

Report on 5th artlibraries.net General Meeting, Paris, 27-29 September 2012

Background

The virtual catalogue for Art History www.art.libraries.net (AN), formerly the VKK, is the international specialised meta catalogue facilitating integrated retrieval of bibliographic and other related records from art historical databases. Currently AN gives access to more than 13 million records and is particularly rich in periodical articles, conference papers and exhibition catalogues. Access to relevant online resources is growing, including general targets such as Google Books and Hathi Trust. Records for archival and photographic materials are an increasing feature of the service.

Beyond its role as a meta catalogue AN is also an international working community of more than 100 art libraries from 14 countries worldwide and this coverage is continually growing. This conference was the fifth in a series of biennial international AN conferences. It is the second conference organised in conjunction with the Future of Art Bibliography (FAB) project initiated by the Getty Research Institute. The conference was hosted by two venues in Paris: Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte and Les Arts décoratifs.

Current Projects from the artlibraries.net Community - Rüdiger Hoyer, Library Director, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich

Rüdiger set the scene by giving a brief overview of the history of international co-operative efforts in art bibliography including RILA, BHA and IBA. He asserted that the problems faced over forty years ago are still relevant today. These include issues such as comprehensiveness versus selectivity, analytical cataloguing versus indexation of key words and the actual value of abstracting. The challenges of language and co-ordinating international co-operative effort persist. The aspiration for high standards of quality causes inevitable delays which increasingly become unacceptable in the contemporary environment.

Rüdiger queried whether bibliography continues to be relevant today, pointing to the low level of use of bibliographic tools both in hard copy and online. He suggested that bibliography may have always been a well-meaning act of academic vanity where the value and usefulness of the product was always dwarfed by the labour required to compile them..

The ubiquity of online catalogues has led to the surpassing of our predecessor' boldest visions as they now serve the function of a bibliography as well. Rudiger suggested that our main task now is to arrange and share our collective resources in the most fruitful way. He also outlined a future for art bibliography in the form of an art libraries network combined with an online library.

The Getty Research Portal: Unified Access to the Early Literature of Art History – Kathleen Salomon, Assistant Director, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles

Kathleen introduced the Portal as a recent innovation by the Getty Research Institute providing an online search platform giving global access to digitised art history texts in the public domain. It is comprised of catalogue records which link to full digitised texts held at contributing institutions in the US and Europe. As the Portal's contributions grow its scope will widen to include more texts about non-Western art.

The Portal allows for the export of references and bibliographies into citation management tools such as EndNote and Zotero and will eventually include tools for annotating and sharing digitised texts and for linking to images.

The Portal is an authoritative worldwide resource that provides one-stop multilingual access to art history texts, auction sales catalogues and rare books without restriction. The texts are free, downloadable and digitised in their entirety according to national and international standards and, because cataloguing is done by the libraries that own the physical books, the records are authoritative. As an added benefit, libraries planning to digitise their art history books can consult the Portal to see what has already been digitised.

Kathleen urged conference participants to both use the service and to consider contributing content from their own libraries.

The 'Portuguese Web Archive' – Paulo Leitao, Biblioteca de Arte, Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon

Paulo spoke about the Portuguese Web Archive (PWA), the national web archive of Portugal. Its mission is to periodically archive contents of national interest available on the Web, storing and preserving for future generations information of historical relevance. It is a project of the Foundation for National Scientific Computing (FCCN).

Reframing Collections for a Digital Age – The Challenge of Web-Based Art Resources – Deborah Kempe, Chief of Collections Management and Access, Frick Art Reference Library, New York and President of the Art Libraries Society of North America

Debbie reported on three recent initiatives relating to web archiving in the US: 'Web Archiving Policies and Practice in the US – 2012 Summit', the 2010 pilot project 'Capturing Born-Digital Content from Auction House Websites' and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation research project with the New York Art Resources Consortium (NYARC) 'Reframing Collections for a Digital Age' running for a year from February 2012.

Columbia University Libraries invited over 20 academic and research libraries to share their perspectives at the 2012 Summit. The overall aim was to create a small number of model programmes for web archiving and the development of best practice for documenting programme elements.

