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Program for the Annual Conference of the Museum Computer Network, October 11-14, 1989

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Museum Computer Network

Annual Conference 1989

PROGRAM

Chicago

Please note the following changes in logistical details:

Wednesday: 8-10 Cash bar in the CONTINENTAL ROOM.

Thursday: 10-4 The vendor marathon will be in PARLOR EF. (Vendor demonstrations will be in Parlors AB and CD).

Thursday: Two busses will run between the Knickerbocker Hotel and the Chicago Historical Society from 5 pm to 7:45 pm.

Saturday: 10:45-12 Formative Meetings of Special Interest Groups:
Administrative and Membership Information Systems will meet in the CONTINENTAL ROOM.
Vendors and Consultants will meet in the BOARD ROOM (Parlor J renamed).

Friday: The evening reception will be held in the CONTINENTAL ROOM.

Saturday: 1:30 - 3 pm Improving the Systems Acquisition Process... will meet in TOWER EAST.

Museum Computer Network
1989 Annual Conference
PROGRAM
Chicago, October 11-14

The Knickerbocker
Walton Place at North Michigan Avenue
(312) 751-8100

Wednesday, October 11

All day -- 9:30 to 4:30 Parlor AB (Second floor)

Management issues in the selection of a collection management system
Nigel Elmore, Systems Analyst, Library of Congress, and
David Bearman, President, Archives and Museum Informatics

Afternoon -- 1 to 4 (Second floor)

Introductory Workshop: "Things I wish I had known before I started"
Ron Kley, Consultant, East Winthrop, Maine, **Parlor H**
Cataloging Museum Objects with the Art and Architecture Thesaurus
Cathy Whitehead and Marguerite d'April-Smith, AAT, **Parlor CD**
Relational Database Design for Collections Management and Research
Jane Stone, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, **Parlor EF**

Late evening (8-10) cash bar in the MCN suite

Knickerbocker Hotel, 2nd floor

Thursday, October 12

Simultaneously -- 9 to 5

(Self-transported) visits to local museum automation installations
Schedules and tickets will be available at the registration desk.
Vendor demonstrations at the Knickerbocker Hotel, **2nd floor**
Vendor Marathon (Lecture/presentations), **Parlor H, 2nd floor**

10:30 Cuadra
11:00 Quantitative Systems
11:30 Cactus

1:00 Questor
1:30 Vernon Systems
2:00 Blackbaud
2:30 Select Ticketing
3:00 Willoughby
3:30 Access

Evening, 5:30-7:30,

Reception at the Chicago Historical Society, North Clark St. at North Ave. (near the southern end of Lincoln Park). A bus will leave from the front of the Knickerbocker Hotel at 5 pm, and return

Friday, October 13,

All-day Electronic Imaging Conference, Ballroom

Moderator: Alan B. Newman

9-10:40 am -- Electronic Imaging Tools

Tools for Prototyping Electronic Image Libraries
Alan B. Newman, Art Institute of Chicago

Suggested Interfaces for Image Databases
Howard Besser, School of Library and Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

3-D Computer Modeling for Museum Applications
Jane Stone, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City

Image Quality and Viewer Perception
Michael Ester, Getty Art History Information Program

Gains & Losses in Computer Storage of Art Images
Russell A. Kirsch, Sturvil Corporation, Clarksburg, MD

11-12:30 -- Electronic Imaging Projects

Project Athena, M.I.T.
Ben Davis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

IRIS, Brown University
Paul Kahn, Brown University

The Artist Videodisc: Ed Pascke, Harold Tovisch, Eadwead Muybridge
Jim Sheldon, Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA

Museum Education Consortium: French Impressionist Interactive Video
Kathy Wilson, Bank Street College of Education

1:45 - 3 -- Potentials and Pitfalls

Panelists:

David Bearman, Archives & Museum Informatics
James Drusik, Getty Conservation Institute
Andrew Eskind, International Museum of Photography/George Eastman House
Marilyn Schmitt, Getty Art History Information Program

3:15 -- Museum Use of Electronic Imaging: Today & Tomorrow

Kent Lydecker, Museum Education, Art Institute of Chicago
William Leisher, Conservation, Art Institute of Chicago

Please note that there are two simultaneous sessions on Friday. The second set of presentations is described on the following page.

Friday, October 13, continued

9-10:40 am - Beyond the Database: Hypertext and Games -- Tower East
Moderator: Janet Gomon, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution

Linking Information to Objects: A Hypertext Prototype
Judi Moline, United States Department of Commerce
Examining the Use of Hypertext in Exhibitions
Catherine Plaisant, Dept. of Computer Science, Univ. of Maryland at Coll. Park
Gallery Computer Games from the Detroit Institute of Arts
Jennifer Williams, Detroit Institute of Arts

11-12 am -- Electronic Communication -- Tower East
Moderator: Suzanne Quigley, Detroit Institute of Arts

The Education Utility: Museum Applications (coordinated electronic communication system, Battle Creek, MI)
Robert Learner, Kingman Museum of Natural History, Battle Creek, MI
LAN (Local Area Network) Introduction, Update, and Summary of Museum Uses
Susan Patterson, Saint Louis Art Museum

