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## One-Stop Shopping: RLIN as a Union Catalog for Research Collections at the Getty Center

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THE CRYPTIC TITLE, "One-Stop Shopping," refers to the potential use of the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) as a union catalog for the bibliographic, archival, and visual research collections of the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities. The perspective of this article is that of the visual resource librarian, and examples are drawn from the experiences of the Getty Center Photo Archive in translating cataloging records from its local system into RLIN. More specifically, the focus will be on the Photo Archive's effort to reconcile its cataloging formats with the MACHINE-Readable Cataloging (MARC) formats for Archival and Manuscripts Control (AMC) and Visual Materials (VM), as implemented in their respective RLIN cataloging files, AMC and VIM. From that narrow frame of reference, however, this author hopes to draw conclusions which should be of benefit to any visual curator faced with similar problems of control, access, and integration.

First a brief explanation of the Getty Photo Archive and of the circumstances which compelled us to investigate methods to provide integrated access to the Center's collections. The Photo Archive was founded in the early 1970s by the Getty Museum's curator of paintings, Burton Fredericksen, as a visual supplement to the curatorial library. Its collections of documentary photographs directly paralleled those of the museum's objects: European painting, Greek and Roman antiquities, and French decorative arts. Acquisitions in the Photo Archive were closely supervised by the curators who also determined what kinds of information would be recorded for the photographs and the formats in which to record it. Cataloging (such as it was) focused entirely on the objects represented within the pictures with only the most cursory

information about the photographs themselves. For access, each curator developed separate card indexes to satisfy his or her own needs, and each had a unique method of arranging the material on the shelves. No one felt the collection would ever grow much beyond 30,000 photographs or that its scope would ever expand beyond that of the museum's collections.

By 1983, however, the Photo Archive had cataloged nearly 100,000 photographs. Most of the material was purchased directly from museums and commercial photographers, but the Photo Archive also acquired subscription sets (such as the *Illustrated Bartsch*), maintained standing orders with major auction houses, and on rare occasions purchased scholars' entire study collections—sometimes in concert with the Getty Museum Library as, for example, with the library and photographs of Ulrich Middeldorf. Yet no matter how closely the two departments collaborated on acquisitions, there was no attempt made to correlate the cataloging or processing of materials. By this time, the Library had begun cataloging into RLIN; the Photo Archive was still firmly entrenched in its manual scheme of item-level object cataloging.

The Library and Photo Archive remained in the basement of the Getty Museum in Malibu until July 1983 at which time the newly founded Getty Center took its first physical form in an office building in Santa Monica. This physical relocation was paralleled by a major redirection of scholarly thrust—i.e., from that of a museum library serving a select curatorial clientele, to that of a major art research library serving the needs of multidisciplinary studies in the history of all Western arts and humanities.

This transition was particularly difficult for the Photo Archive. As the scope of the collection increased to include new subject areas—e.g., Medieval art and architecture, European sculpture, and post-antique architecture—the volume of material purchased increased dramatically: over 300,000 photos in 1983 alone. The resultant backlog of nearly 1 million photos, coupled with the cumbersome maintenance of the manual card indexes, and the need to devise new cataloging schemes for new subject areas, led us to adopt an automated system for cataloging. We eventually chose the STAR system from Cuadra Associates primarily because it allowed us to prototype databases quickly, with no programming skills, and it had remarkable reporting features which would allow us to generate the necessary—and elaborate—photo labels and cards for the various subject sections.

We prepared for the advent of automated cataloging by undergoing a rigorous systems analysis of every facet of Photo Archive processing—from the ordering of photos to their reshelving after patrons' use. One key component of this self-study was analysis of the data used to catalog the photographs—or, more accurately, the objects within the photographs. From this analysis, we attempted to create a single data format which could be used for all photos—what came to be known as “the big

bucket." Unfortunately, in an attempt to arrive at a consensus in labeling the resultant data elements, the fields were so homogenized that the staff of art historians rebelled, insisting that the inherent differences between Roman coins, Medieval cathedrals, and Dutch still lifes were insuperable, and that each should be mounted in a separate cataloging file.

