The Handbook of Art and Design Librarianship
Every purchase of a Facet book helps to fund CILIP’s advocacy, awareness and accreditation programmes for information professionals.
Contents

List of figures and tables ix
Notes on contributors xiii
Foreword xvii
Clive Phillpot
Preface xix

Part I Roles and responsibilities

1 The governance and administration of the art and design library
Paul Glassman 3

2 Evolution not revolution: evolving trends in art and design libraries
Barbara Opar 15

3 Expanding roles for fine arts liaison librarians: re-visioning the liaison model
Stephanie Kays 25

4 Accreditation and visual arts libraries
Judy Dyki 33

5 Design thinking for design librarians: rethinking art and design librarianship
Rachel Ivy Clarke 41

Part II Materials and collection management

6 Visual resources: from analogue to digital and beyond
Molly Schoen 53
7 Developing digital collections  
Greta Bahnemann and Jeannine Keefer

8 Inspirational encounters: the management and use of archives and special collections in the art and design library  
Jess Crilly, Gustavo Grandal Montero and Sarah Mahurter

9 What is special about special collections?  
Lee Sorensen

10 Artists’ books in the art and design library  
Tony White

11 Art documentation: exhibition catalogues and beyond  
Gustavo Grandal Montero

12 Tactile libraries: material collections in art, architecture and design  
Rebecca Coleman and Mark Pompelia

13 Seeing the bigger picture: archival description of visual information  
Alyssa Carver

Part III Teaching and learning

14 Embedded in their world: moving mentally into the studio environment  
Michael A. Wirtz

15 Teaching with threshold concepts and the ACRL Framework in the art and design context  
Alexander Watkins

16 Teaching by the book: art history pedagogy and special collections  
Sandra Ludig Brooke

17 Metaliteracy in art and design education: implications for library instruction  
Leo Appleton

18 The art of evidence: a method for instructing students in art history research  
Catherine Haras
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>‘I want students to research the idea of red’: using instructional design for teaching information literacy in the fine arts</td>
<td>Katie Greer and Amanda Nichols Hess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cultural differences and information literacy competencies</td>
<td>Nancy Fawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part IV  Knowledge creation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The ever-shifting landscape: mapping the present and future of digital art histories</td>
<td>Colin Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Critical cARTography: mapping spaces for dialogue about identity and artistic practices</td>
<td>Andy Rutkowski and Stacy R. Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>More than just art on the walls: enhancing fine arts pedagogy in the academic library space</td>
<td>Rachael Muszkiewicz, Jonathan Bull and Aimee Tomasek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Beyond the monograph? Transformations in scholarly communication and their impact on art librarianship</td>
<td>Patrick Tomlin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part V  The physical environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>New, renovated and repurposed library spaces: responding to new demands</td>
<td>Leo Appleton, Karen Latimer and Pat Christie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Why is that column in the middle of the room? Success in creating classrooms for library instruction</td>
<td>Paul Glassman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Finding common ground: creating library spaces for collaboration</td>
<td>Beverly Mitchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Part VI  Promotion and sustainability</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Marketing plans made simple</td>
<td>Paul Glassman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIII  THE HANDBOOK OF ART AND DESIGN LIBRARIANSHIP