1:45 - 3 pm -- Case Studies in Museum Automation -- Tower East
Moderator: Suzanna Fabing, National Gallery of Art

Automation of the Springfield Library and Museums Association: Self-evaluation, Goal Assessment, Implementation
Trudy Oppenheimer and others, Springfield, MA
Facing a New Computer System: The Second Time Around
Suzanne Quigley, The Detroit Institute of Arts
Adaptive Use of an Existing Computer Software (SAS) for Collection Management
Anita Baerg- Vatndal, Milwaukee Public Museum

3:15 pm -- Case Studies in Museum Automation, continued -- Tower East
Moderator: Deirdre C. Stam, Museum Computer Network

Computerized Curation of the Lower Paleozoic Invertebrates at the Milwaukee Public Museum (Using SAS)
Paula M. Sumpter, Milwaukee Public Museum
Use of Data and Accountability
John Burnett, National Museums of Scotland
Testing the Feasibility of Using the MARC Format for a Museum Collections Management System -- The Syracuse University Experiment
Deirdre C. Stam, Museum Computer Network

Evening (5-7) -- Cash bar and light snack reception at the hotel.

Saturday, October 14

Please note that there are simultaneous sessions from 9 - 10:30 am.

9-10:30 am -- Museum and Archival Parallels Tower East

Moderator: Larry Viskochil, Chicago Historical Society

Archive on a Screen: A Multimedia Database for Access to Primary Resources
Beth Oddy, Syracuse University

Design Requirements for an Archives and Museum Information System
David Bearman, Archives and Museum Informatics

Developing Communication Standards: The Archival Experience
Marion Matters, Society of American Archivists

9--10: 30 am -- Practical Solutions to Common Problems Tower West

Moderator: James Bower, Getty Art History Program

Computers in Exhibits: Criteria for Application and Evaluation
John Hensley, St. Louis Science Center

Managing the National Park Service Museum Collections: Using the Automated Catalog System (ANCS)
Joan Bacharach, National Park Service

Computerization on a Shoestring: The Use of Off-the-shelf Technology and Dedicated Volunteers
Raymond D. Tindel, Oriental Institute Museum

10:45-12 Formative Meetings of Special interest Groups

Administrative and Membership Information Systems -- Parlor AB
Art Museum Issues -- Tower East
Museum Bulletin Boards and E Mail -- Tower West
Natural Science Museum Issues -- Parlor EF
Small Museums and Automation Issues -- Parlor H
Vendors and Consultants -- Parlor J
Visual Informatio (Photographs and Prints, Electronic Technologies) -- Parlor CD

12-1:30 Luncheon Ballroom

1:30 - 3 pm Improving the Systems Acquisition Process: A Dialog among Vendors, Consultants and Clients on the Use and Abuse of RFP's

Moderator: David Bearman, Archives and Informatics

Panel: Lenore Sarasan, Willoughby Associates, Ltd.
Mary Sullivan, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
Gary Rubenstein, Rubenstein/Justman Management Consultants, Beverly Hills, CA

3:15 - 4 pm MCN Membership Meeting Tower East

Presentation of the first David Vance Distinguished Service Award to David Vance

The Conference Program ends at 4 pm.

Exhibitors

Access International, 208 Union Wharf, Boston, MA 02109

Blackbaud MicroSystems, Inc., 160 East Main St.., Huntington, NY 11743

Cactus Software, 850 N. State Street, Suite 2F, Chicago, IL 60610

Cuadra Associates, Inc., 11835 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 855, Los Angeles, CA 90064

Master Software Corporation, 8604 Allison Road, Indianapolis, IN 46250

National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Curatorial Svces., Washington, DC 20013-7127

Questor Systems, Inc., 1005 E. Colorado Boulevard, Suite 208, Pasadena CA 91106

Select Ticketing Systems, PO Box 959, Syracuse, NY 13201

Vernon Systems, PO Box 6909, Auckland, New Zealand

Willoughby Associates, Ltd., 266 Linden, Winnetka, IL 60093

Museum Computer Network
c/o School of Information Studies
Syracuse University
Syracuse, NY 13244

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RESTAURANTS NEAR THE KNICKERBOCKER

