

# TRENDS FOR ACADEMIC ART LIBRARIES: THE HERRON ART LIBRARY -- DRIVING DIGITAL CONTENT

by Sonja Staum



## A 'BIRDS-EYE VIEW'

Traditionally, as librarians in academic art libraries our roles have been to collect, organize, and provide access to art-related information in print and non-print formats such as books, journals, picture files, 35 mm slides, and video. Our content development efforts were focused towards developing and managing collections of content that met the research and instruction needs of our library's primary clientele, the faculty and students. Today's rapid changes imposed upon our profession by technology and higher education are pushing art librarians and libraries into new and varied roles that expand our everyday jobs and embrace new responsibilities related to scholarly communication, preservation and stewardship of digital collections.

Recent literature discusses the swift move to the virtual library. A quick glance at our library web sites reflects this trend. Within one stop at our IUPUI University Library web site (<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu>) patrons can search for items in the system-wide catalog IUCAT (across all collections state wide); submit requests over the web for select items in the catalog to be delivered to a more convenient library location; submit ILL requests for books and photocopies of articles (photocopies that can be delivered to the patrons email account); search across multiple pre-selected databases; access content in multiple versions of electronic books, full text articles, and digital images all either licensed or created in-house and much of the material viewable remotely upon demand. In addition to these new and far ranging dynamic web based resources and services, IUPUI Faculty can contribute their scholarly documents electronically into University Library's *Institutional Repository*, IDEa, (<https://idea.iupui.edu/>) so that their research is available for further study and review by others.

The Herron Art Library, (<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/herron>), a branch of the IUPUI University Library, is no exception to this dynamic and evolving environment of library services, resources, and use patterns. The Herron Art Library, located on the IUPUI campus within the new Herron School of Art and Design building on New York Street serves the art related research and

instruction needs of the IUPUI campus through the traditional roles of collecting, preserving, and disseminating recorded knowledge in print, multi media, and digital formats.

The Herron Library's holdings include print and non-print materials, electronic formats, as well as Internet access. The Library houses approximately 25,000 books, 150 journal subscriptions, over 160,000 slides, 1,200 videos, and provides access to electronic resources including digital image collections.

The art library was established formally with the hiring of the first full-time librarian, Anna Turrell, in 1909. The rate of change to the services, collections, and use of the Herron Art Library over the past 10 years is unprecedented in the almost century long history of the art library.

In my professional experience throughout the past 10 years as director of the Herron Art Library I have seen a swift integration of traditional library functions and formats with the virtual environment described above. An increasing availability of new web-based resources and services accessible via the main IUPUI University library web site must be integrated with the dynamic and varied educational needs, both established and 'new', of the faculty and students.

The area most notably affected and promising great impact upon both the visual resources profession and teaching and learning in the study of art and art history concerns the availability of digital images for instructional activities. As the literature reflects, changes in technology and higher education are re-defining our libraries. *"Numerous creative and useful services have evolved within the academic libraries in the digital age: providing quality learning environments, creating metadata, offering virtual reference services, teaching information literacy; choosing resources and managing resource licenses; collecting and digitizing archival materials; and maintaining digital repositories".<sup>1</sup>*

New models of web-based teaching are pushing our libraries and thus, our job-related responsibilities into areas that redefine our traditional designs of both library as place as well as the long-established skill-sets

required by librarians to provide the most relevant and current collections and services needed by our faculty and students. Following the professional listservs, conference programs and proceedings related to art librarianship and visual resource management makes obvious a very strong concern for those development opportunities which offer broad-ranging technology and training that enable professionals to provide access to digital image collections, develop and preserve digital image collections in-house. These art librarians and visual resource managers are also encouraged to take a leadership role within academic art departments and libraries in training and teaching in web based environments in order to best utilize those digital resources either licensed or developed in-house.

Like many academic art library and visual resource collections, historically a significant activity of the IUPUI Herron Library has been to develop and provide faculty 35mm slides of the images of artworks needed to support their instructional activities. A review of the Herron library annual report and statistics over the past two years strongly demonstrates a move away from the traditional 35mm slide as the preferred image format for classroom instruction. The Herron library statistics for the 2004/2005 academic year reflected a dramatic decline in in-house production of 35mm slide requests from faculty. During the 2004/2005 academic year the Herron Art Library processed only 198 35mm slide requests from faculty. Since 1995 when my appointment began with the Herron library, library staff historically processed a minimum of 2,000 35mm slides per year to meet faculty slide requests of images needed for their lectures. Select previous years indicate an even higher slide production depending on emerging academic programs for that respective year. For example, when the IUPUI Museum studies program was revitalized the Herron Library processed requests for over 4,000 35 mm slides to support the related curriculum. This was in addition to our typical 35mm slide production for that year.

Simultaneous to these changes in our library organizations, digital technologies are also revolutionizing the film industry as we have known it. Kodak ceased production of slide peripheral equipment such as slide carousels and slide projectors June 2004. It has been suggested that slide film will soon be available in limited supply. As of Fall 2005 our local 35mm slide film developer no longer processed 35 mm slide film but moved to working only with digital formats. It was necessary to find a new developer locally. These are strong indicators that the digital format is here to stay, and that we are undergoing a transformation from the traditional formats for instruction and learning to new digital content not unlike the major format migration from lantern slides to 35mm slides for classroom presentation throughout the 1960's.

