Artist Files Special Interest Group

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Leadership Update:

Membership: 185 members as of February 2020 (from HQ); 379 according to SIG directory in Airtable; 60 new or renewing members expressed interest since the last conference.

Activities during the past year:
- SIG (29 members) met at the annual conference in Salt Lake City and published minutes. The SIG members organized the session “Better to Receive?: Approaches to Building, Managing, and Promoting Artist Files Collections,” and the SIG co-sponsored the MARCEdit workshop. The SIG also promoted its activities at the “SIG Lightning Round,” event organized by ArLiSNAP.

Ongoing projects:
- *Best Practices for Cataloging Artist Files Using MARC* was published in Aug. 2018. The Art Institute of Chicago has implemented the guidelines in their local catalog and has seen increased use of these collections. The Amon Carter Museum also implemented these guidelines recently. Despite this, other institutions are approaching cataloging of such collections in multiple ways and they are expressed in varied ways in WorldCat. Sam has compiled a spreadsheet with this information by institution. The goal would be searches that yield more predictable and comprehensive results.
- Continued discussions with OCLC and others to improve access to artist files and to explore a shared artist files digitization project took place. Evernote could be one platform to investigate. JSTOR Forum was also explored as a possible platform for this in the last year. Dennis Massie at OCLC RLP suggested the SIG leadership reach out to
Chela Weber, Sr. Program Officer, OCLC RLP (author of this 2017 position paper), and a conference call was conducted with her in July. Various platforms were discussed and a sense that what we were talking about were archives/assembled collections. Our project was deemed a good candidate to discuss in terms of linked data. There were concerns about migrating data out of Evernote if used. Using IIIF supported by CONTENTdm might be a possibility: e.g. the Huntington Library did a test with OCLC. Any contributions to such a project would require (beyond artist file collections themselves): that contributors would be able to scan the content, and serve them up via IIIF, per Chela. Ultimately, there was no indication that OCLC RLP wishes to partner with us on such a project. Some presence or role within the Art Discovery Group Catalogue is another possibility, and Sam reached out to Debbie Kempe this year to see if this might be a possibility (first proposed to that group in 2017).

- Continued development of SIG website, including:
  - Published five blog entries
  - The Artist Files Bibliography was updated.
  - ARLIS/NA Headquarters staff updated the SIG’s PHP installation to bring it into alignment with the version of Wordpress the SIG uses.

- Continued effort to move Artist Files Revealed: Online Directory forward. The SIG submitted a request for Special Funding to ARLIS/NA this year for funds to hire a developer and purchase a necessary Wordpress plug-in in order to expand, improve and release a sustainable version by the time of the St. Louis conference. The Executive Board suggested instead that we join forces/consider synergies with the Digital Art History Directory (DAHD) folks, who were hoping to do something similar and needed funding. A conference call with Kim Collins about this led to a second call with Meredith Kahn representing the Humanities Commons Implementation Task Force. The work we hope to do with our directory may go beyond what the HC is capable of supporting, unless we would be okay with a more modest version of the directory. We concluded that the features as currently planned for the HC are not a good fit for our project, and would not allow us to make use of all desired features in Wordpress. We did discuss with Meredith a number of other directory-like projects that we felt the Society should find a way to support (like DAHD). The Artist Files SIG did not approach the DAHD folks because we felt the projects were different. Most recently, Sam reached out to one individual to see if he might be interested in working on the project, provided funds might be coming our way. This individual was going to take a look but felt that Wordpress and PHP are beyond his expertise. The SIG recommends that ARLIS/NA discusses how it might provide support for such directory projects. Directories such ours are likely to be common resources developed by the Society.

**Preliminary goals for next year:**

- Moving Artist Files Revealed forward would seem to be the most pressing goal for the SIG, if not in the current state than in some other form. Questions to consider: *What are
our options at this point? Would reaching out to the DAHD be useful to see if they will hire a developer, if the Humanities Commons will meet their needs, etc.?

- Continue to conceptualize and formulate a goal around born-digital and digitized artist file collections. Questions to consider: Which platform might be doable and sufficiently collaborative such that multiple institutions can contribute digital artist files? Is there an entity or group that could help us move such a project forward?

Articulate how your activities, projects and goals relate to the ARLIS/NA Strategic Directions:

- Both goals address the Collections and Access and Innovation and Technology strategic directions. Also, such directories/platforms both informing art information professionals about and hosting artist file collections enable and support point 2 of the latest Core Competencies document.

Other (please share anything else you want the membership to know about your group or your role):

- Artist Files SIG Mission Statement: The Artist Files Special Interest Group, part of the Art Libraries Society of North America, recognizes the unique characteristics and research value of artist files and serves as a professional forum for advancing all aspects of their management, including access, acquisition, cataloging, digitization, preservation, promotion, and scholarship.

- Although we weren’t able to submit the chapter on “Artist Files” to the forthcoming New Art Museum Library monograph, we are of course interested in reading that chapter (and the rest).