then what was “modern art?” Sixty years later, how do we understand the “avant-garde” given that the examples we are left with are random, only a fraction of what once existed? When the offer came to do this conference, I realized that I could develop the vague and unanswerable question into a more substantial investigation into the “teleology” of modern art, established in 1936 by Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art.

Although regional, the Southeastern College Art Conference is a very large conference, drawing people from all over the world. It was professionally run and I met a lot of interesting people. My paper was well received. The other papers were theoretical and were delivered without images. My work was the only paper that was material and concrete, taking the idea of theory of “teleology” and placing it in the realm of the practical, illustrating the gaps in the lineage of modern art through actual selected case histories of the fate of the now lost art. Over the near future, I, as a member, will keep my eye on any opportunities offered by this conference. The meeting for 2016 will be in Blacksburg, Virginia, a place that is accessible only by car, preceded by several separate flights. I found out that most of the local participants to this conference drive, and I assume that this is why the conferences are scheduled at sites that are difficult for the distanced participant to get to without massive inconvenience.
This conference paper was tailored to a pre-arranged theme, teleology, a theme I treated only in passing, because I considered it a passé idea. When I was invited to present a topic on teleology by the chair of the panel, I already had an idea of something I wanted to work on in relation to Alfred Barr. I had come across new research which pointed to his war-time purchases of what were looted works of art for the Museum of Modern Art and I had been thinking for a year about the difference between the "story" of modern art and the fate of modern art during the Second World War. There was a gap between the theory (the teleology) and the actual works of art still available to be studied. Using the famous Chart of Barr, which presented a "teleology" for modern art, I examined the state of the art world in 1936, the year he drew the Chart. This chart, which initially appeared in a catalogue Cubism and Abstract Art, became the Bible for organizing the sequence of Modern Art for generations of art historians. My paper was able to take advantage of recent information, which was coming to light concerning the pillaging of European art by the Nazis. This information was not available and the concept that art was actually missing was not on the radar of earlier art historians. When I researched the art movements that the Chart presented, I found that much of the significant work (Matisse's *Bonheur de Vivre* and Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*) were in private collections, not open to the public, other movements were simply under lock and key in Germany and Russia, and other huge private collections were four years from being looted and lost in France. In point of fact, much of the art Barr depicted in the Chart was already on its way to its sad fate. My question is what was modern art? and my answer is we have no idea of the actual works; so much is gone, never to be recovered. What we define as "modern art" is but a group of random survivors and not comprehensive bodies of work on the parts of the artists.
“The Return of the Prodigal Painting: Rethinking Courbet’s Jean Journet”

One of the topics embedded in the Alfred Barr paper was the nefarious dealings of the Director of the Museum of Modern Art with certain New York galleries which were clearing houses for looted Nazi art. One of the main dealers who fed this underground and entirely illegal market was Hitler’s art dealer, Hildebrand Gurlitt. Gurlitt, who was a quarter Jewish, had flown under the radar in Nazi Germany and became one of the few art dealers authorized to buy and sell “degenerate art.” Gurlitt came from a distinguished family of artists and art dealers and was an expert in modern art, inheriting from his father an important gallery in avant-garde art in Berlin. During the Second World War, thanks to Hitler, Gurlitt amassed a substantial collection of avant-garde art and kept what may have been at least two thousand works for himself. After the War, he was questioned by American authorities and he claimed that his collection was lost in the firebombing of Germany. In fact, he had moved the art before the bombing and the collection survived. For reason unknown, Gurlitt who returned unscathed to
respectability, did nothing with the collection. He passed the hoard on to his son, Cornelius who lived his life as a recluse, caring the art. Towards the end of his life, the son and the cache was discovered, revealing to the world long lost works of art. The stunning discovery took place between 2012 and 2013 in Munich.

The case was notorious and raised many questions about who was buying looted art illegally. Unfortunately, old Cornelius died before he could provide answers the fate of lost art and there seem to be no written records of which works of art had been obtained from whom. As I was doing causal research on the connection between Alfred Barr and the Gurlitt gallery, I came across a BBC video on a second stash of looted art hidden by Gurlitt, found in the country estate of the family. The video was ten or fifteen minutes and the camera causally swept over some of the painting lined up to be restored. My eye immediately fell on one painting which I instantly recognized as a Courbet and knew it was important. The narration did not mention it but I was able to find one brief mention on a new post on the Internet. The painting was Gustave Courbet’s painting of the Socialist "prophet" Jean Journet. This painting, according to the primary sources I located, had been missing since 1914, lost for over one hundred years. Because this painting was so thoroughly and completely lost and because no one had any living memory of the work, art historians did not acknowledge or mention the lost painting but discussed a famous print made by Courbet years later.

Because the BBC video was posted in November of 2015 and I posted my paper on this painting in January of 2016, I am sure am the first person to write extensively and directly about this long lost painting for over one hundred years. To some, it may seem an obscure painting, but the obscurity is only because it has been lost. In its own time, the Salon of 1850, this painting was the keystone of an arch of paintings presented by Courbet. I was able to access the primary sources for the reviews of this suite of paintings and found floor plans to determine how the collection was hung in the Salon. My paper discussed the Socialist idea of the early nineteenth century that had inspired Courbet and had informed his work of the early 1850s with a Socialist theme. I placed this significant political statement in the Salon in the context of Napoléon III and his Second Empire, which was very repressive towards dissident ideas, even when they were of French origin. By writing on this newly found painting--whose ultimate fate is still unknown--I attempted to complete the arch by using this painting as a philosophical statement presented by Courbet to explain his group of paintings.

I placed both of these paper, stemming from the Conference and my Faculty Development Grant, on Academia.edu. The paper on Barr has gotten a number of reads on Academia.edu and has generated some interest among art historians. As for its future, I am hoping to use this paper as the end of my book on the avant-garde, for the Chart, far from charting the course of Modern Art was, in fact, mapping the end of the avant-garde. Out of this paper I was able to spin off another paper on the finding of the long-lost painting of Jean Journet, by Gustave Courbet. This painting is easily the most significant painting found when the Gurlitt collection was rediscovered in 2013. Sadly, this paper, which I think of as my most significant, has not gotten the readers it
deserves. So far, the field of nineteenth century art seems to be unaware of the rediscovery of this painting. I hope that over time more people will read this second paper. Currently I am not sure what its eventual fate will be—perhaps it can serve as a closure to the book on avant-garde—but, for the present, it will live on Academia.edu, where, over time, hopefully the paper will gain more and more readers.