

## Seeing the Big Picture: the Integration of Visual Resources for Art Libraries

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### SLIDE 1 – Title

#### Acknowledgements

Before I begin, I would like to say thank you to:

- Greta Bahnemann for sharing an independent study on Art Librarianship with me at the University of British Columbia.
- Maryly Snow who recently retired as the head of the Architecture Visual Resources Library at UC Berkeley after 30+years, for inspiring the librarian in me.
- And Sarah Falls, for inviting me to present here today.

Thank you all!

### SLIDE 2 – Bamiyan through window by A. Haidaryan

My presentation is excerpted from a larger paper that I had a hard time condensing into 16 minutes. What I will present here today is a kind of parable on the necessity of art librarians and visual resources curators to consider image collections in a new way.

### SLIDE 3 – Historic image of Bamiyan

My research on this topic was inspired by the Taliban in Afghanistan. I know this statement might seem inflammatory or insensitive, but it is the truth. Before starting my MLIS degree at UBC, I was cataloger at the Architecture Visual Resources Library --or AVRL-- at the University of California Berkeley from 1993-2003. During this time, we received a gift of 30,000 Kodachrome slides from the estate of a Professor Emeritus. Photographed during a period of intensive travel from 1959-1970, these slides covered architecture and built environments in 32 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and North America.

The Stump Collection of World Architecture --as it is now known-- covers many vernacular styles, from mud huts in Central Africa to colonial architecture in Southeast Asia. The collection also

happened to include approximately 40 slides of the colossal 5<sup>th</sup> century Buddhas of Bamiyan in Afghanistan. These particular images proved to have exceptional value when, in March 2001, Taliban leaders in Afghanistan declared that the Bamiyan Buddhas were sacrilegious idols, and obliterated them with Stinger missiles.

#### **SLIDE 4 – Bamiyan destruction**

At the time, the staff at AVRL felt a sense of duty to make the Bamiyan material available as soon as possible. We felt we had worthwhile images, and we needed to make them available to others. Approximately 20 of the best images were selected, cataloged, and added to the collection as slides and digital surrogates in the AVRL's own online catalog, called SPIRO.

The acquisition and evaluation of the Bamiyan material, cataloging the images, management of the digital files, and administering the rights to the files all fit into the regular operations of AVRL. This was daily life in the AVRL, and daily life for many in this audience today: faculty and staff identify material to add to the collection and, by various means, we create physical and digital access to images.

#### **SLIDE 5 – Bamiyan is a hole**

The images of the Bamiyan Buddhas in the SPIRO database may only have been surrogate records and metadata but, considering that they no longer exist, surrogates and metadata are really *all that we have left*. So, even though the AVRL collection was always considered a teaching collection --a small, departmental library with a staff of 3-- Stump's images suddenly became primary research material. It is intriguing to think about the implications of this.

#### **SLIDE 6 – Japanese lantern slide, UOregon collection**

Every one of us has --in our own image collections-- material that is equivalent to the Bamiyan Buddhas. For example, a professor donates a collection of lantern slides depicting Japanese samurai culture. A graduate student in City Planning photographed and identified 100 images of 19<sup>th</sup> century housing in Calcutta for her dissertation research. Iraqi public art, ward housing in New Orleans, internet art -- all of these topics have relevance to scholarship outside our own departments, and outside our own art-and-architecture-related conceptions of them as visual material.

#### **SLIDE 7 – SPIRO search: Bamiyan**

As with material collected in the Berkeley Library system, everything we did at AVRL followed a paradigm established by the concept of bibliographic control. We created item-level catalog records, employed authority control, and assigned subject indexing using controlled vocabularies. In technical services jargon, these tasks comprise what is called original cataloging!

Each item record in the SPIRO database also has a unique identifier, and a source record that refers to an ISBN, a source or vendor attribution, a copyright statement, as well as fields for AVRL's own internal records management.