The auction house website archive pilot used Archive-It software available on subscription from the Internet Archive. This programme is used by 190 partner institutions in 17 countries and covers 1,954 collections. The pilot asked questions about the limitations of the Archive-It crawler, how deeply sites are crawled, the best frequency for crawling auction house sites and access issues. The project found the vast diversity of content formats challenging and many of these do not capture well if at all. The overwhelming scale of data affected crawl efficiency and this was further complicated by crawler traps and password protection. The whole exercise pushed the limits of intellectual property as there were no built-in permissions available.

The Mellon project aimed to identify to NYARC what it would be best to collect, the best methods of achieving this and what partners it was most appropriate to work with. It also dealt with ethical and access issues. It examined how best to disseminate the project results to the art libraries community. To date it has recommended using the Archive-It tool, growing collections incrementally by identifying high priority or high risk materials, automating metadata creation and greater collaboration.

Artlibraries.net and the Future of Art Bibliography (FAB) Project: a Resumé – Jan Simane, Library Director, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence and Chair of IFLA Art Libraries Section

Jan introduced his session by giving a brief historical overview of AN. The organisation began as a union catalogue of two German university libraries and the emerging *kubikat* consortium. This initiative evolved against a background of a lack of any central national art library in Germany. The two possible routes for the development of this venture were aggregation and selection, the former aiming at connecting as many German art libraries as possible and the latter based on the concept of a virtual bibliography, selective and international in scope. This latter model became the preferred solution of AN.

Jan remarked on the historic similarities between catalogues and bibliographies and the recent blurring of distinctions between them. The value-added features of many online catalogues such as book cover images, abstracts and tables of contents can make these sources much richer than traditional bibliographies. He outlined the attempts made by the AN steering committee to draw in metadata from other sources beyond member organisation's catalogues such as the BHA and JSTOR. However, these initiatives did not meet with any success and were hampered by the lack of traditional financial and organisational structures in AN. Further drawbacks of AN relate to varying cataloguing rules used by member institutions particularly in relation to subject indexing. The variety of languages included in the

database and the slowing down of performance due to the expansion of the libraries included are further challenges. Statistics confirm that levels of use of the service continue to be low.

The announcement of the cessation of the production of the International Bibliography of Art (IBA) by the Getty Research Institute in 2009 led to the creation of the Future of Art Bibliography (FAB) initiative with the aim of establishing an alternative co-operative replacement for the IBA. Essentially FAB recognised the outdated nature of the traditional IBA approach and aspired to create or support a more appropriate and future-proofed model. The key approach of FAB was to act as an umbrella under which several initiatives could proceed simultaneously. Key developments include the creation of a portal to digitised art history texts, the development of a bibliographical tool and an aggregation tool for e-publications. It is recognised that interoperability with other types of data and with other projects is crucial. All developments should be driven by the needs and expectations of our users. It is also recognised that we need to decide whether our coverage is to be comprehensive or selective.

The Getty Research Portal is now a reality. An alternative commercial federated search system has already been thoroughly explored but felt ultimately to be inappropriate for our needs. Considerable progress has been made in negotiations with OCLC which will be reported on later in the conference.

Discipline-specific Discovery: the Challenge and an OCLC Experiment – Bruce Washburn, OCLC Research, San Mateo, California and Eric van Lubeek, managing Director, OCLC Europe, Middle East and Africa

Bruce and Eric gave a broad overview of OCLC and WorldCat by way of introduction. They explained the viable options for co-operation with AN consisting of WorldCat Search API, WorldCat Local and Worldcat Group catalogs. Both clearly favoured the latter approach and demonstrated its value through the ADAMnet group catalogue from Amsterdam. They proposed a group catalogue with libraries already represented in WorldCat and the branding of this group catalogue. They also proposed having a discussion about a price model relating to this development as well as a step by step addition of more art libraries to the group over time.

In spite of the obvious attractions of the model proposed by OCLC it was felt that considerable consultation would be required with AN participants before any decision could be arrived at, particularly as such a large number of these would be, at least initially, excluded from the initiative through current non-participation in WorldCat.