Moderately priced luncheon fare

Water Tower Place Restaurants
835 North Michigan Avenue

1. Hillary's
2. D. B. Kaplans
3. Vie de France
4. Eatery

Spaggia Cafe
980 North Michigan Avenue

Oak Terrace at the Drake Hotel
140 East Walton Place

Hoppers
900 North Michigan Avenue

Oak Tree
25 East Oak

Johnny Ricket
901 North Rush

Hamburger Hamlet
44 East Walton Street

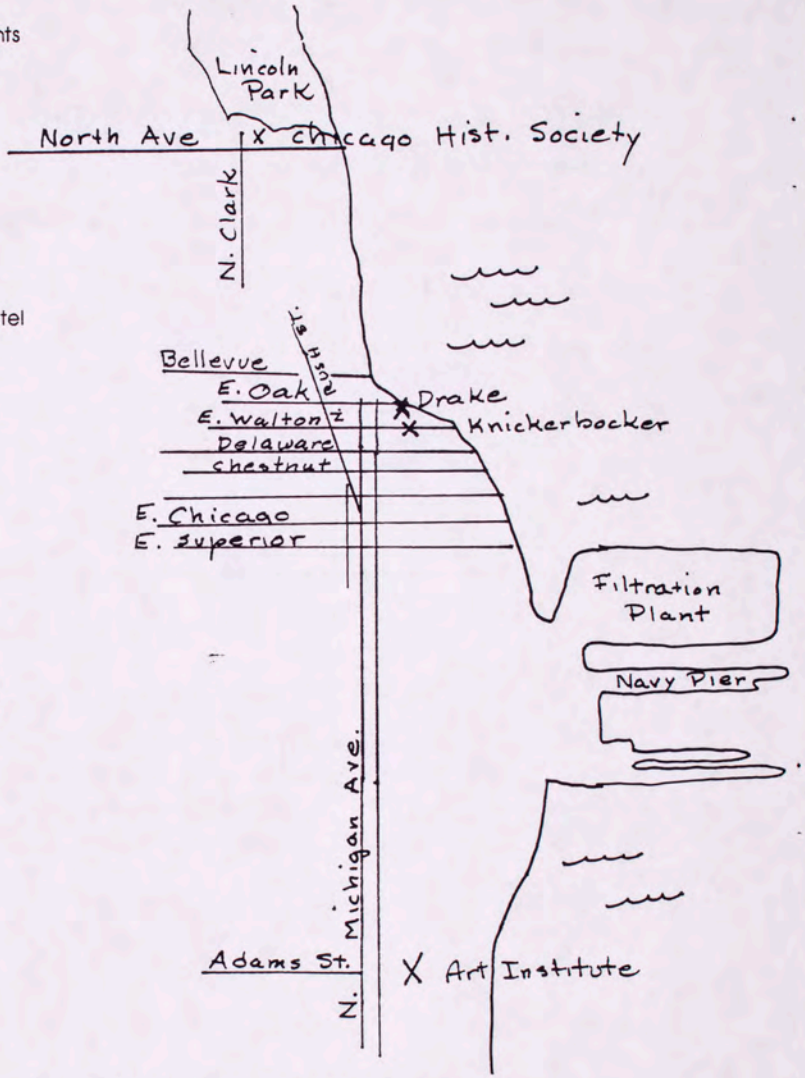
McDonald's
730 North Michigan Avenue

Arby's
115 East Chicago Avenue

Acorn on Oak
116 East Oak Street

Original Pancake House
22 Bellevue

Gino's Pizza
160 East Superior Street



We are grateful to Chip Tom of Willoughby Associates for these suggestions.

Joan Bacharach
National Park Service
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TITLE: Managing the National Park Service Museum Collections: Using the Automated National Catalog System (ANCS).

ABSTRACT:

This paper will present the National Park Service's continuing activities to computerize its vast holdings that include archeology, ethnology, history, archives, fine arts, biology, paleontology and geology using the Automated National Catalog System (ANCS). National Park Service (NPS) museum collections are located at over 300 individual sites throughout the United States. The ANCS and the Collection Management Report (CMR) that annually abstracts summary ANCS information concerning collection management activities are the primary tools for management of collections at the park museum, regional and Washington office levels. Statistics yielded from these annual reports have enabled the NPS to assess collection management needs and obtain funds to catalog the backlog of uncataloged objects that number over 25 million.

The paper will outline how ANCS is used by individual curators, park managers, regional curators and Washington staff to manage collections, provide inventories, and accountability. ANCS has also provided a mechanism whereby disciplinary concerns of classification, consistent data capture and terminology are being addressed. The NPS is one of the major users of Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging (1978) and the paper will report on the NPS conversion to The Revised Nomenclature (1988).

Future plans include an upgrade that will have multi-user and increased user-defined capabilities, and the development of a prototype to aggregate approximately 2.5 million records. The aggregated database will be housed centrally and will provide, for the first time a mechanism to centralize collection and research potential on museum collections within the NPS. This aggregated database promises to have a major positive impact on NPS collection and information management activities.

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TITLE:
Adaptive Use of an Existing Computer Software for Collections Management

ABSTRACT

For museums (or certain departments within the institutions) without computer software designed specifically for collections management and research purposes, it may be possible to adapt an existing software package to perform many of the functions needed to at least begin a mechanized information program. Although this may not be possible every time, in our case it has opened up the opportunity to begin entering the object data on a data base and to manipulate that data for curatorial, exhibit, accessioning and research purposes until computer software specifically designed for our collection needs can be found and funded.

The Milwaukee Public Museum is owned and governed by Milwaukee County, and shares a Statistical Analysis System (SAS) accounting package accessible through the County's mainframe. The History Section of the Museum has adapted SAS to function as a collections management data base. Through the use of this system, several advantages and disadvantages of using an existing in-house computer system have become apparent.

