Session 3

Too Much of a Good Thing? Selection, Collection Development, and Cataloging of Art/Design Web Sites

Art Libraries Society of North America 29th Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA

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Moderators:
Judy Donovan, Design Arts/Architecture Librarian, Drexel University
Alexandra de Luise, Coordinator, Instructional Services, Queens College/City University of New York

Recorder:
David Austin, University of Illinois at Chicago

Sponsors:
Reference and Information Services Section; Cataloging Section

Speakers:
Tom Grieves: Just Enough of a Good Thing: Using and Organizing Art Related Web Sites for Reference Resource Guides and Bibliographic Instruction
Lois Swan Jones: Not Enough of a Good Thing? Special Needs for Art
Linda Barnhart: Catalogs, Portals, Pathfinders: How should we organize and access web resources?

Related Event:
Poster session by Miguel Juarez, Developing Collaborative Web Sites,
Tuesday, 10:00 am-10:30 am.

After a brief introduction Tom Grieves, Reference librarian and Fine Arts Bibliographer at Arizona State University presented his paper, “Just Enough of a Good Thing.” Tom pointed out the biggest problem with the amount of information on any subject, including the arts, that exists on the Web has grown to overwhelming numbers, and that not everything presented as information on the Web is worth viewing. He reported that he feels that one of his responsibilities as a bibliographer is to review and analyze art-related Web sites as he finds them. To help his patrons he organizes the Web resources of value into appropriate thematic groups, such as General Resource Sites and Museums/Galleries/Collections, in the manner of a Meta-Site. The result of his work may be viewed at http://www.asu.edu/lib/hayden/ref/hum/art/arthist.html. Tom also uses his Web page relating to “Article Indexes” as a didactic site to help users to select the most appropriate index for their searches.

Lois Swan Jones, Professor Emeritus from the University of North Texas, continued the session with her offering of “Not Enough of a Good Thing? Special Needs for Art.” Lois focused on the results of looking for links to visual materials related to Sir Edward Burne-Jones. Her results varied greatly according to the search engine (Dogpile [http://www.dogpile.com/], Alta Vista, [http://www.altavista.com/], Infoseek [http://www.infoseek.go.com/], or Google [http://www.google.com/]) that she used. Once again, the speaker admonished caution when searching for information on the web. The comparison varied from 15 hits to 4,771 hits and reminds us that keeping current on sources and the need to exercise critical analysis of Web sites is crucial to provide accurate and valuable information to our users. Lois informed us that Oryx Press provides a continuously updated version of her book, Art Information and the Internet (http://www.oryxpress.com/artupdate).

Linda Barnhart, Head, Cataloging Department, at the University of California, San Diego, concluded the program with “Catalogs, Portals, Pathfinders: How Should We Organize Web Resources?” Linda noted that all Web sites share common qualities of intangibility, granularity and volatility that require appropriate electronic tools to monitor them. Each of the several methods suggested in her presentation title has advantages and disadvantages. Pathfinders are usually institutionally supported and require the least amount of upkeep and use static html. Some institutions call portals gateways and can be created on the fly from various search engines, such as Yahoo and Altavista. Portals contain less redundant material and keep the Web resources up to date, but they require more money and manpower to construct. Catalogs of Web sites are also expensive and require trained manpower to construct, but the infrastructure already exists in most institutions. Unfortunately, library catalogs are no longer
the first choice of users when they seek information. Linda concluded to stating that long term solutions must be undertaken if libraries are to provide information for their users Pre-K to Gray.