### **SLIDE 8 – Melvyl record: keyword Bamiyan**

The AVRL was not an official part of the Berkeley Library, but on a fundamental level, our cataloging shared many the same features with the million of records in the UC Library catalogs. Nevertheless, SPIRO was, and still is, a stand-alone database. I keep coming back to the question posed by the Bamiyan Buddhas.

How could we have created greater access to our images? Should we have asked catalogers in the Main Library to create a MARC (or OPAC compatible) record for the Bamiyan Buddha slides in the library catalog? Why not? In many respects, creating a catalog record would have been the most immediate and simple solution but this would have introduced a radical departure from our mandate, and from our workflow.

### **SLIDE 9 – SPIRO record: location Bamiyan**

More importantly, I think, is this fact: we had always considered the importance of our images *to each other rather than to other library material*. And with so much energy going into the creation and development of SPIRO, we devoted our attention to amassing images rather than making our material relevant and accessible to the larger campus community. As a departmental collection, we were so involved with the needs of our own faculty to forge relationships beyond them. This quandary appears commonplace.

### **SLIDE 10 – Bamiyan Hotel, A. Haidaryan**

By the time the Bamiyan Buddhas were destroyed, the (by that time) 50 thousand plus images in the SPIRO database stood as a renegade example of an online image database, but it was, in effect, surrounded by a moat. Recounting this story is not intended as a criticism of the AVRL's

policies, or the UC Library system, but an illustration of the “wall-flower” existence of many stand-alone image databases. There is often kind of isolation of image resources in their relationship to larger library issues: namely, communication between library departments and administration, collection development, standards for metadata and discovery, and, ultimately, comprehensive access to worthwhile content across platforms.

#### **SLIDE 11 – Clark Art Institute Library, search: chocolate**

The moral of the story: image resources need to be integrated into library services to be meaningful to the library communities of which they are a part. On campuses with multiple catalog databases, or in collections that do not have the status of a library, selectively creating MARC or Dublin Core records to upload into the OPAC may be one solution. MARC, DC, XML and VRA-Core records are more and more able to be imported/exported/uploaded into the same systems. Cross-walking record formats, subject metadata, and record interoperability make this integration not only possible, but doable. I know it sounds old-fashioned to focus on the OPAC, record structure and interoperability these days, but the library catalog is still the primary discovery, access, and inventory tool to our own collections. Next generation catalogs will, theoretically, expand the possibilities of the catalog, not abandon them -- at least not the data that they contain. Here is an example of “integrated” results for the keyword search: chocolate from the Clark Art Institute Library that includes books, images and other formats.

#### **SLIDE 12 – U Oregon ILS page with IMAGES as a resource**

Another way to create greater accessibility to images is to create indirect --but high profile-- access through the ILS. Directing users to image databases from the library gateway, for example, raises the status of visual material to the equal of other library resources. This strategy also helps to bring into proximity multiple collection agendas. Reference librarians can more easily direct users to multiple types of library materials, including those being developed in tiny, off-the-beaten-path collections. Since many visual resources collections are departmentally-driven collections, the ILS gateway brings lesser known collections into wider purview. Here is an example of the University of Oregon Libraries Gateway with a link to image resources.

#### **SLIDE 13 -- U Oregon IMAGES gateway**

Creating access to images through the ILS user interface also enables some functionality to be maintained by a library’s systems administration. (Of course, speaking frankly, this may have positive or negative implications in terms of local workflow, etc.) Several OPAC systems offer a

platform for federated searching. Other libraries use meta-searching software to create gateway searching across multiple catalogs such as the OPAC, and collections that reside in CONTENTdm, Luna Insight, or other storage and retrieval platforms. While there is no single recipe for integrating images into the OPAC or the ILS, an intention to create more seamless access is an important step.

#### **SLIDE 14 – Image of Melvyl interface with “integrated” e-book result**

Let’s think about access to electronic resources for a moment. Many of the recent technological developments that enable library users access to e-books provide a kind of paradigm for access to images. User authentication and link resolution tools work together in the ILS to provide different levels of access to electronic resources. Often this process involves multiple types of software working in tandem, such as link resolution software, indexing software, and proxy servers. The sophisticated integration of these processes depends on many variables and may include status of the user, status of the computer IP address, and administration of copyright. Here is an example of a UC Melvyl catalog record with integrated e-book access from within the OPAC.