Efficiency is one primary reasons for using a computer, and for collections management the efficiency of the staff is more than doubled through its use by organizing and sorting the data in whatever order a curator or researcher desires. It has also assisted in the location of objects, whether they are on loan, on exhibit, in the conservation lab, or in storage. Keeping up with the current trend toward mechanized collections data has also forced us to think of better methods of documenting objects, and of devising a consistent nomenclature. Using an existing computer system also enabled us to develop a list of functions we believe are necessary when looking for a more "perfect" software package.

Some considerations in using an existing system include the ability of the information to transfer to the new software which you chose. This can be avoided somewhat by checking in advance with vendors of the in-house system and those who are developing software in which you are interested. Another concern in using an existing software is where the information is actually stored and who has control over the system. Also, will the nomenclature and other data standard to your collections work within an existing system, or will the system be too complicated to make it efficient?

Several guidelines will aid you in determining if a software package in your institution will work for you collection. Most important is to think ahead to potential problems and solutions, and to seek the advice of other museums and computer professionals to see if an existing system will work for you until a more "perfect" system is established.

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Title: Suggested Interfaces for Image Databases

Abstract

Automated retrieval systems in museums have primarily consisted of user interfaces traditionally associated with mainframe computers and IBM PCs (line-by-line text entry and fill-in-the-blank interfaces). In this presentation the speaker will describe the more user-friendly, iconic-based interfaces commonly found on new graphics-oriented workstations. Using examples from the University of California at Berkeley's Image Database system, the speaker will show how pull-down menus, iconic pointing capabilites, and image browsing tools can make access to a database of images more intuitive.

John Burnett

Head of Documentation

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The National Museums of Scotland is a multi-disciplinary institution covering almost all of human and natural history. Its collections, totalling 3.8 million items, date from 1780. At present 14 documentation staff are engaged on a database building exercise: currently 170,000 records have been input, and the final total will be about 600,000 records, to be reached in 1993. The software in use is Minisis (it is likely that Quixis will be purchased shortly), and the hardware is a Hewlett-Packard 3000 minicomputer. There is an extensive communications network.

The issue which now confronts us is how to use our data. One of the key reasons for funding being available for this project is the need to demonstrate that we are able to account for the collections. Some full shelf inventories are being compiled to address limited problems of lack of location control.

We are also developing statistical methods of sampling from the collections so that a long-term programme of inventory control can be developed. These methods are complex in that they include the collection of conservation data, checks on the accuracy of the documentation, as well as a check to ensure that each object is in its correct location. The methods vary considerably between the different collections, depending on the value and portability of the objects, and the type of storage used for them.

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TITLE: Image Quality and Viewer Perception

ABSTRACT

Increasing the quality of digital images can have enormous implications for information storage and transfer, pushing the prospects for image databases well beyond the limits of feasibility. How good should electronic images be? Among the guidelines for selecting image quality is the question: What differences are viewers able to see among images of different resolution and dynamic range (bit-depth)? To what extent can they discriminate variations in quality? Groups of art historians were asked to rate a series of test images; the results show how participant response compared with the actual range of image quality. Practical implications of viewer perception are discussed.

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TITLE: Computers In Exhibits: Criteria for Application and Evaluation

This paper will attempt to synthesize current educational theories and museum exhibit evaluation techniques with strategies for effective human-computer interaction developed by computer scientists. It will be of interest to museum professionals of all kinds, and especially to those involved with exhibit gallery development.

A considerable body of literature has been written concerning uses of computers in formal learning settings. Relatively little has been generated, however, on how to select or develop computer systems for use in informal learning settings such as museums. In this presentation, I will discuss current educational uses of computers in the classroom and the work of Patrick Suppes, Robert Davis, Tom Dwyer, and Seymour Papert. I will concentrate on the differences between learning in formal and informal settings, visitor motivation in museums, and about fundamental learning criteria. Furthermore, I will summarize how summative and formative evaluation in general can guide exhibit development and minimize risks and even failure.

Within this overall context I will present information on computer system evaluation for use in museum exhibits. I will consider human factors goals such as time to learn, speed of performance, rate of errors by users, subjective satisfaction, and retention over time. I will also stress the importance of the serious consideration of interactive styles and interactive devices, and other factors such as response time and display rate and messages, screen design, color, and windows.

Russell A. Kirsch, Director of Research

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and
National Institute of Standards and Technology
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Title: Gains and Losses in Computer Storage of Art Images

Abstract

All storage schemes for images create distortions of the art objects that the images purport to represent. The nature and degree of these distortion vary among different representation schemes. We even become sufficiently familiar with some representations to find it unnecessary to acknowledge, and hence easy to ignore, the lack of fidelity to the original objects.

There are new storage schemes, that may become popular in the future, involving technologies like optical and video disks, computer graphics, pattern recognition, and artificial intelligence. The radical distortion that these technologies create in representing art objects is partly compensated in several ways. These include economy in the use of the storage medium, the degree of automation introduced, and the amount of supplemental analytical insight that can be archived with and associated with parts of the image surrogates.