29  Engaging with social media  305
    
    Ken Laing and Hillary Webb

30  Website strategies for art and design libraries  315
    Judy Dyki

Appendix: Library profiles  323
    Beth Morris

Index  339
List of figures and tables

Figures

1.1 Strategic Plan 2016–2019, Yeshiva University Libraries 6
1.2 Assessment template for Felician College Libraries 6
1.3 Example of a Yeshiva University Libraries Update 8
5.1 A basic representation of the design thinking process, including various terminology used in different sources 44
7.1 Digital collection development resources, digitization standards and best practices, metadata schemas, metadata standards and controlled vocabulary resources 71
14.1 Edward Teague’s categories of creative practitioners’ information use visualized as overlapping elements that provide opportunities for librarian intervention (Teague, 1987) 144
16.1 Cover designed by Kazimir Malevich for his O novykh sistemakh v iskusstve. Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University 161
16.2 Title page designed by Peter Paul Rubens for Jean-Gaspard Gevaert’s Pompa introitus © Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University 163
16.3 The amphitheatre at Arles as it appeared in 1666, from Joseph Guis’s Description des arènes © Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University 164
16.4 The amphitheatre at Nîmes from Valette de Travessac’s Sonnets sur les antiquités © Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University 164
16.5 Courtesan and client by the Kanbun Master from Yoshiwara makura-e © Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University 165
18.1 Unknown, *Portrait Head of Augustus*, 25–1 BC, marble, 185
15¾ x 8¼ x 9 7/16 in. © The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

20.1 Sample curriculum map based on two of the six frames in the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*

21.1 Virtual reality model of Roman Coliseum, Experiential Technologies Center © University of California Regents, 2003


21.3 Visualizations of the core components of network analysis in the Low Countries, 1580–90 and 1640–50, Lincoln (2016)

23.1 Students assess the second group of Library Student Art Purchase Award winning artwork at the 2015 Student Artist Reception © 2015 Valparaiso University

25.1 The Ryerson University Students Learning Center, Toronto © Photographer: lornebridge.com

25.2 The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design Library © Photographer: Matti Östling


25.4 The University Center Library at The New School, New York © Photographer: Martin Seck

25.5 The Wellcome Collection Reading Room, London © Wellcome Collection

25.6 The Musashino Art University Library, Tokyo. © Photographer: Yuichiro Tanaka © Musashino Art University Museum & Library

25.7 The materials and products collection at Central Saint Martins at UAL. © Photographer: Ideal Insight © University of the Arts London

25.8 The learning zone of Central Saint Martins at UAL. © Photographer: Ideal Insight © University of the Arts London

26.1 The column intrusion in Yeshiva University’s instruction laboratory in the 2015 renovation of the Pollack Library in the Gottesman Library Building

26.2 A trapezoidal table on casters

26.3 Stadium seating in Dickinson College’s Waidner-Spahr Library (courtesy of James Gerencser, Dickinson College)

26.4 Floor plan of computer laboratory in Felician University’s Education Commons illustrating the instruction node at the lower left (courtesy of Arcari + Iovino Architects)
28.1 SWOT analysis for a library marketing plan (American Library Association, 2017)

29.1 Screenshot from Emily Carr University of Art and Design Library Instagram account (@ecuad_library), 28 January 2017

29.2 Screenshot of Squarelovin analytics of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design Library Instagram account, 24 January 2017

29.3 Screenshot of Emily Carr University of Art and Design Library Facebook Insights highlighting a jump in followers, 21 August 2014

29.4 Winner of the September 2015 ECUAD Library Instagram Contest

29.5 Screenshot of the Ringling Art Library Rare Book Pinterest board, 24 January 2017

29.6 Screenshot from The Fisher Rare Book Library Instagram account (@fisherlibrary), 24 January 2017

Tables

5.1 Common elements of design epistemology (ways of knowing) from a review of the literature of design scholarship (from Clarke 2016, 2017)

7.1 Comparative analysis of three content management systems

19.1 Aligning broad goals with defined objectives and proposed assessment items
Notes on contributors

Editors

Judy Dyki is Director of Library and Academic Resources at Cranbrook Academy of Art and Editor of Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America.

Paul Glassman is Director of University Libraries and Adjunct Instructor of Architectural History and Design at Yeshiva University. He teaches art librarianship and library design at Rutgers during the summer session.

Contributors

Leo Appleton is Director of Library Services at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Greta Bahnemann is Metadata Librarian at the Minnesota Digital Library of the University of Minnesota.

Sandra Ludig Brooke has been Head of Princeton University’s Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology since 2007.

Jonathan Bull is Scholarly Communications Services Librarian at Valparaiso University.

Alyssa Carver is an assistant librarian and project archivist for the Chip Kidd Papers at the Special Collections Library of the Pennsylvania State University.