#### **SLIDE 15 – Astor Library Closed!**

Despite the multiplicity of resources types (both analog and digital) held by libraries, a random sample of a dozen library catalogs illustrates that, in many cases, images are very hard to locate in the cornucopia of library resources. Judging from the websites of some academic libraries – even those with quite prestigious image collections-- you would never know these collections are there. I am not naming names here; but I am suggesting that each of us go home after this conference and look at how library users navigate to our image resources from the top level of the library ILS gateway. Are we making our collections available to library users? Where are our Bamiyan Buddhas?

#### **SLIDE 16– image of electronic resource record in MARC/UCSD**

Interestingly, many of the factors that enable seamless access to e-journals and electronic resources are also relevant to visual resources collections, particularly when the collection includes both vendor licensed and copy photography images (which may be of lesser quality). Linking from catalog records to digital objects held in a database outside of the catalog is another method of creating access to selective digital content. Here is an example from UC San Diego

showing results in multiple formats –including images held in ArtSTOR -- for a search of Frida Kahlo, in the OPAC Roger.

If I am researching the Frida Kahlo for a feminist theory course, I want to know that there is a collection of images as well as books, electronic resources, and maybe even a reel of cranky old Super 8 film. As a user, I honestly don't care if the visual resources collection is housed in this department or that. I want to know—to the best of my ability—EVERYTHING that my library has on my topic. Then I can choose what is useful to me now.

### **SLIDE 17 – Caravaggio**

We might think that images are still the exception to the rule in terms of discovery, but image content is nothing new to art libraries or scholarship. Lacking the original work of art to study directly, art librarians and curators have--by necessity--relied on surrogate images for scholarship and teaching purposes. Max Marmor suggests that “art libraries are, among other things, vast corpora of images.” (Marmor 2005) Regardless of format – auction catalogs, glass lantern slides, Kodachrome slides, glossy monograph plates, or digital TIFF and jpeg files -- art scholarship has promoted the use of images in ways not seen in other disciplines.

### **SLIDE 18 – Carravaggio to Cindy Sherman**

The interdisciplinary reality of academia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century truly challenges the separation of an institution's text and image resources. This challenge is being shaped by two very different factors. First, the use of images has spilled over into other academic disciplines. And second, as we have seen, library OPACs and ILS systems have an increasing capacity to manage disparate information types.

### **SLIDE 19 – Francesco Goya**

In the current scholarly information landscape, the use of images is ubiquitous and pervasive. Two recent, large-scale studies funded by the National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education (David Green 2006, and Roger Schonfeld 2006) have confirmed this to be the case. Visual resources collections are still full of images of art, architecture, and cultural artifacts. But increasingly, these materials are used for research and instruction in a variety of academic disciplines -- including the study of anthropology, photography, cinema, geography, advertising and communications, environmental science, material culture, history, languages and literature, and the natural sciences. We might think that graffiti tags in Atlanta, 18<sup>th</sup> century anatomical

drawings, or Spanish portraiture are only useful to art students, but that is simply no longer the case. Indeed, if there is a single word for the state of scholarship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is interdisciplinary. If you had two words, they might be: adaptive reuse.

### **SLIDE 20 – Korans in window, Sarafan Carsisi**

Corresponding to the increasing appreciation of the informational value of images, is an increasing demand placed on visual resource collections, the expertise of visual resources staff, and the technical requirements of the collections themselves.

### **SLIDE 21 – Bamiyan INTACT**

Art librarians and visual resources curators are managers of materials that are actively being used by library users outside the departments of art, architecture and the allied arts. This expanded universe of image use requires that art librarians and curators understand not only how images are used by their own faculty and students, but also how images will be described and managed in the context of *other*, relevant library resources. In fine arts and humanities libraries, images can, and, we might boldly assume, one day will, be as accessible as more “traditional” library holdings such as journals, monographs, and, electronic resources are now. It really is up to us to advocate for the relevance of our own collections, and to legitimize their value along side everything else our libraries offer.

