Interoperability was the word of the April 4 Session X, Evolving Operations: Libraries, VR Collections, & Digital Image Resources, moderated by Don Juedes, Librarian for Art History, Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University. In the burgeoning electronic world, digital image databases need to work with content management systems that need to work with presentation software packages, that need to work with instructional courseware, that need to work with other digital image databases. Hence, the importance of the word interoperability, and while interoperability signifies enhanced technical abilities, at the same time it signifies enhanced relationships on academic campuses. Each of the panelists offered insight into the ways that academic communities are forging new alliances, identifying new models for collection management and public service, and thinking about the collective work of librarians, visual resources curators, and other specialists on an academic campus.

At Johns Hopkins University, Don has been assessing characteristics of image databases to determine how digital integration of images can happen with the least amount of turmoil and stress on staff, users, and budgets. Assessment of a digital image resource must consider an assortment of criteria, but the most outstanding is whether a product will "work with what you already have." The ideal product will work with existing presentation software and content management systems and possibly other digital image databases. Other criteria to consider include: metadata, technical specifications, content, and functionality. Some of the more specific questions Don recommends asking: Is the resource Web-based and will it work with browsers? Is it easily accessible? Is it reliable and secure? Is it sensitive to user hardware limitations (to the reality that there is a wide array of technical capacity on college and university campuses)? Is the system compatible with as many operating
systems and versions of operating systems. Is the vendor-based user support sensitive to the academic calendar, well-documented, and proactive?

Selene Hinojosa, Collection Development Librarian, Alkek Library, Texas State University, San Marcos discussed her institution's decision-making experience regarding the potential purchase of a digital image database. State funding in Texas for education has been low and the elimination of the consortia Texas-Share has limited the ability to add resources. Despite the financial situation, the demand for image and picture resources is high with requests coming in everyday at the library, not only in the area of art but advertising, communications, and design. Acquiring ARTstor seemed like a reasonable solution for handling this demand since it already has a well-recognized reputation with its affiliation with JSTOR, and because its content is multi-disciplinary, and it a non-profit. Team decision making is popular at Texas State University, and normally selections are made by teams. However, since ARTstor is not a journal or an index, Selene decided to survey art faculty, non-art faculty, and librarians for feedback. The survey indicated that the need for images in high with the heaviest interest of images sought being photographs, then illustrations and the fine arts. The strongest use of images is for classroom instruction, then for information value/image comparison and to help generate ideas. The image resources by the different groups surveyed include Google, artbank, Corbis, and Archivision, Sculpture.org, and freefoto.com.

Texas State University has not yet received funding for ARTstor, and, if pursued funding, will come from the reference budget and the art department.

Ann Baird Whiteside, Director, Head, Fiske Kimball Fine Arts Library, University of Virginia, spoke about the coordination of services from the library and on campus in order to facilitate the use of vended image products, such as Index of Christian Art, Grove Dictionary of Art, ARTstor, AP Photo Archive, and RLG Cultural Materials. The use and acquisition of vended image resources is necessitating the need for the coordination of service points.

Factors involved with the acquisition and access of vended resource images is forcing a shift in roles and responsibilities, especially for the image professional and the collection development librarian. The acquisition of images with the vended resources is no longer an isolated process by image professionals and involves the collection development librarian. This shift also changes the concept of ownership and responsibility for the image collections. The training of users also becomes a collaborative venture between the visual resources professional and the librarian and the knowledge bases of each ought to be coordinated for the greatest success. Whiteside notes that ARTstor brought these issues to the fore including collection development, training and instruction, new services, role shifts, and collaborative opportunities.

Julia Deal, Visual Resources Coordinator, Department of Art & Design, Texas State University, San Marcos, emphasized the diverse roles and responsibilities of the visual resources curator with the emergence of digital image resources. Prior to electronic resources, the image professional already managed a variety of responsibilities from making slides to helping with classroom equipment. Now, the image professional proves to have to be a true chameleon of sorts. In her department, for example, she serves full-time art historians, studio artists, adjunct art history faculty, studio art faculty, and the departmental fine art gallery curators and staff. The upkeep and service of various rooms and equipment are also under
her supervision including the ITS-equipped classrooms, the slide collection, the art studio conference room, and various computer labs. To further complicate matters, there is anticipation of an MFA program.

Besides the maintenance of rooms and equipment and assisting users with the collections, the VRC faces many technical challenges such as collection quality, server and backup capabilities, copyright and fair use. Local concerns for her involve challenges with access and the fact that there is no “front end software,” they use Filemaker 5.5 DBMS, and have separate collection of JPEG files on local snap server. While this represents her own situation, Deal suggests that this is almost a universal problem with the profession and that job burnout suggests that many are suffering from job-related physical and psychological exhaustion. Therefore, the benefits of collaborating with the acquisition, management, and user training with a resource such as ARTstor will alleviate many of the challenges the VRC faces.