To make a long story only slightly less long, we eventually reached a compromise: as far as possible, each subject section's database was defined along a consistent model, varying only in the *object information* needed to identify uniquely the work of art. The other parts of the model—fields for photographic description, bibliography, and geographic information (both for current and original location or manufacture)—were defined identically for each database and controlled by integrated authority files.

At this point you may rightly wonder, "how is it that he has gone on at such length without *once* mentioning the MARC formats?" Partly because library standards such as MARC had no place in what was still a thoroughly art historical department. More importantly, however, none of the cataloging or indexing systems that we found in use elsewhere—whether MARC-compatible or not—provided the depth of description and access which we were able to build into our own local system.

The automated system was implemented in phases beginning in Summer 1984 with the Medieval material; as the most recent addition to the Photo Archive, it had no card catalogs and no predetermined data format. Over the course of a year, and after 200 separate iterations of the data definition, the Medieval section produced its first automated cataloging labels. Antiquities shortly followed suit, with modifications from the Medieval prototype, as did Paintings and Sculpture. By Summer 1986, only Decorative Arts—with the most convoluted manual scheme—remained unautomated (although a prototype had been devised).

As the sections began developing their individual cataloging files, we began to prototype a database which would, in fact, constitute the "big bucket"—a compilation of all the separate object description fields plus the fields for photography, bibliography, and geography which had been applied consistently among all the files. It was in this database that we would truly achieve the goal of our automation effort—i.e., integrated, item-level access to the intellectually and physically disparate subject section catalogs within the Photo Archive.

This dream has been only partially realized, however, due to reorganization of the Photo Archive in late 1986. It was felt that the continuing bias toward "connoisseurship" in Photo Archive cataloging was out of step with the emerging focus of research in the Getty Center—i.e., art *historiography* rather than art history.

The first manifestation of this change in research focus had occurred even as the Center relocated to Santa Monica, with the founding of the Center's third resource department, the Archives of the History of Art. The Archives quickly established an important collection of primary documents on the history of art and became the repository for archival materials which had come to the center as part of collections purchased by the other departments. Similarly, the Archives acquired large collections containing significant visual materials, some of which were transferred to the Photo Archive for storage and description. By 1986, virtually all of the Archives' holdings were being reported to RLIN's Archival and Manuscripts Control file, in a mixture of item- and collection-level records.

For the Photo Archive, this restructuring meant a total reconceptualization of collection development, processing, cataloging, and reference. The photographs would no longer be considered secondary records of the objects they depict but would be primary records of the documentation of art.

Under this new *weltanschauung*, object-based, item-level cataloging was unsupportable. Instead, the dozens of special collections which formed the major part of the unprocessed backlog would be brought forward as integral collections, these being documents of the history of visual documentation. Where once a scholar's archive would have been cannibalized, its constituent parts dispersed to boxes in different corners of the department, emphasis was now placed on developing collection-level descriptions, both for those groups left intact and for those already cataloged into the "core" collections.

As models, we used descriptive records created by the Archives of the History of Art—in some cases, for collections split between our two departments. Yet while the Archives was doing all of its cataloging in RLIN's AMC file, the Photo Archive developed another database within its local system to house information about our special collection holdings. This holdings database had as its core a lengthy notes field containing narrative text about the collection. Occasionally, we made explicit reference from a holdings record to yet another STAR database, whether intended for inventory control of negatives, as an alternate access tool to a self-indexing collection, or for full item-level indexing to a special archival photo collection. Where applicable, we noted that related materials were being deposited in the Archives of the History of Art. Ultimately, the only link between the Archives of the History of Art's AMC description and the Photo Archive's holdings record was the similar use of notes. Again, we had diverged from an available and clearly applicable standard—the MARC AMC format—in preference of a locally-defined format which more aptly suited our department's specific needs.

There was, however, one major need which was not met by the Photo Archive's many databases. In spite of its rich indexing and

reporting features, STAR could not be used to access the records of either the Library or the Archives. Each department was performing reference from a different automated system: the Library from its RLIN records downloaded onto UCLA's ORION system, the Archives from its AMC files in RLIN, and the Photo Archive from its STAR databases. In support of Getty Center research, and almost as a matter of conscience, the Center's resource departments began to investigate possibilities for merging their databases or, as an alternative, for providing integrated access to the separate files.