We will discuss some quantitative estimates of the losses and gains for various storage schemes and discuss the nature of the research needed to realize the gains in practice. We will note especially, the opportunity for storing image representations along with the results of extensive analytical scholarship that are keyed to appropriate parts of the representations. Although the representations that lend themselves to this approach greatly distort the originals, there is compensation in the economy and ability to do very deep indexing of the art works thereby represented. We will also note that storage cost estimates are applicable, with appropriate changes, to transmission schemes for images.

Marion Matters
Automation Program Officer

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Title: Standards for Archival Description: Growing up in the '80s

ABSTRACT

The beginning of the 1980s saw standards for archival description developing along two separate lines, with rules for the content of description on one hand, and a format for the structure of description on the other. The content line was represented by the publication in 1982 of Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries. The structure line was represented by the publication in 1984 of the MARC AMC (Archival and Manuscript Control) format.

Both were adaptations or reinterpretations of existing standards developed in the library community. Each embodied the response "Archives are not books!" But neither would exist without the acknowledgement of commonalities in the description of a range of cultural artifacts. Serial publications are not books, videotapes are not books, musical scores are not books, maps are not books, computer files are not books--but information about them can be recorded and structured in similar ways, and so can information about archives. Archivists, too, could have bibliographic records.

At the end of the 1980s, just as these lines of development (content and structure) have finally more or less converged, and just as the body of the archival profession has almost caught up with the leaders, the leaders are moving on. Look at the descriptions, they say; they're not so much about archives (i.e., the "stuff") as about their context. The real meat of archival "description," they say, is the information about people, organizations, places, events--and archival management actions--that have shaped the historical record. This isn't bibliographic data; people are not books (or archives). Existing standards for the content and structure of bibliographic data don't apply. And if that weren't problem enough, what shall be done with information about electronic records systems? They are most emphatically not books, and they are more than simply "computer files."

In the 1990s, archivists will continue to develop standards for description, but within a broader universe, as bibliographic data and nonbibliographic data are linked in cultural information systems.

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TITLE: Linking Information to Objects: A Hypertext Prototype

ABSTRACT

In this paper the researcher discusses a prototype hypertext application developed to provide for the information needs of numismatists, particularly those working with early Arab coins. The structure of the application is discussed showing the organization of the information bases, the links among information bases, and the links to tools which facilitate the work of the researcher. The information bases include image bases, object bases, and document bases. Hypertext provides a user interface with simple links to allow non-sequential browsing of the material, as well as complex links which integrate other applications, e.g., an expert system and word processor, into the prototype.

Although this paper is directed toward museum professionals, it does not solve the problems of computer use in museums nor does it even present the ideal system for a very limited group of users, numismatists. Rather, it is the purpose of this paper to present a system of limited scope as a basis for discussing how it deals with some of the issues which may be important in museum settings.

It is expected that this research could serve as a model for the development of parallel systems for other user groups. Further, it is expected that this prototype will provide a better understanding of the technologies available and their role in facilitating information use by a particular user community.

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Tools for Prototyping Electronic Image Libraries

Image databases can be as diverse as a stack of playing cards, a postage stamp collection, slides in a shoebox or meticulously catalogued photographs of museum objects. In all cases images are captured and when required, they are displayed, either on paper, film or video phosphor. In planning electronic image libraries, the overriding consideration should be the use(s) of the displayed image.

Institutional image databases can be designed as elastic modular files which can fulfill a variety of needs. Museum researchers need comparative visual evidence of iconography, originator, color, form, style or the physical properties of the object and its conservation history.

An alternate need is to provide collection management functions which would fulfill insurance and security requirements, and assist in proper identification of the work as it moves into, around and out of the museum. In this application, the image aids registrars, curators, preparators, art handlers and photographers in their scheduling.

A third need is to serve a variety of museum audiences. The external community needs books, periodicals, educational presentations, posters, photographic prints and slides. With the growth of audio-visual collections in film, "slide-tapes" and video, we are further challenged to manage the moving image/audio archives which also bear witness to our museums' collections, and their social and architectural histories.

Institutional imaging plans should strategically consider the scope and intersections of these needs. Applications should be evaluated by the users, and tested in prototype fashion before committing to a major hardware investment. How, when and where to phase in new technology can be obvious, deceptive or incomprehensible. The most compelling course of immediate action in the imaging arena may be in optical document storage systems, which free us of corridors of file cabinetry and endless staff hours passing through this paper labyrinth.

The tools for creating both conventional photographic and electronic image libraries have similarities. A museum object can be directly captured by video cameras or by scanning photographic slides, prints or negatives into analogue or digital form. The resolution of the capture and delivery system; the efficiency, processing power and magnitude of the image storage/retrieval hardware; the ease of capture/storage; the retrieval software, i.e. the database logic/engine; the graphic design of the interface; and the desired image quality of the display or print– all impact system cost.