### **SLIDE 22 – Google: billions and billions served**

Librarianship has been wrestling with many issues of relevance in light of Google. I don’t want to go into minutiae on this topic but, suffice it to say, the incredible resources that our libraries have developed and maintained over the decades deserve to be as broadly accessible as possible. We want to keep our users engaged in the library from remote locations 24/7, and we want to provide them with materials they want and need. If we want to stay central to scholarship, we need to aim for seamlessness in the discovery and delivery of library content, and that includes images.

### **SLIDE 23 – Fountain by Marcel Duchamp**

Seamlessness is --to a large degree-- what makes Google so attractive to users. The sheer magnitude of web results has fueled the mythology that not only is “everything on the web,” but that if it is here today, it will be here tomorrow (or at some version of it will be). Seen in the best

light, the Internet does seem to function, in the words of Diana Dack, as a “de-facto distributed digital library, providing direct access to a vast range of digital resources housed, maintained and made available by a variety of institutions.” (Dack 2001).

#### **SLIDE 24 – TYPE is ALIVE! On flickr**

But the web poses an interesting challenge to the idea of collection management for visual resources, since it is larger than anything an institution can amass, and remains highly changeable as a source. Even when the quality of images is consistently high, there is still the factor of longevity. After all, Internet resources are inherently dynamic objects, or as Howard Besser describes it: objects that are “essentially alive, and changing on a daily basis” (Besser 2002).

#### **SLIDE 25 – Istanbul Bookshop**

The proliferation of digital media and the advent of image reproduction technologies have created new emphasis on visual information and visual representation. Fields of scholarship, such as critical theory and semiotics, have developed alongside the concept of the *visual as information*.

Art librarians and visual resources curators can assure that quality visual material is available to library users across campus by committing to developing access image collections with standards **not only** for cataloging and metadata, but also with the same high standard for discovery and access that we expect for other library material. As James Murphy describes it: “these are intellectual necessities, not frills to be discarded because of the cost...” (Murphy 2003).

#### **SLIDE 26 – AVRL Slide drawer**

A fuller integration of visual resource collections into the library ILS will both enable, and assure, our professional responsibility for these unique resources. Bringing images into closer proximity with other library resources--through the use of the catalog and ILS frameworks--will bring visual resources wholly into the big picture.

Thank you!

**NB: Author references cite sources in original paper.**

#### **SLIDE 27 -- Image sources**

Clark Art Institute. (screen dump)

CNN (Cable News Network). Bamiyan Buddhas destroyed, unknown photographer.  
<http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/03/12/afghan.buddha.02/>

Flickr. Photos by Tulipa Turcica. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sinem/>

GoogleImages.  
<http://images.google.com>

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Timeline of Art History.  
<http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/splash.htm>

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Permanent Collection Online.  
[http://www.metmuseum.org/Works\\_of\\_Art/collection.asp](http://www.metmuseum.org/Works_of_Art/collection.asp)

New York Public Library Picture Collection Online. "Jan. 9, 1854, Astor Library opened."  
<http://digital.nypl.org/mmpco/index.cfm>

New York Times. Travel feature on Afghanistan, photos by Azim Haidaryan  
[http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2005/09/19/travel/20050925\\_KABUL\\_SLIDESHOW.html](http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2005/09/19/travel/20050925_KABUL_SLIDESHOW.html)

University of California Berkeley, SPIRO UC Berkeley. (screen dump)  
<http://www.mip.berkeley.edu/spiro>

University of California Libraries. (screen dump)  
<http://melvyl.cdlib.org/>

University of California San Diego Library. (screen dump)  
<http://roger.ucsd.edu/>

University of Oregon Library. (screen dump)

University of Oregon Library, Gertrude Warner Collection.  
<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/catdept/digcol/gh/index.html>