Pat Christie has been Director of Libraries and Academic Support Services at University of the Arts London since 2012 and was chair of ARLIS/UK & Ireland from 2009 through 2011.

Rachel Ivy Clarke is an assistant professor at Syracuse University’s School of Information Studies. She was previously the Cataloguing Librarian at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles, California.
Rebecca Coleman is Research Librarian for Architecture at the University of Virginia, where she has built and maintained a materials collection in the Fine Arts Library.

Nancy Fawley is the Director of Information & Instruction Services at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

Katie Greer is the Fine and Performing Arts Librarian at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan.

Catherine Haras is the Senior Director of the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning at California State University, Los Angeles, with a faculty appointment in the University Library.

Amanda Nichols Hess is e-Learning, Instructional Technology, and Education Librarian at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan.

Stephanie Kays is Fine Arts Liaison Librarian at Denison University.

Jeannine Keefer is Visual Resources Librarian at the Boatwright Memorial Library of the University of Richmond.

Ken Laing is Co-Ordinator of Library Operations at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

Karen Latimer is Chair of the Designing Libraries Advisory Board UK, a member of the LIBER Architecture Group and a former chair of the IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations) Library Buildings & Equipment Standing Committee.

Sarah Mahurter is Manager of the University Archives and Special Collections Centre and convener of the Archives and Special Collections Community of Practice at University of the Arts London.

Beverly Mitchell is Assistant Director and Art and Dance Librarian at Hamon Arts Library, Southern Methodist University.

Gustavo Grandal Montero has been a librarian and special collections curator at Chelsea College of Arts and Camberwell College of Arts, University of the Arts London, since 2007 and has been Deputy Editor of Art Libraries Journal since 2012.

Beth Morris is an assistant librarian at the Yale Center for British Art, Reference Library and Archives, where she has served since 2011.

Rachael Muszkiewicz is a research services librarian at Valparaiso University.

Barbara Opar has worked in architectural librarianship at Syracuse University for over 40 years.

Clive Phillpot is Publisher, Fermley Press, London, and former Director of the Library, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
Mark Pompelia has been Visual + Material Resource Librarian in the Fleet Library at Rhode Island School of Design since 2010 and was the founder and five-year moderator of the Materials Special Interest Group for Art Libraries Society of North America.

Colin Post is a doctoral student in the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Andy Rutkowski is the Geospatial Resources Librarian at the University of California Los Angeles.

Lori Salmon, who indexed this edition of the Handbook, is Librarian in the Art & Architecture Collection at the New York Public Library.

Molly Schoen is the Visual Resources Curator at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

Lee Sorensen is the Photography, Art History and Visual Studies Librarian at the Lilly Library, Duke University.

Aimee Tomasek is the Chair of the Department of Art at Valparaiso University.

Patrick Tomlin is Associate Director of Learning Environments at Virginia Tech.

Alexander Watkins is an assistant professor and the Art & Architecture Librarian at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Hillary Webb is Systems and Technical Services Librarian at Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

Tony White is the Florence and Herbert Irving Associate Chief Librarian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Stacy R. Williams is the Head of the Helen Topping Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Southern California.

Michael A. Wirtz is an associate professor and Head of Research and Library Technology at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar.
Foreword

Why is there a demand for a handbook of art and design librarianship? Presumably this book is needed by what I will call 'art librarians' (even though this entity is made up of several species, including, notably, 'design librarians'). Would not a handbook of librarianship be enough? Well, the success of the first edition of this work, which ran to 330 pages, suggests not.

Why might art librarians, or budding art librarians, require their own specialized handbook? Perhaps it is the 'art' in art librarianship that is the fly in the ointment. Libraries devoted to art, or to art and design, are inevitable, for there are, after all, libraries devoted to any subject you can imagine: maritime libraries, music libraries, zoological libraries, and there are, of course, many kinds of art libraries. Even so: why do we need specialist art librarians?

It must be that art librarians bring other skills or knowledge to libraries of art. Foremost among these qualities must be a knowledge of art and design and art history – even an inside knowledge of art.