Image quality, in photography, is determined not only by the choice of the hardware (camera-lights) and software (film-processing), but also by the skills of the photographer. Electronic imagers need the same technical mastery and sensitivity to the original object as it is mirrored by its representation. Other considerations are the consistency of display from monitor to monitor and the intelligence of the color palette software as it relates to perception. More powerful "image correction after capture" tools are now at our disposal. But image quality standards are immature and inadequate, as is the reliability of desktop digital input devices.

Image quality issues aside, the best systems will be visibly simple. They will conceal hardware and software compression, multiple resolution access, self-calibrating monitors, and scalable, color-accurate devices, away from our attention. They will permit utility beyond the technocrats to a broader group of plain folks. We need schema as familiar as slides spread out on a lightbox and the effortless ability to make personal picture lists. The systems should be designed, maintained and extended by the principal users.

Elizabeth Carley Oddy, Information Transfer Specialist

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Title: Archive on a screen: a multimedia database for access to primary resources

ABSTRACT

Since September 1986, the Kellogg Project has been developing an optical disk-based image storage and retrieval system for materials in the Syracuse University Library's unique Adult and Continuing Education Research Collections. Digitized replicas of pages of documents and of photographs (the majority unpublished) are stored on Write Once Read Many (WORM) disks for later display on high resolution computer screens. Adding sound clips from audio tapes will be investigated next. Long range plans call for including color images in the database. The collections scheduled for this treatment include "papers" of about 35 individuals and 20 organizations.

Emphasis will be placed on describing the approach taken to giving intellectual access to this data. No software currently available was capable of the flexibility, specificity, and breadth needed. A unique system was designed jointly by the Kellogg Project and Plexus Computers, Inc., and now awaits final debugging and testing. The system design process will be highlighted, advantages and disadvantages of the new system (as we now understand them) will be mentioned, and future possibilities for use of this approach to the storage and retrieval of unique information will be suggested.

Trudy Oppenheimer
Director of Computing Systems
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AUTOMATION OF THE SPRINGFIELD LIBRARY AND MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION
-SELF EVALUATION-GOAL ASSESSMENT-IMPLEMENTATION-

The Springfield Library and Museums Association is an unusual combination of different museums and extensive public library system. We have served the public for over a century through the development of diverse yet extensive collections, and through the provision of literature, information, exhibits and education programs ranging from science, history and fine art. Because of our great diversity we opted for a small mainframe and terminal network as the backbone of our automation project rather than personal computers.

A presentation of the process the SLMA underwent to arrive at a bold position in museum computerization. Of particular interest to the museum community is our selection of Digital Equipment Corporation's hardware and operating system, WordPerfect Corporation's wordprocessor software, and Oracle Corporation's financial and relational database management software.

We would like to share with the MCN our four year automation plan, its evolution and implementation. Phase 1 involves the automation of our administration, business, membership and development offices. This has not been the common primary focus of computer applications in museums to date. More commonly museums have put their primary efforts into collections mamagement. We offer an interesting counter to this occurance.

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TITLE: LAN Discovered at The Saint Louis Art Museum

ABSTRACT

As system supervisor of the local area network at The Saint Louis Art Museum, I will discuss the installation of our LAN and the software in use on the system. Tips and insights "from the trenches" will alert those considering the purchase of a local area network to questions and concerns which should be addressed before the cable is installed and the system delivered.

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Title:
Evaluation of a Museum Installation of a Hypertext System

ABSTRACT

After describing and demonstrating Hyperties, the hypertext system developed at the University of Maryland, we will discuss its use by patrons of three museums. Hyperties is an interactive encyclopedia system which allows users to browse a database of articles. Data on the articles accessed, the time spent in each, the number of times the index was accessed, etc. were collected from a total of more than 5000 sessions. Results shows that visitors at both museums used the embedded menus of the Hyperties hypertext system in moving from one article to another far more than the traditional index. Article selection appears to reflect anticipated interests of patrons at each museum suggesting success in traversing the database. At the third museum, the data collection is complemented by direct observation and interviews of the museum patrons. This approach appears to be more appropriate to analyse the usage data as well as to improve the user interface and database structure. The presentation of this study at the MCN conference will emphasize this third evaluation.

James L. Sheldon, Curator of Photography

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TITLE: The Extended Museum: Case Studies of 3 Interactive Videodisc Projects about Artists

Abstract

Art museums have always been educating institutions. The meaning of this concept has changed over time and increasingly has come to include use of media both within the museum and beyond the museum walls. Interactive videodisc is a form of publication which can significantly enhance the museum experience by making the art and the artist more accessible both to those who work with museum collections and to those who wish to learn and teach about the art experience.

This talk will discuss the design and production of the interactive videodiscs; *Pigmentata: Ed Paschke, Harold Tovish: Sculptor* and *Eadweard Muybridge: Motion Studies*. Topics covered include descriptions of the different design strategies and production processes for each project. These videodiscs can act as models for both traditional and new media methods of educating museum audiences either within a specific museum context or beyond the actual museum environment. A demonstration of the interactive implementations of the videodiscs will accompany the talk.

