Lost in the Fogg: Finding One's Way Around in a Sea of Slides
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Sponsored by the Technology Committee

Moderator: Sheryl Wilhite Garcia, Visual Resources Curator, Department of Art, University of Houston

Speakers:
Miranda Howard Haddock, Visual Resources Librarian, Western Michigan University
Martha Mahard, Curator of Visual Resources, Harvard Fine Arts Library
Paula Hardin, Manager, Visual Resources Library, Louisiana State University

Sheryl Garcia began the session with a short introduction to two popular slide classification schemes the Santa Cruz System (Simons/Tansey) and the Fogg System. The Santa Cruz System was designed for a general collection of images, including such subject areas as history, art, and science. It allows for ease of cataloging, indexing, and computerization of records. The Fogg System is based on the Metropolitan System, and was adapted for use by the Fogg Museum at Harvard University. Art images are divided into subject categories, time period, and geographical/ethnical origins.

Paula Hardin discussed the possibilities presented by databases for applying idiosyncratic filing schemes. She had hoped that a database with sufficient conditions would indicate where to file items in a visual resources collection. She discovered, however, that there were so many inconsistencies in any scheme that it was not possible to write enough nested conditionals to cover all of these inconsistencies.

Miranda Howard Haddock presented her findings of What Works and What Does Not Work in a visual resources collection. Consistency is a key issue. A logical, hierarchical filing arrangement with color-coded guide cards works very well in her collection, as do backing cards that utilize a copy of the slide label. With regard to decisions about broad indexing, the collection's users should be considered the general university community has different needs than faculty users. However, Haddock cautioned against trying to please everyone; it is best to stick to a manual and filing rules that will accommodate the majority of patrons. Her catalog records are done in MARC format, and are integrated into the library's OPAC. These records are available for copy-cataloging in OCLC.

Martha Mahard proposed that a revision of the Fogg Classification Scheme is long overdue. Her collection no longer utilizes this system in its original form, but has implemented the following major changes: 1) Western art they rearranged the collection from an arbitrary assignment of numbers to individual countries to an alphabetical arrangement of these countries. They plan to merge all media so that all of the work of one artist will be filed together. 2) Contemporary art contemporary art had been redefined from "work by artists born after 1945" to "works created after 1945." This did not suit everyone's definition of "contemporary," so it was changed again to "post 1900." Filing is alphabetical by artist with all media merged. 3) Photographic Archive similar to Contemporary Art. Organized by artist, with anonymous images arranged by country.

Martha suggested that the best course of action would be for the revision project to be developed cooperatively, using the web as a central clearinghouse. Libraries could post their filing schemes to a site on the web, and a new scheme could be developed interactively by all participants. The audience was invited to make comments and suggestions at this point regarding this idea and Fogg pros/cons, and a round table discussion ensued. John Taormina suggested that a joint ARLIS/VRA task force be formed to tackle this problem.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Czerniewjeski/Sheryl Garcia