

On June 8–9, 2006, the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles hosted a workshop, “Art History and the Digital World,” cosponsored by the GRI and the College Art Association. The workshop, organized by Murtha Baca, head of the Getty Vocabulary Program and Digital Resource Management at the GRI, and William Tronzo of the CAA Board of Directors, assembled a group of over a dozen speakers and panelists to consider a wide range of questions at the intersection of the practice of art history and the rapidly evolving digital environment. The territory thus defined was large, and one of the virtues of the workshop was that, in negotiating relevant issues, it did not follow exclusively a single track. Rather it brought together participants with different fields of expertise and points of view in order to create a dynamic and thought-provoking conversation that crossed boundaries.

Murtha Baca and William Tronzo

Art History and the Digital World

On the first day, the keynote speaker was Lindsay Waters, executive editor for the humanities, Harvard University Press, who set the stage for the proceedings by considering the changing nature of academic publishing and the role of the university press. Thomas Moritz, associate director and chief of knowledge management at the GRI, spoke on the role of technology in academic research; his address was followed by a panel discussion

on digital technology as the increasingly dominant capture and delivery mechanism for research and education, also chaired by Moritz, entitled “The Technological Edge.” The panel included Joanna Stevens, vice president for corporate communications at Yahoo, and Clint Hope, executive director, Experimental Systems/Applied Minds, who presented an overview of current trends in digital communication and image making. Their remarks were made all the more poignant by Hope’s observation that we are already losing the history of the digital: “Our biggest fear is that we are deep in a dark age where all of the digital information is going to be lost. We will have the books and prints from the past, and something will evolve in the future, but our present digital history will be gone. The digital data put on the early internet is gone. We have archival digital masters, and there no longer exist machines that can read them.”

The afternoon session consisted of a presentation by Susan Allen, associate director and chief librarian at the GRI, on the digital library, and a panel, “New Publishing Paradigms,” moderated by Tronzo, which included Catherine M. Soussloff, professor of art history, University of California, Santa Cruz; Eve Sinaiko, director of publications, CAA; Ronald G. Musto and Eileen Gardiner, directors of the ACLS History E-Book Project; Waters; and Robert Stein, director of the Institute for the Future of the Book and founder of the Voyager Company and Night Kitchen, which develops authoring tools for electronic publishing. Michael Hawley of the Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute for Technology concluded the first day with a survey of some of the projects with which he was involved, particularly with regard to the social and cultural significance of the intertwined fortunes of technology and research.

The discussion of publishing was rich and varied. Waters’s description of the book as a “sacramental thing” proved resonant in the afternoon panel. Soussloff argued eloquently for the persistence of the art book—the beautifully produced, illustrated, codex-based volume—as an embodiment of the visual values of the

discipline. As counterpoint, Musto and Gardiner presented a template for the historical monograph in electronic form, which they created by submitting print conventions—introductory matter, body of text, footnotes, index, and so forth—to a critical rethinking. The capacity to tap a network of associations through the vehicle of links is one of the salient characteristics of the history e-book as conceived by Musto and Gardiner. Stein's presentation culminated in the exposition of a new form of publication in which, in a given text, readers' comments are incorporated in the form of an ongoing conversation, like a blog. Thus, in the course of the day there emerged an interesting polarity, which can only superficially be described in formal terms: a manifest commitment to the traditional formats of the print medium and a move to experiment in the digital arena. One of the real issues seemed to be rather the limits and nature of the end product: was the book as stable and fixed an entity, finished when finally produced, as the print medium would imply, or a platform for the furthering of an ongoing conversation and therefore open-ended? The latter concept raised important issues regarding the integrity of the work and the role of the author, not to mention the traditional protocols of copyright and citation. Herewith a selection of more detailed summaries, provided in part by the authors themselves:

Moritz pointed out how the past thirty years have seen an unprecedented acceleration in the development and implementation of computer-based technologies. These developments will, from the perspective of history, be a defining characteristic of this era. With respect to art history, digital technologies have the potential to deepen and enrich traditional scholarship and may enable entirely new lines of research. Moritz indicated that the Getty Research Institute will be exploring how these technologies may support the development of the institute as a "comprehensive knowledge environment" for the arts, serving an extended audience of scholars and other users worldwide. Specifically, Moritz stated, the GRI will be exploring a range of new and innovative digital tools for scholarly communication and collaboration.

Stevens spoke about the power and immediacy of user-generated content. She highlighted "folksonomies," "social tagging," and "social bookmarking" as phenomena that have gained currency in the nonacademic online environment and that might be adapted in order to enrich scholarly art-historical resources online. Stevens pointed out how most art museums' collections remain largely inaccessible online, either because they are part of the "deep web" or—more likely—because most museums are unable to provide item-level access to their collections. According to Stevens, collaborative web tools may help create distributed knowledge resources and build virtual communities that will bridge the gap between professional curators and scholars on the one hand and nonexpert members of the general public on the other. Concomitantly, Hope addressed the issues of visual reproduction, which he characterized as a set of circumstances or adaptive approximations based on our physiologies and available technologies. He emphasized the need for technology to exceed our frame of expectations: "We have the ability to generate something that for lack of a better term I call Super References, data that extends into hyperspectral bands and techniques that can store the aberrations of a lens that took a picture, even the grain characteristics of the silver halide of the film. This additional data allows us to capture a digital image that is sharper, of higher contrast, with a wider dynamic range, and

sometimes in the case of photographs with actually more information than the original image. We should develop a storage technology that can be degraded to recover images and display them with the technology of the future. Basically, we must make room in image-archiving techniques for higher-resolution displays, expanded color gamuts, and additional data. We need the vision to keep information that is beyond the limited display technologies available now.”