## ART MUSEUM IMAGE CONSORTIUM UNIVERSITY TESTBED AT THE HERRON LIBRARY

The Herron Library's first introduction to working within the digital collections environment began in 1998 when the Herron Library was selected as one of 16 universities in North America to be granted AMICO University Testbed status by the then 'cutting-edge' digital image repository initiative, Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO) (<http://www.amico.org>). The AMICO University Testbed provided access to a digital collection of approximately 30,000 digital art-related images from 25 contributing art museums and arts organizations. The goal of the consortium was to enable educational use of their digital art related multi-media resources.

## THE IUPUI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY/INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM OF ART COMMUNITY PROJECT

The AMICO University Testbed project at IUPUI led to a larger and broader outreach project to integrate digital images of artwork across the curriculum of kindergarten through twelfth grade and public library lifelong learning programs for those counties surrounding and including Marion County. This project, the IUPUI/Indianapolis Museum of Art Community Project (<http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/impls>), 1998-2001, was funded by a \$290,000.00 matching National Leadership Grant from the Federal Agency, the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

One of the most significant 'lessons-learned' throughout both projects concerned the availability of relevant digital image content. For example, while these vast digital image repositories held promise for improved convenience due to their *access-on-demand* nature, the content in these resources did not always match the instructional needs of the respective target audience and often was not applicable to the instructional task at hand. Throughout the initial phases of the population of the AMICO resource, content in the repository was not driven by the specific curricular needs of the target audience but rather selected by persons from the contributing arts organization or art museum, and/or by what was available due to copyright clearance of the image. Unlike the AMICO University Testbed project, the IUPUI/IMA Community Project gave the end-users (educators and librarians) the opportunity to select image content based on curricular needs and significantly added to the use and success of the project on the IUPUI campus.

## HERRON ART LIBRARY ONLINE (HALO)

This direct need for very specific relative content motivates many institutions to develop online image libraries based on their local curricular requirements. The *Herron Art Library Online (HALO)* developed in

response to the local instructional needs at the Herron School of Art and Design. HALO provides IUPUI faculty and students convenient desktop access to select digital images of art works that support their classroom instruction. What began as a project to provide access to art-related images is now a program of the Herron Library. The *Herron Image Library* can be found under the drop down box at <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/>. Due to copyright restrictions however, persons wanting to launch the HALO images must be valid IUPUI users and enter through an authentication process.

## UMBRELLA

Our newest digital initiative at the Herron Art Library involves the scanning and uploading of the journal, *Umbrella* published by Umbrella Associates and edited by Judith Hoffberg, 1978-2005. This journal covers artist's interviews, artworks, book arts, and mail art. It is a significant resource for information on artists' books. Once completed, *Umbrella* will be available for viewing at our IUPUI University Library institutional repository, *IDEA*, (<https://idea.iupui.edu/>). This collaboration between the IUPUI University Digital Library Team and the Herron Art Library Team will serve as University Library's first project of this type to digitize a journal run covering 28 years of issues.

As briefly discussed above, the job related responsibilities of art librarians and visual resources professionals are changing rapidly. We find ourselves needing to quickly adapt to and integrate the new technologies and services related to the provision of digital content while simultaneously continuing to manage traditional materials. In our new roles as digital content providers, art librarians and visual resources professionals need to understand at least at a very basic level, the technology, software, and application that lie behind the creation, delivery, access, and preservation of digital formats as well as those resources to consult for further guidance and training.

It is critical to have a good understanding of the big picture or impact of copyright and the terms to license the needed digital content i.e., will the terms of the license be granted on an annual or perpetual basis? Perhaps most important, it's critical to understand your target audience's use patterns in order to negotiate license terms that best reflect its needs. For example, the need for long-term access to digital images by faculty drives the need to license digital image content in perpetuity. Understanding both the impact and limitations of the license upon the library's target audience's use of that resource is critical to the success of art libraries and visual resources collections wanting and/or needing to move to digital image formats.

The visibility of our jobs has increased across campus with the move to the digital environment. There is an increased demand on our time and skills that has a positive impact on the contributions we make

to scholarship. The emerging cross-disciplinary nature of teaching and learning along with the need for training and troubleshooting on e-resources often requires visual resources professionals to take a leadership and/or collaborative role across campus to market or promote these new services and e-formats. Many times art librarians and visual resources professionals are positioned as the first point-of-contact for these types of activities. For example, in order to successfully implement the newly available digital image database ARTstor (<http://www.artstor.org>), across the IUPUI campus it was critical to lead and collaborate as needed with the campus wide technology center staff and our local library client support staff to ensure the software was pushed out to all computers on campus.

In closing, the rapid changes in higher education and technology that move our libraries into digital formats require new skill-sets and responsibilities for our profession. As visual arts professionals we may participate in numerous activities that lead to access to e-resources for our patrons. We may find ourselves responsible for negotiating and/or managing licenses to e-content for our users, serving as a technology liaison to client support and/or academic units on our campus, or leading and/or collaborating with other campus units or local community organizations on activities that create e-content. We may be called upon to lead or participate in the selection, recommendation, and access to the project's resources, and direct the creation of digital content including scanning and metadata creation, as well as the training, promotion, and marketing of the e-resources. We often serve as the catalyst to integrate these resources across all disciplines on campus. We must be able to work collaboratively with technology people to lead this integration. We often play a significant role in educating users as to their responsibilities related to copyright or other issues regarding digital content. We find ourselves in unexplored territory since there is no single course of study available to the varied and unique roles we now play in field of the visual arts librarianship.

Within the IUPUI University Library unit we are evaluated on the impact, innovation, and initiative we offer towards the scholarship at the campus. I believe we have exceeded expectations for innovation and initiative when working in the digital environment. It is time to evaluate the impact digital images have on teaching and learning. Our next step is to research and assess the use of digital image content in the classroom.

## ENDNOTES

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