The art librarian needs not only to speak the language of art and design but also to be able to read images and objects, to be highly visually literate. That there are such requirements for the art librarian, as well as the need to be in the swim of new ideas and techniques in library science reported in such a book as this, is testimony to the challenges and complexities of connecting hungry users with their prey.

So how might such knowledge help art librarians to engage with their users? It concerns their ability to understand the terms of reference of the users, and thereby to better interpret their needs. Some users of art libraries will have far-out preoccupations; if so, one’s attempts at connecting them involve the kind of process that makes art librarianship interesting. Inevitably art librarians, like other librarians, are engaged in life-long learning.

Art librarians facilitate connections between people and art, and most of these interconnections begin at the level of sharing data. Initially the librarian and the user
need to agree on the nature of an enquiry through conversation, or by interrogating images. Then the enquiry might be satisfied with surrogates for art: prose, reproductions, books of images, electronic duplicates, filmic doppelgangers and other forms of information.

In parenthesis, it should be noted however that occasionally art librarians are privileged to be able to respond to enquiries with art itself – witness the portability of movies, prints, some art objects, conceptual art documents, book works and images of many kinds in many forms of presentation.

The contributors to this book are writing from the front line. So, art and design librarians of the world, read on, you have nothing to lose but your innocence.

Clive Phillpot
Fermley Press, London
(formerly Director of the Library, Museum of Modern Art, New York)
In the seven years that have passed since the publication of the first edition of this handbook, the world of art and design libraries has been rocked by rapid advances in technology, an explosion in social media, the release of new standards and guidelines, shifts in the materials and processes of contemporary art, innovative developments in publishing models, expanding roles of librarians, new perspectives surrounding library spaces, and the evolving needs and expectations of art and design students. What has not changed is each library’s deep commitment to art, which manifests itself as collections that are developed around images and objects; library instruction with an emphasis on visual literacy; and a student body consisting of artists, designers, art historians and art educators who approach the use of the library in unexpected and creative ways.

The goal of this second edition is the same as the first: to present a selection of essays that take a careful look into the world of academic art and design libraries, whether they are part of universities or support independent art and design schools. A few of the essays are revised and updated from the first edition, but most are new to this book and present topics that are now gaining prominence in the profession. Throughout the handbook, authors were asked to maintain an international perspective in their research and examples.

The volume is divided into six sections with three to eight chapters in each. Part I, ‘Roles and responsibilities’, considers several management concerns faced by art and design librarians. These include the general governance and administration of the library, evolving trends in the field, the changing roles of the art librarian, accreditation procedures and design thinking. One of the characteristics that distinguish art and design libraries from other libraries is their unique collections. Authors in Part II, ‘Materials and collection management’, explore visual resources, digital collections, archives, special collections, artists’ books and materials collections in the context of the library.

Library instruction is a large and important part of the work of academic and art and design school librarians, and new methods and priorities are reshaping the field. Chapters
in Part III, ‘Teaching and learning’, examine embedded librarianship, threshold concepts and the ACRL Framework, teaching with special collections, meta-literacies, instructional design and cultural differences. Part IV, ‘Knowledge creation’, investigates the involvement of art and design libraries in developing new information, including digital art history, digital map-making, professional exhibition opportunities and scholarly communication.

The physical design and space usage of the library have undergone dramatic transformations in recent years. The chapters in Part V, ‘Physical environment’, look at contemporary library design, effective classrooms for library instruction and developing spaces for collaboration. Unless users are aware of a library’s collections and services, even the most compelling facility will be under-used. Part VI, ‘Promotion and sustainability’, presents effective methods for developing marketing plans, using social media, and designing websites to engage the target audiences. The final section of the book contains profiles of the authors’ libraries. Even a quick scan of this listing demonstrates the wide diversity in size, collections, facilities and staff that exists among art and design libraries.

The field of art and design librarianship continues to be challenging and energizing. Our sincere thanks are extended to all of the chapter authors who shared their wisdom, knowledge and enthusiasm for working with some of the most beautiful collections and imaginative patrons on the planet.
Chapter 6

Visual resources: from analogue to digital and beyond

*Molly Schoen*

**Introduction**

In a professional context, visual resources refers to the line of work that encompasses creating and managing collections of visual content. Working primarily with images, but also with video, virtual reality and other new media, visual resources professionals are involved heavily in digitization, cataloguing and preservation of these materials. In general, visual resources departments are found in academic institutions and museums, but they also exist in public and private libraries and archives. Some businesses may have visual resources units, often operating under a different name, such as digital asset management.

The study of art history relies heavily on image technologies (Kohl, 2012). Interaction with visual materials has also risen dramatically in the internet age. By staying on the cutting edge of technology, visual resource professionals can continue to provide targeted, meaningful advice to their patrons on finding, creating and using images effectively and ethically.

**What are visual resources centres?**

In the past, visual resources centres existed as slide libraries. Developments of photography and magic lantern slides in the 19th century enabled the study of art history as the discipline known today; without reproducible images, the study of art was limited. Art history degree programmes developed alongside early slide libraries, which included glass lantern slides and printed image collections for study.

By the 1950s, the development of 35mm slides provided a vast improvement over large, clunky lantern slides. Magic lantern projectors were susceptible to fires, but 35mm projectors ran safely and efficiently. The 35mm slides provided rich colour and were more portable. Slide libraries were necessary to house collections of images for the teaching of art history – everything from cave paintings to modern art (Kohl, 2012).
Towards the end of the 20th century, as the use of digital images increased, slide libraries underwent an immense transition. Slides gradually fell out of favour and today are rarely used for teaching. Visual resources centres shifted their efforts from creating slides to digitizing them. This continues to be an ongoing effort for many visual resource offices, having had hundreds of thousands of analogue images in their collections.

While visual resources centres have gradually shifted from slide libraries to become digital image repositories, the transition is not over. They are continuing to transform into more collaborative environments, working with shared resources – such as linked open data – that benefit the communities outside their campuses. Visual resources professionals are exploring data mining, 360° photos and virtual reality as new means of exploring digital humanities. They also may specialize in underserved areas, such as Eastern art history, or in local history.

Visual resources centres offer many other services, such as photography, copyright advisement, technology training and equipment lending. With less time needed for managing in-house image collections, visual resources centres are able to expand beyond their traditional scope.

Who are visual resources professionals?

Technicians, specialists, cataloguers, photographers, directors, librarians and curators are among the most prevalent roles in visual resources. A 2015 survey of the profession found that most respondents (59%) work in higher education, with museums in second place at 29%. The number of visual resources staff working in museums has increased by a significant margin – almost 20% – since the previous survey in 2007 (VRA, 2016). This is no surprise considering that many museums are expanding their online presence with high-quality digital images of their collections.

Graduate-level degrees in art history and in library and information science are the most common credentials for visual resources professionals: 85% of those in visual resources have at least one graduate degree, 55% with one master’s, 19% with two master’s and 11% with a doctorate. For master’s degrees, library and information science ranked just above art history, followed by museum studies (13%) and studio art (10%). Those with doctoral degrees had mainly studied art history (55%), with other disciplines such as information science at less than 10%. The most common undergraduate degree obtained by respondents is in art history, followed closely by studio art (VRA, 2016).

The core duties of visual resources professionals have remained essentially the same for over a century: creating, collecting and cataloguing images for their users. Of course, in the digital age, these tasks are performed much differently: photographing and scanning objects, prints and film; researching online image sources; and performing complex data operations to ensure the accuracy and accessibility of images.

However, the roles of most professionals go beyond digitization or cataloguing. Additional responsibilities may include research and copyright assistance, leading class...
presentations and workshops, technology training, event photography, IT or audiovisual support, reference desk shifts, teaching, web design, social media and marketing. Many individuals have split appointments or work part time.