Gardiner and Musto spoke about publishing as a social contract between author, publisher, and reader, which they believe has been broken in the print realm and is now being reinvented in the electronic realm. They emphasized the importance of structure and standards for effective electronic publishing—in both cost and delivery. Structured data (for example, well-structured e-books expressed in XML) can be more easily searched, more easily manipulated by computer programs, and more easily recycled and repurposed than simple websites. Static websites are neither effective nor repurposable, while standardized, data-driven resources are. With regard to rights, Musto and Gardiner stressed the importance of fair use—“use it or lose it.” While Musto and Gardiner have been successful in the realm of electronic publishing for the scholarly community, they also made clear their belief that “digitization will not bring salvation.”

Stein put forth the proposition that electronic publishing gives authors a larger palette and a more varied set of tools for communication, which would enable them at least potentially to reach an audience that is far more diverse than that of print publication. Stein also stressed how the electronic environment is changing the relationship between authors and readers, with the blog as one example.

In wide-ranging remarks on the social significance of technology, Hawley described in detail *Bhutan*, the world’s largest published book (measuring five by seven feet when open), produced by Friendly Planet using the most up-to-date digital technology.

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The following morning was devoted to the issues of rights and access, beginning with a presentation by Kenneth Hamma, executive director for digital policy and initiative at the Getty Trust, on value and open access. There then followed a panel, “Text-Image Access: Data, Collections, and Rights,” moderated by Christine Sundt, visual resources curator emerita from the Architecture and Allied Arts Library at the University of Oregon and a member of the CAA Board of Directors. The panel included Hamma, Max Marmor, director of collection development for ARTstor, Susan Allen, Maureen Whalen, associate general counsel for the J. Paul Getty Trust, Murtha Baca, and Christine Kuan, Grove Dictionary of Art/Grove Online. Sundt presented concluding remarks following a general discussion of workshop panelists and audience chaired by Baca.

In his remarks as part of the panel on rights and access, Hamma pointed out that the current information environment holds unprecedented opportunities for sharing information and enhancing a publicly available repository of resources for education and research. The paradigm for sharing resources in a networked environment is not incrementally different, Hamma maintained, but fundamentally different from any available before. Hamma believes that almost certainly more effective and less expensive models of publication will be required, and

these will likely be the result of a similar reexamination of principles in the business of scholarship. When that happens, collecting institutions should be natural partners and allies of the academic research community, a role that today's purveyors of pay-per-view information and rented publications will almost certainly find difficult to accept.

The presentation by Marmor focused on the need for coherent digital-image collections, as well as software and services, shaped around the needs of art historians and other researchers and scholars. Marmor argued that we do not lack for digital images per se, when a Google Image search on "Picasso" retrieves hundreds of thousands of images in seconds. What we do lack are digital collections that have the features we most value in libraries—features designed to support teaching, learning, and research. Marmor further suggested that in building such collections it is essential to focus first and foremost on relationships and on what creators (artists, photographers, et al.) and collecting institutions (archives, libraries, museums) have in common with educators, scholars, and other users of digital resources, rather than focusing exclusively on the complex issues surrounding rights, which tend to polarize populations that in fact have shared interests and missions.

Kuan's remarks were focused on a need for the integration of text and images in online publication. Grove Art Online recently added thousands of key illustrations to its articles in order to provide greater opportunities for learning and discovery in a variety of subjects in world art. Many of these images were included in the print *Dictionary of Art* (1996, 34 vols.), the foundation of Grove Art Online, but were omitted in the online version at first due to copyright restrictions. Today, as research and study increasingly take place in digital environments, illustrated online scholarly publications are critical to furthering the field of art history—particularly in traditionally underrepresented areas where authoritative information can be difficult to locate.

Baca emphasized that technology should be used to serve the field of art history, rather than driving the agenda; new technologies and delivery mechanisms should be used to fulfill a specific user need, not simply because they exist. Baca also focused on the importance of cataloguing, controlled vocabularies, and reliability and authenticity in the creation of online resources for the study of art history, at a time where many students and researchers get their information from sources like Wikipedia, which according to its own founder, Jimmy Wales, lays no claim to being a valid academic source.

Whalen, a transactional lawyer responsible for intellectual property matters including licensing rights, acquisition of rights, and rights clearances, outlined the basic questions regarding rights acquisition for both analogue and digital publications while offering encouragement to look for balance in crafting or negotiating policies. Whalen's presentation highlighted how text and image uses can be empowered rather than being relegated to compromised submission when creative avenues are available to those who are willing to assess and take well-informed risks.

Sundt stressed the need for collaboration and empowerment in looking for new directions with art history and publishing in the digital world. Sundt encouraged CAA to seek allies in setting policies that will work within this specialized community of scholars and artists and to be a leader in staking out

territory important to the discipline. For example, Sundt pointed out the potential advantages of CAA having a stronger presence within sister organizations such as the American Association of Museums, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Association of Research Libraries, and others. Sundt remarked that CAA has both the need and the means to be a leader in reshaping art history publishing, and that CAA's membership is ready to embrace these new directions.

For more information on the forum, please see www.getty.edu/research/scholarly_activities/digital_world/index.html.

Murtha Baca holds a PhD in art history and Italian language and literature from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is head of the Getty Vocabulary Program and the Digital Resource Management Department at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. Her publications include *Introduction to Art Image Access* and *Introduction to Metadata* (both Getty Research Institute publications). She teaches a graduate seminar on metadata in the School of Information Studies at UCLA.

William Tronzo has held research appointments at the American Academy in Rome, Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies in Washington DC, the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome, and the École des Hautes Études en sciences sociales in Paris. This year he is a fellow at the Stanford Humanities Center, where he is at work on a book on gardens of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance.