YALE
CENTER
FOR
BRITISH
ART

NDSR Project: A New Paradigm for Preserving Born-Digital Art Collection Records

Summary

Opened to the public in 1977, the Yale Center for British Art (YCBA) provides full public access to the largest and most comprehensive collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. In addition to free admission to its galleries, the Center offers a comprehensive cross-collection online catalog of the museum's fine art, rare books, and manuscripts.

Documentation of the YCBA's art collection is permanently managed by a number of different departments, ranging from the Institutional Archives, to Curatorial and Conservation Departments, to the Office of the Registrar. Stewarding of collections-related documentation in their offices of origin rather than transferring the materials to a museum's archives is standard practice throughout the United States. Much of this recent documentation is born-digital, meaning that it is created using a computer and stewarded in its native digital format, thus putting it at risk of data corruption, loss, and obsolescence.

While the YCBA Institutional Archives has already adopted digital preservation processes, a National Digital Stewardship Residency for Art Information would provide the opportunity to extend the Institutional Archives' digital preservation framework throughout the entire museum, ensuring the preservation of records pertaining to the YCBA's permanent collection across all departments. Since the full history and provenance of a work of art can only be understood when its disparate documentation is viewed as a whole, this project will ensure that this documentation is preserved in full. In so doing, it will allow the YCBA to continue to fulfill its educational mission by guaranteeing that its collection information remains available and fully accessible to the public.

This project will use the digital preservation system, workflows, and procedures implemented by the YCBA's Institutional Archives as a guide for developing and executing a digital preservation plan to ensure the integrity, accessibility, and usability of the museum's art-collection-related born-digital records permanently held by departments other than the museum's archives.

The lessons learned from implementing a new records strategy will provide a model for other art museums regarding the management and preservation of born-digital historical records held by multiple museum departments. The project will also define policies, procedures, and standards that may be reused and repurposed by others.

Specific Objectives

● Document the permanent-collection-related born-digital records at the YCBA held outside the Institutional Archives. Develop a digital preservation policy and arrangement systems for these records.

● Develop a proposal for integrating the YCBA's digital preservation system and its art collections management system, TMS.

● Adapt existing ingest and description workflows so museum departments can ingest

records into the YCBA's digital preservation system.

● Develop and implement a training program for YCBA staff.

● Share this model for managing museum records in a multi-departmental environment with the ARLIS/NA and museum archives communities.

Timeframe & Deliverables

Months 1-2: State of the Field
- Introduction to the YCBA's current digital preservation workflows and processes.
- Building on a 2013 museum-wide records survey, review all museum records already identified as pertinent to the project. Meet with records creators to discuss stakeholder needs. These meetings are essential to the project as they will introduce the resident to both the records and YCBA staff.

Months 3-5: Procedures and Documentation
- Assess the YCBA's digital preservation system capabilities in relation to this project and begin testing potential ingest workflows for individual departments.
- Propose workflows for ingesting records into the digital preservation system to the archivist and individual departments.
- Customize workflows by department as necessary and create associated documentation.

Month 6-7: The Museum's Collections Management System
- Develop a proposal for integrating the Center's digital preservation system with its art collections management system, TMS. This will require experimentation, research, and conversations with YCBA staff, other museums, and Gallery Systems, the vendor for TMS.

Month 7-8: Digital Preservation Policy for Museum Records
- Develop a digital preservation policy for the YCBA art-collection-related born-digital permanent records. Present this policy to YCBA senior staff for approval.
- Suggest any necessary modifications to the Center's records management policies and procedures to correspond with this newly created digital preservation proposal.

Months 9-12: Training and Dissemination
- Develop staff training program for the digital preservation of art-collection-related records.
- Provide staff training to departments.
- Develop and share the documentation created throughout the project with relevant professional museum, library, and archives communities.

The resident will have the opportunity to attend the Center's programming and professional development events as appropriate throughout the course of the residency.

Context

Over the past two years, the YCBA's Institutional Archives enacted a plan for managing transfers of born-digital archival records from museum departments and is currently implementing a digital preservation system, Preservica, for the records held by the repository. Furthermore, in order to preserve the YCBA's earliest born-digital records, the Institutional Archives is undertaking a project to survey and collect the Center's disks, CDs, DVDs, and hard drives from all departments to be forensically imaged and prepared for ingest into the Center's digital preservation system.

At the University level, the YCBA is one of four units comprising the Yale University Born Digital Archives Working Group, which is leading Yale's efforts to enable all special collections in its libraries and museums to acquire, ingest, preserve, and provide access to born-digital archival materials. The Group is currently developing a vision for born-digital archival work at Yale. The YCBA has also been coordinating a University-wide web archiving effort, culminating in a strategic plan for web archiving at Yale. At the YCBA, this has resulted in the archiving of its web and social media sites.

Developing a robust digital preservation practice across the YCBA will enhance and support the museum's broader digital strategy, which is driven by a commitment to open access. In 2011, the YCBA released online digital images of its artwork in the public domain, with no restrictions on their use; images of copyrighted works were released as thumbnails under fair use. Building on this initiative, the YCBA's images are now available through IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) and Mirador, enabling international interoperability, extensive scholarly access to the images, and the possibility to collect, compare, annotate, and share images from multiple repositories. Furthermore, the YCBA is committed to using technology to disseminate its data and digital images to support their scholarly and creative reuse. This includes disseminating its machine-readable collection data through XML (LIDO) and the OAI-PMH data sharing protocol as well as Linked Open Data, thus enabling semantic interoperability with datasets from other institutions. Most recently, the YCBA and the Paul Mellon Centre launched the online open-access journal, *British Art Studies*, which is advancing the field of digital art history and scholarship on an international stage.

If awarded, this residency would take place in coordination with these other efforts, offering an opportunity to contribute to the development of an exciting born-digital archival records program at the YCBA.

Required Resources	Staffing: 2 mentors and 1 resident.

The Yale Center for British Art will provide a workspace and support to the resident in its New Haven offices. The resident will be supplied with the technology and tools necessary to complete the project, including a computer, appropriate software, and a digital preservation system.

Required Knowledge & Skills

- Master's degree from an ALA-accredited library school or equivalent accredited degree with formal training in archival theory and practice.

- Knowledge of art history and art museum operations.

- Experience working collaboratively and independently with varied groups within a complex organization.

- Working knowledge of standards related to born-digital records.

- Excellent oral and written communications and analytical ability.

- High level of proficiency with computers and desktop applications and an aptitude for learning new technologies.

Preferred Knowledge or Experience

- Experience working in an archives or museum.

- Comfort working with obsolete hardware and software.