**Skills development**

There is no specific degree programme or academic trajectory for aspiring visual resources professionals (Iyer, 2009). Many students, new professionals and seasoned veterans alike take it on themselves to stay on top of the evolving technologies in the field.

Fortunately, there are numerous resources available to novice and experienced individuals alike. Popular organizations among visual resources professionals are the Visual Resources Association (VRA), the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), the American Alliance of Museums and the Digital Library Federation. In addition to conferences, these organizations host webinars, workshops, Twitter chats and other informative events.

Local chapters and student groups of these organizations are also excellent resources. Visual Resources Emerging Professionals and Students (VREPS) and Art Libraries Students & New ARLIS Professionals (ArLiSNAP) collaborate on a virtual conference each year. Each group also shares opportunities in the field, such as calls for papers, fellowships, job postings, workshops and new resources.

Perhaps one of the most effective, hands-on ways to fill any educational gaps is to attend the Summer Educational Institute, an intensive week-long programme created by ARLIS/NA and the VRA Foundation. Its curriculum covers digital imaging, metadata, intellectual property rights, digital asset management and more. In her analysis of visual resources job postings, Hemalata Iyer finds that ‘a master’s degree programme in library and information science, supplemented with training in the Summer Educational Institute, would provide appropriate training for a visual resources career’ (Iyer, 2009).

**Digitization best practices**

An effective digitization workflow is paramount to the core functions of visual resource centres. Many have backlogs of thousands of legacy items to digitize, not to mention the day-to-day requests from their patrons. Establishing priorities is necessary for all digitization projects (Eklund, 2012).

Appropriate computers, software and devices are essential for successful digitizing endeavours. Many visual resources centres are equipped with flatbed scanners, digital SLR (single-lens reflex) cameras and copy stands. Programmes from the Adobe Creative Suite are most often used for imaging.

Digitization practices vary widely. An image scan for an upcoming publication may look different from a scan done for a PowerPoint presentation, but individual items should not be digitized more than once. Re-scanning is a waste of time and resources, and
because older materials are often quite delicate, they should not be handled more than is necessary.

Standard practice is to make a master file for each image digitized and to have separate access copies for downloading and editing. Master files should be in a non-compressed format with a high resolution, and they should be stored securely in networked servers that are backed up regularly. TIF images are the prevailing format for archival digital images, but because of their large size, smaller institutions may not be able to accommodate them.

Access images are usually smaller versions of the corresponding master images. They are often saved as JPEGs, a compressed image format that uses significantly less memory. Images should only be altered on derivative copies of the master. For instance, in scanning a damaged film negative, there should be no retouching of the master file. Restorative work alters the original information of the film image, so only copies should be restored. An art history professor who requested the scan may want a touched-up image for teaching, since visible damage such as burns or scratches is distracting. Conversely, a conservator may be interested in the original damaged image, showing the negative in its condition at the time of the scan. Furthermore, if an original photograph is overly or sloppily retouched, there is often no way to undo these changes.

There are no overarching standards for high-quality digital images because of institutions’ widely varying needs and evolving technologies. However, the Federal Agencies’ Digitization Guidelines Initiatives routinely publishes standards used by the US National Archives and other agencies. Other resources may be found at the Image Permanence Institute, which offers a wealth of information on conserving all types of images – film formats in particular, but also digital images.

**Metadata best practices**

Without textual information to describe them, images are essentially inaccessible. Image recognition technologies, such as those in Google’s Reverse Image Search, often do not produce any results, especially for rare images.

In visual resources, metadata identifies and describes images. There are three basic types of metadata:

- **technical metadata:** digital file information such as capture time, pixel dimensions and image resolution
- **administrative metadata:** local data used for records management, including accession numbers, file names and notes about the image (e.g. ‘slide missing’)
- **descriptive metadata:** describes the content of the work depicted in the image

Embedded metadata is stored within the image file itself, and images can be linked to database records on the visual resources centre’s content management system. The image
Examples of different databases within visual resources centres include vendor-provided options from Luna or Artstor, or customized programmes built in Filemaker Pro or Microsoft Access. Some visual resources centres use the same system that their parent institutions use, but this can be problematic because museum and library databases were not designed for visual resources use.

To address this, the data standard VRA Core was created for the specific needs of those working with images of cultural heritage objects. One of VRA Core’s main features is that it delineates the artwork from the image. A work record describes a distinct object or structure, be it a painting, sculpture, original photograph or archaeological site. An image record describes the visual representation of the work. Image records store information such as the source of the image and specific description of the image in relation to the work (e.g. ‘detail of hands’ or ‘view of mosque looking northwest’).

The relationship of work records to image records is parent–child. In a relational database, the image record links to the work record. Relational databases link many different kinds of records together, such as all images of artworks at the Louvre, or all Chinese ceramics. This is different from a ‘flat’ database, such as an Excel spreadsheet, which has non-linked data (Eklund, 2012).

Cataloging Cultural Objects is a manual for describing works and their image surrogates. Developed in 2006 by the VRA, Cataloging Cultural Objects maps to VRA Core and to another metadata standard, Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA).

Finally, authority lists ensure consistency of data across institutions. The Getty’s Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and Union List of Artist Names (ULAN) provide the preferred spellings and hierarchies of terms and names. For example, should an artwork by El Bosco be catalogued under his colloquial name or by his full name, Hieronymus Bosch? ULAN indicates that the preferred entry is Bosch, Hieronymus.

**Open content**

Many museums and collections, recognizing the value of added scholarship, have made their digital collections fully accessible. The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam was a pioneer in providing high-quality, open access images to the public. Images of their public domain artworks are completely free for any purpose, including commercial use. The Getty’s Open Content Program has the same idea. High-quality downloads of more than 100,000 museum images are available, and no permission is needed to re-use or publish them (Getty, 2017).

Metadata, too, has become open and shared, leading to new discoveries. In 2015, the Museum of Modern Art released a dataset of 100,000+ records on GitHub, open for anyone to use. One data professional compared the years of artwork acquisitions to the
gender of the artist. News website FiveThirtyEight used the data to publish illuminating graphs of the Museum of Modern Art’s artworks, including date of creation versus date of acquisition, and a comparison of paintings’ dimensions, showing how many are taller than wide and vice versa (Romeo, 2015).

Openly available content leads to new insights. GitHub’s users include computer scientists, programmers and creative technologists; their unique backgrounds can add a new layer of meaning to art information.

De-accessioning 35mm slides

Even while promoting forward-thinking initiatives like open content, many visual resources centres are still challenged by a legacy problem: what to do with obsolescent 35mm slide collections? Some colleges may have older professors still dutifully filling slide carousels for their lectures, but many visual resources professionals have since guided them into the digital era. Circulation of slides dropped dramatically, starting around 2004 or 2005, and most institutions had stopped circulating them altogether by the start of the 2010s (Godfrey, 2014; Cartledge et al., 2014).

Should slides be retained, moved or discarded – or some combination of the three? What do visual resources centres look like without slides? Can they justify their space and budget needs to administrative heads? Unfortunately, some visual resources centres did not survive the transition and have been shuttered. After retirement, other professionals found that their positions were either not filled or reclassified at a lower level.

A 2014 survey of 112 35mm slide collections revealed that 85% of respondents were located in an academic environment, with most of the rest in cultural institutions. Collection size ranged from 80,000 to 550,000 slides. Only 24% of collections were reported as being intact. The rest were either undergoing culling, had already been disseminated, or had been sent to remote storage (VRA Slide & Transitional Media Task Force, 2014).

Reasons for the de-accessioning of slides varied: lack of use, lack of funds, lack of space, administrative pressure, facility closure or some combination of the above. Around half of the survey respondents had had their collection space reduced.

Criteria for weeding slides included:

- poor image quality
- poor slide quality (film deteriorated)
- equivalent digital images being available
- slides being duplicates
- slides being unlabelled
- slides being book images (copy photography)
- slides being outside the collection scope.
Conversely, slides were kept for the following reasons:

- They were rare or original images.
- They were gifted or donated slides.
- They were slides kept for cataloguing information (labels).
- There was no immediate pressure to cull.
- They were slides selected by faculty to be retained.

