Introduction

At Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Libraries, staff from Collection Management, Cataloging, and Special Collections and Archives developed a local genre headings index to be used in the online catalog to provide enhanced access to the Libraries’ collection of artists’ books. The book art genre index allows users to locate items by their structure or features when they are unfamiliar with individual artists or titles.

The VCU Book Art Collection

The VCU Book Art Collection includes over 9,000 items and is housed in Special Collections and Archives at James Branch Cabell Library. The collection is international in scope and is strongest in publications from the 1960s to the present. It encompasses all aspects of contemporary book art publications ranging from photo-narratives to three-dimensional book works. In addition to artists’ books, the collection includes art prints, exhibition catalogs, and reference materials. A large selection of concrete, sound, and visual poetry is also included in the collection. Special Collections and Archives is a repository for the Women’s Studio Workshop, the largest publisher of hand printed artists’ books in the United States.

At Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Libraries, staff from Collection Management, Cataloging, and Special Collections and Archives developed a local genre headings index to be used in the online catalog. An attempt was made to include terms that address structures, binding techniques, formats, and art techniques/media found in the book art collection. Resources such as the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), the Library of Congress Theaurus for Graphic Materials (LCTGM), Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), and RBMS Controlled Vocabularies Genre Terms have been consulted in developing the list of terms and their definitions.

The glossary was the basis for the genre authority records, which included see and see also entries, with broader and narrower term qualifiers, as well as scope notes that display in the online catalog.

Sample Authority Records

View in GUI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>655</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>A Book art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>655</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catalog Interface

In the catalog, book art was established as a separate local genre to be added to all book art records. The specific book art genres were set up as part of the book art index.

Book art records receive a local genre of book art and then any other appropriate specific book art genre heading, as 655 fields.

Tables in the library catalog were edited to accommodate the new book art index. Additional changes were made to create links between the authority records and the headings in the bibliographic records, and to create a browseable book art index for the online catalog.

Cataloging Module and Dropdown Menu

Cataloging Checklist

To help facilitate cataloging with the new book art genre headings, we created a paper checklist of all book art genres along with a section for additional notes. Staff in Special Collections can check off relevant book art genres and include suggested notes to be added to the records. This checklist then accompanies book art titles when they are sent from Special Collections to Cataloging.

Retrospective Cataloging

We also developed a workflow to identify previously cataloged book art titles that lacked any book art genres. These titles can then be added to an excel spreadsheet, and moved to a shared drive where Special Collections staff can add the appropriate genres. The excel file can then be used to generate brief MARC records that can overlay existing records in the catalog with the added book art genres.

Future Directions

The book art genre index is a useful tool to provide increased access to the book art collection. The current number of genres in the index has now increased to 58, and we plan to continue to add new genres as needed. As the Library of Congress continues development with its genre/form theaurus, genres are likely to play a more important role in the catalog. Hopefully genre headings will be incorporated as additional facets in a future discovery system. Additionally, genres will be important features that can be included in metadata for any future digitization projects involving the book art collection, either using CONTENTdm or as a possible collection in ARTstor’s Shared Shelf.