Clearly RLIN was the logical place to begin, since two of the three departments had already made significant investments in the RLIN cataloging files. The Photo Archive quickly identified several potential benefits of contributing records of its special collections to the RLIN database: broader awareness among the research public of the unique material; creating a basis for exchanging records with other photo archives through MARC-based communication; and, of course, being able to provide a single point of reference for the three Center resource departments. A less tangible but important benefit of Photo Archive records in RLIN would be a stronger profile for the historiographic collections being formed at the Center, especially if we were to mingle collection-level records in the AMC file with those of the Archives of the History of Art. Finally, we recognized the tremendous advantage of being able to search the RLIN Name Authority File for use in all collection management, cataloging, and reference work.

What were the *disadvantages* of contributing to RLIN? Technical issues were not problematic, as we have library staff at hand to guide us through the physical installation process. Cost is a factor; if we only contribute records for the 144 special collections, it does not seem worth the high cost of even a single leased phone line and modem. In light of the potential benefits, however, we feel the cost can be rationalized. Committing ourselves to one RLIN workstation, however, means the inevitable conflicts among staff members wanting to use RLIN for authority work and catalogers entering and maintaining records.

The most pressing problem was the total lack of expertise on the part of the Photo Archive staff in the use of MARC formats. Rather than involve the entire cataloging staff in a retraining program, however, it made more sense to develop "maps" between existing STAR record structures (from which RLIN records could be constructed) and the MARC Archival and Manuscripts Control and Visual Materials formats. By doing automatically as much of the record construction as possible, we could minimize the amount of cataloger time spent editing and "fine-tuning" the resultant pseudo-MARC records.

The Photo Archive staff responsible for this mapping project have so far devised a preliminary concordance between the item-level Paintings database and the MARC VM format. As would be expected, there are gaps from both perspectives; much of the fixed-field data required

for the MARC record are not captured as part of the Photo Archive's normal cataloging procedure, but quite a bit can be constructed automatically from other related fields in the STAR database. Other fields, like subject added entries—essential if the Photo Archive's records are to be of value in the broader context of RLIN—will have to be added manually by the reviewing cataloger.

In addition to mapping between STAR and MARC VM on the item level, we have constructed over a dozen sample VM format record worksheets for Photo Archive collections, identifying conceptual and formal differences between the record structures. In this case, the extreme flexibility of STAR as a database management package allows us to change the actual structure of our holdings records, bringing them into closer conformity with MARC. Such a radical redesign would be impractical with the other cataloging databases, where the conceptual data model already satisfies our current needs.

Mapping between record structures is a difficult exercise; another difficulty is the choice of files into which to place our records once the mapping is finished. As with many repositories of archival visual materials, our dilemma has been to recognize both the *visual* nature of the material and its integral, *collective* organization. Because of the nature of RLIN, we have seriously considered placing collection-level records into the AMC file. First, AMC is attractive because the Archives of the History of Art has a rich presence there. As sample records indicate (see Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4), the Archives' collections relate closely to material in the Photo Archive. It would certainly serve the purpose of integrated access at the Getty Center for our scholars to find both departments' holdings from the William Suhr collection juxtaposed within a single RLIN display from the AMC file. Second, but less valid as a criterion for such a decision, there is a lot of material currently in RLIN's VIM file which we would find "distracting" to a researcher looking for archival holdings. The preponderance of material in VIM seems to be published visual material (video-cassettes, films, slide kits, etc.) treated on the item level. It is a valid concern to wonder whether, over time, more collection-level materials will be contributed to RLIN's VIM file.

Ultimately, this author believes that we will decide to utilize *both* the AMC and VIM files for our collection-level records. Some collections, like that of the restorer Suhr with conservation reports, articles, correspondence, and clippings, contain a heavy textual component and are most reasonably placed as archives in the AMC file. Others, like the John Henry Parker collection, are principally visual and are appropriately placed in the VIM file. This author can offer no hard and fast rule for making these decisions; perhaps the forthcoming summary of use for the MARC VM format will offer guidance on this choice.