In many instances, such as at the Getty Museum’s Slide Library, or in Oxford University’s art history department, slides that document the history of their institutions – event photos, fieldwork photography, architectural plans – were retained. Art and design schools often keep slides of student work and exhibitions.

At Cardiff University, Visual Resources Librarian Jenny Godfrey found reasons for institutions to keep at least some part of their slide collections: ‘The sensual nature of the slide is a novelty to students who have only known the digital image on a bland screen’ (Godfrey, 2014). John Davis, visual resources curator at Manchester Metropolitan University, found that there was a ‘significant increase’ in the number of students visiting the visual resources centre to view slides because they are interested in working with ‘found images and pre-digital technology’ (Davis, 2012).

Once a collection is reviewed, staff must decide what to do with the discarded slides. They can be discarded, but because many visual resources centres are located in art-centric environments, they can often be given away for creative re-use. Many slides are still protected under copyright, but the chances of someone using discarded slides in a way that would not be considered fair use is extremely unlikely. Slides have been used to make lampshades, light catchers and viewfinders. They have also been incorporated in contemporary art exhibits. In 2012, Ithaca College’s visual resources centre invited faculty, staff and students to pick up bags of de-accessioned slides to use in creating new artworks. Completed works were exhibited in a show later that year (Cartledge et al., 2014).

In the music world, vinyl records and even cassette tapes have made comebacks. Recently, instant cameras have also surged in popularity after being almost nonexistent a few years ago. A second coming of slides is not entirely implausible. Nostalgia and the desire for tangible objects run strong in the digital age.

**New spaces, new collaborations**

One big benefit of reducing or eliminating slide collections is increased space. Bulky rows of slide cabinets have the effect of a wall or barrier; without them, the cleared space can be transformed into something more open and inviting.

The extra space at Connecticut College was used to create a digital photography studio (Braunstein, 2013). At Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the Visual Resources Department invited the archives to use their refashioned space as a reading room. This
increased the collaboration between the two departments (Cartledge et al., 2014). At the University of Georgia, the fine arts librarian was invited to host office hours inside the visual resources centre. Similarly, at the University of New Mexico, professionals from the Bunting Visual Resources Library and the Fine Arts and Design Library began a ‘staff sharing’ initiative that placed visual resources professionals at the reference desk and in collaborations with library exhibitions (Kline, 2014).

Duke University’s Wired! Lab for Digital Art History & Visual Culture brings faculty, librarians, curators, technologists and students together on digital humanities projects. These projects integrate 3D modelling, web development and data visualization as part of its digital pedagogy, equipping those involved with a deeper understanding of technologies and the creative ways in which they may be used (Jacobs, 2016).

No longer dusty slide libraries, revamped visual resources centres are more like information commons or makerspaces, collaborative environments that foster learning through technology. One of the attractions of such spaces is that they provide equipment and software users would not be able to afford individually (Milewicz, 2009). Another advantage is the space they provide for collaboration and exploration.

**Conclusion**

In the age of Google, where thousands of images can be found with just a few keystrokes, are visual resource centres still relevant? They are, and will continue to be, so long as they keep evolving. Patrons interact with visual materials now more than ever, but that does not mean they know how to find, interpret or use images effectively. Visual resources professionals can stay relevant by advocating for visual literacy and by curating repositories of images that may not be available elsewhere.

Changes at visual resource centres parallel what is happening to libraries in general: where less space is needed for physical collections, more space can be dedicated to ‘defining the user experience’ (Houston, 2015). Serendipitous discoveries can be made in the stacks or slide drawers, and human connections are made daily. These experiences cannot be replicated in online environments. The slide library may be a dying breed, but the growing use of visual media in virtually all forms of communication ensures that the visual resources profession is here to stay.

**References and bibliography**


Davis, J. (2012) E-mail message posted to ACADI listserv, 2 November, unpublished.