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TITLE: TESTING THE FEASIBILITY OF USING THE MARC FORMAT FOR A MUSEUM COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM -- THE SYRACUSE EXPERIMENT

Shortly after the Museum Computer Network moved to Syracuse University, in the summer of 1988, the Syracuse University Art Collection was required to redo its automated collections management system in order to meet the requirements of a new campus mainframe computer. In a collaborative effort, MCN, the Art Collection, and Academic Computing Services decided to test the feasibility of using established information structure and communication standards to build a system for the Art Collection. The basic standard is known as MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging), and is used widely in the library and archives communities.

Working closely with the curatorial staff, MCN project staff and ACS programmers developed descriptive standards for the desired fields, mapped these fields into the MARC format, extended the MARC format where necessary, and programmed the resulting format for SPIRES, a hierarchical software program in wide use in universities. Subsequently, entry screens and report forms were developed.

The results of this work are published in a 230-page report, SUART, A MARC-based Information Structure and Data Dictionary for the Syracuse University Art Collection, available (for $22) from the Museum Computer Network.

This project was made possible by a grant from the Council on Library Resources.

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TITLE: Computerized Curation of the Paleozoic Invertebrates at the Milwaukee Public Museum.

ABSTRACT

Computerized curation of the invertebrate fossil collection at MPM is an ongoing project currently in its fifth year of grant support from the Biological Research Resources Program of the National Science Foundation. The project is primarily a retrospective cataloging of existing Paleozoic collections made form the 1930's through the present. The Cambrian, Ordovician and Devonian collections have been completed and the Silurian is in progress. Data are entered using the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) data base into the Milwaukee County mainframe through an IBM PC-AT. Specimens are cataloged and stored by locality (defined by both geographic location and stratigraphic horizon). Each locality is assigned a number shared by all of the specimens in the locality. All available data pertaining to the locality are entered into the locality data set. Locality data includes all available geographic and geologic data, collector and date, any associated numbers (field numbers, accession numbers, etc...), and narrative notes fields. Each taxon within a locality is classified in a systematic hierarchy as a distinct record in a corresponding taxonomic data set. Type and figured specimens, specimens on loan and specimens with assigned specimen numbers are documented in additional data sets. All records include the locality number, and the data sets are combined by means of that variable. The combined data set provide a total of 42 points of access from which to locate specimens. Taxonomic data can be prepared for multivariate analysis using SAS utility programs. Data will be downloaded and combined with graphics programs to create diagrams suitable for publication.

Raymond D. Tindel, Registrar

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TITLE: COMPUTERIZATION ON A SHOESTRING: THE USE OF OFF-THE- SHELF TECHNOLOGY AND DEDICATED VOLUNTEERS

The salient point: There are a number of options available for computerizing a collections management system if one has perhaps $100,000 available. It is also possible to do it for around $5000.

The problem: The Oriental Institute Museum is a primary center for research into the origins of civilization in the ancient Near East, and has registered collections of approximately 70,000 objects. As such, it receives numerous enquiries both from scholars and other museums. A cumbersome file-card system of collections management made answering these requests both difficult and time consuming. Computerized inventory control and object catalogue would solve much of the problem. There was, however, very little money available for such a project.

This presentation discusses how we did it and some lessons learned in the process:

Lessons learned:

1. Hardware and software are the easy parts; they are readily available, relatively cheap, and occasionally even free.

2. Determining the structure, the fields, the categories of information to record, is the most important and complex part; we did it by reviewing many questions and requests.

3. The biggest surprise: people are willing to help; many people are willing to volunteer a morning or afternoon per week even typing data entry.

4. It is useful to be able to modify and revise the system's structure; if you do-it-yourself you can also redo-it-yourself.

5. Record only those characteristics which can be objectively verified and which it would be necessary to sort by. Use subsidiary files for the rest. We found that we already had most of this information on the registration cards or in various lists.

6. Maintain consistent technology; we do this with terminology lists which are periodically reviewed, and we clean up the database with unique indices.

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TITLE: Art Appreciation Games from the Detroit Institute of Arts

ABSTRACT

The Education Department of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) has created several interactive computer activities to teach art history in the gallery and classroom. The software was designed for Apple II computers to be used by fifth grade through adults with no previous computer or art experience. These activities may be used in the classroom as an adjunct to art, humanities and social studies courses and to prepare students for a visit to the DIA or their local museum. In the museum, they provide information for the large portion of visitors who are self-guided.

The computer games were developed with funds from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The use of computer technology seemed an excellent way to meet Kellogg and museum objectives of bringing fine arts experiences to a statewide audience. There is very little humanties software on the market. Existing software creates visual images but does not teach about the cognitive content of works of art.

The first software we developed is called ART WARE, and consists of three different activities on one diskette. The ART WARE package also contains 41 postcards of works of art as major visual references for each game. The three games are:

"The Gallery Game", which simulates a tour of an art museum. The player moves through a floor plan of 11 museum galleries in search of six postcards selectively assigned by the computer. Students learn about the narrative content, composition, media and cultural history of each work, as well as the function and organization of art museums.