Once we have established a pattern of contributing collection records to the RLIN database, we hope to expand upon this basic record in certain instances—i.e., for collections which lend themselves to

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035		(NNMM)RECON
040		NNMM\$cNNMM
100	10	Parker, John Henry,\$d1806-1884.
245	10	Historical photographs :\$ba catalogue of ... photographs of antiquities in Rome and Italy : with the dates, historical or approximative ...
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260	1	Oxford,\$c1871-1872.
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690	4	Art, Ancient\$zItaly.
690	4	Photographs\$xCatalogue.

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Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.

A Victorian view of ancient Rome : the Parker  
 Collection of historical photographs in the Kelsey  
 Museum of Archaeology / by Judith Keller and Kenneth  
 A. Breisch ; with a foreword by Margaret Cool Root.

-- Ann Arbor : Kelsey Museum of Archaeology,  
 University of Michigan, c1980.

32 p., 7 p. of plates : ill. ; 28 cm.

1. Parker, John Henry, 1806-1884--Photograph  
 collections. 2. Rome (Italy)--Antiquities--  
 Exhibitions. 3. Photography in archaeology--Italy--  
 Rome--Exhibitions. 4. Photograph collections--  
 Michigan--Ann Arbor--Exhibitions. 5. Photography--  
 Italy--Rome--Exhibitions. 6. Photography--19th  
 century--Italy--Rome--Exhibitions. I. Keller,  
 Judith. II. Breisch, Kenneth A. III. Title.

100 10 \$aParker, John Henry,\$d1806-1884  
 245 00 \$aJohn Henry Parker Collection  
 300 \$a1011 photoprints  
 545 \$aPublisher  
 520 \$aSummary: In the 1860's and 1870's Parker, an English amateur enthusiast of classical and medieval archaeology, undertook the documentation of Roman aqueducts, gates, walls, and other sites, hiring local photographers. Between 1868 and 1879 over 3,300 photographs, executed under his direction, were published in a multi-volume series. The photographs were also sold separately as sets. The Photo Archive owns 556 images attributed specifically to Parker's work. Due to the loss of almost all of the Parker Archive negatives in a fire in 1893, the historical value of the collection is especially great. Other parts of the Parker Archive may be found at the Fototeca Unione (which owns the few hundred remaining negatives), the Vatican archive, Princeton University, and the University of Michigan. The Parker photographs are currently stored separately within Antiquities.  
 A xerox copy of the 1879 catalog to the Parker Collection is kept in Antiquities.  
 The PARKER database gives full textual descriptions for individual photographs.  
 555 \$aFinding aid: Catalogue (1879) available  
 555 \$aFinding aid: On-line inventory available  
 \$citem-level control  
 500 Acquired 1980  
 500 Other photographers represented in the collection are Alinari, Anderson, Brogi, Sommer, Loso, Mang, and Roberto Riva.  
 506 \$aOpen for use by qualified researchers.  
 851 \$aThe Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Photo Archives, 401 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400, Santa Monica, CA 90401

Figure 2. Prototype Photo Archive "MARC" record for John Henry Parker collection

PROD Archival FUL CJPV88-A24 Search CJPA-XXX  
 FIN PN SUHR, W - Record 1 of 1  
 035 (CMalG-A)870697  
 040 CMalG-A\$CMalG-A\$eappm  
 041 eng  
 100 1 Suhr, William.  
 245 00 Condition report,\$f1938 Dec. 10.  
 300 1 item (2 p.).  
 500 Holographs.  
 545 Conservator.  
 520 A condition report on Petrus Christus'  
 "Death of the Virgin" for Knoedler. A repro-  
 duction of the painting is included.  
 506 Open for use to qualified researchers.  
 600 10 Christus, Petrus\$dca. 1410-1472 or 3.  
 650 0 Painting\$xConservation and restoration.  
 851 The Getty Center for the History of Art and  
 the Humanities, Archives of the History of Art,  
 401 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400, Santa Monica, CA