"The Thinker's Guessing Game" invites players to try to stump a computerized image of Rodin's Thinker. The player selects an object from the postcards and reads the information on it to answer the Thinker's questions concerning its medium, age, function, etc., until the Thinker can identify the object by name. This game has been installed in the DIA since 1987 and has proven a popular way to introduce major works in the collection to visitors.

"The Scribe" is based on Egyptian hieroglyphics. Players go back in time to follow a scribe (based on a sculpture in the museum) to work and can create thier own names in hieroglyphs and (with a printer) print them out. This game was also installed in the museum during the Cleopatra's Egypt exhibition.

In addition to ART WARE, two activities in which computer graphic reproductions of artworks can be manipulated to emphasize the formal element of color have been created. "An Eye for Color" teaches about the visual effects of color through the works of modernist painter and teacher Joseph Albers. This game will be installed in the museum on an Apple IIgs computer."Kirchner's Colors" recreates the German Expressionist painter Ernst Kirchner's motivation for color choices as players add color to a monchrome reproduction of Kirchner's work.

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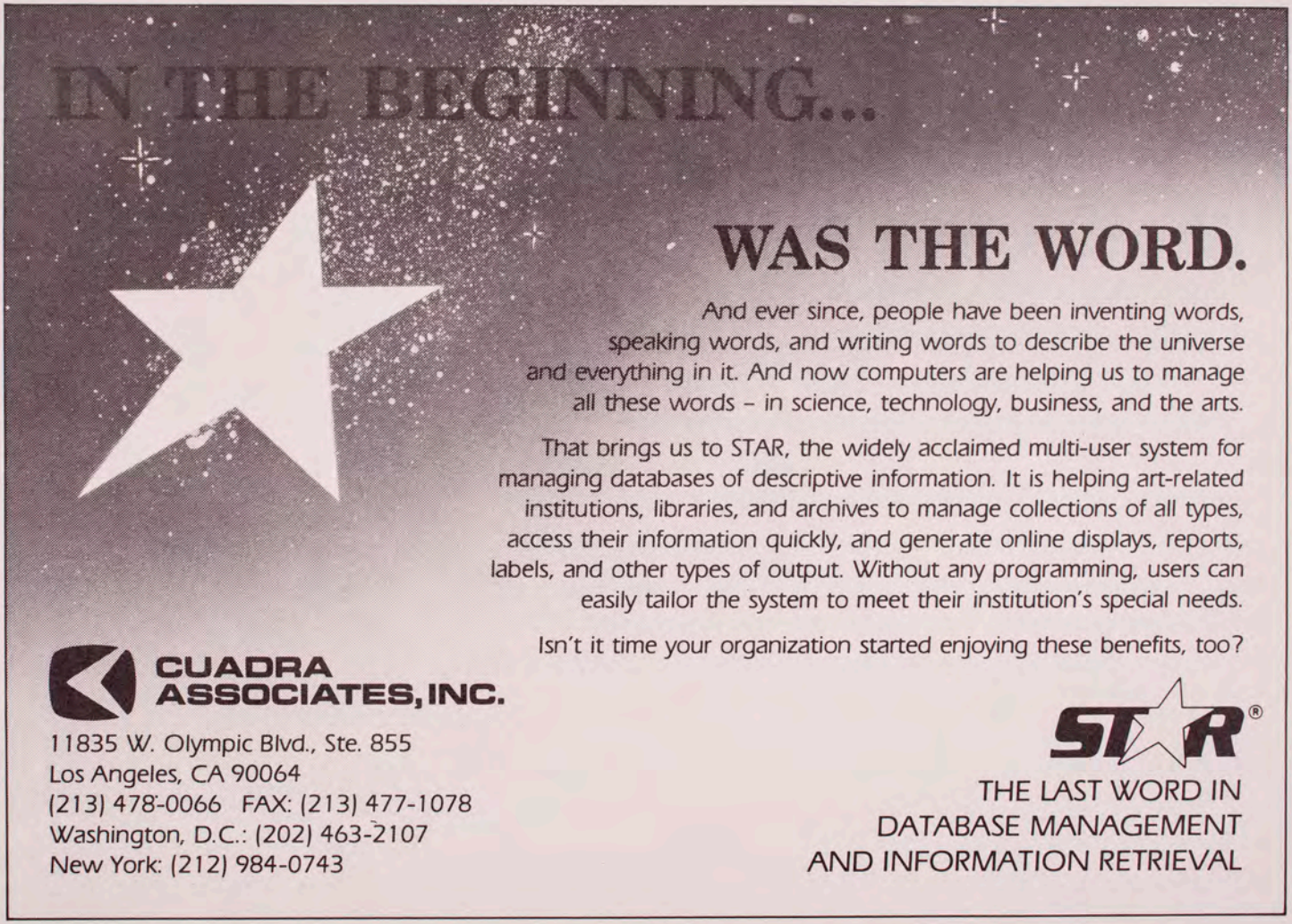
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