**William Suhr Collection**

Holdings: P

Type: Restorer  
 Size: c. 11,000 photos + numerous negatives  
 Shelved: Special Collection - partially integrated  
 Descrip: Negatives and prints from the archive of  
 William Suhr, paintings conservator in New  
 York City, c.1935-1982. Suhr worked on  
 paintings in many important private and public  
 collections in America, photographing them at  
 nearly every stage of the conservation process.  
 Suhr's detailed analyses, treatment notes,  
 and related documentation will be kept in the  
 Archives of the History of Art.  
 Information about the negatives and prints  
 is indexed in the SUHR database. A large  
 unindexed clipping file is also available.  
 Stored: Paintings

PROD Archival LON CJPV86-A174 Search CJPA-XXX  
 FIN CW FRENCH ALS LI CJPV - Record 1 of 1

+

French and Company.

Registration records, 1909-1964.

30 linear ft.

American art dealer of New York, specializing in the decorative arts. Clients included J. Paul Getty and William Randolph Hearst.

Stocksheets, 1909-1964: Description of objects and record of all movements, eventual purchasers and prices. By accession number, assigned roughly by date of acquisition. Acquired with company's Photo Archive, 1978, and located in the Getty Center's Photo Archive.

Open for use by qualified researchers.

Location: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Archives of the History of Art, 401 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400, Santa Monica, CA.

1. Art--Collectors and Collecting. 2. Decorative Arts. 3. Sales Records.

**French and Company**

**Holdings: A,D,M,P,S**

Type: Dealer

Size: c. 40,000 photos + negatives

Shelved: Special Collection - integrated

Descrip: Negatives, photographs, and stock sheets from the New York firm of French and Company. Of special interest to decorative arts scholars as documentation of collections assembled in the United States in the early 20th century. Concentrations lie in 18th-century furniture, tapestries (all periods and countries), and paintings. Antiquities, Medieval art, and post-Medieval sculpture are occasionally represented.

Prints have been distributed for cataloging; stock sheets are filed by number. Negatives are indexed in the FRCO database. Some older negatives on nitrate film have been destroyed.

Stored: Various

“subunit” cataloging. The Max Hutzel Collection contains nearly 120,000 negatives documenting Italian art and architecture in photographs remarkable for their rich visual context. The photographs are taken on “campaigns” through the Italian countryside, and the site documentation is remarkably complete, everything from the antique through the Baroque and often in the same photograph. To a “host” record for the full collection we could link subunit records for each site or campaign. Such records would be rich with added entries for the buildings and artists represented in the photographs—valuable access points which would be impractical to establish from a single collection record.

The scenario described may sound scattered and inconsistent in terms of our potential application of the MARC AMC and VM formats in RLIN. The results of a recent survey by the Art and Architecture Program Committee (AAPC) of the Research Libraries Group, however, indicate otherwise. Their survey of visual materials in the RLIN database shows that usage of the AMC and VM formats *in general* seems scattered and inconsistent. Many survey respondents indicated that they catalog the same visual medium at more than one level, although most appeared to use only one RLIN file per medium—for example, the Books (BKS) file for microforms, VIM for videorecordings, and AMC for photographs. The AAPC survey represents a handy barometer of current usage as we consider different implementation options for the Getty Photo Archive.

What, then, is the lesson we have learned from our investigation into RLIN as a union catalog for Getty Center holdings? First and foremost, we are reminded of the fact that MARC formats exist solely as a means of data communication and are not intended as any sort of cataloging standard. Given its original curatorial audience, the Photo Archive responded with a home-grown data model which was far more useful than the MARC structure in every way. As cataloging and research policies changed, however, there was more impetus for the Photo Archive to translate its records into a format which could be easily and directly communicated to the Center’s other resource departments. For that specific, functional reason, the MARC AMC and VM formats became useful and appropriate.

The Photo Archive was fortunate to have selected a local system which is highly adaptive and lends itself to rapid, self-guided development of sophisticated output formats; as such it was the perfect tool for “mapping” between our own formats and those of MARC. Visual resource curators considering purchase or development of local systems would do well to realize that this is an essential bridge—the one you least want to burn. As more visual resource curators make the ability to export MARC-formatted records a requirement of candidate systems, vendors should respond and help eliminate a major hurdle to development of union catalogs of archival visual collections—such as RLIN will be for the collections of the Getty Center.