The Art Discovery Group Catalogue: a new and freely-available tool for art historical bibliographic research

Geert-Jan Koot

As project manager of the Art Discovery Group Catalogue project, and on behalf of the artlibraries.net committee, Geert-Jan Koot explains the development of the Art Discovery Group Catalogue. This discovery service powered by WorldCat is a new, separate project developed by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) in Europe for art libraries, which became officially available on May 1st 2014. The project has been accepted within the international Future of Art Bibliography (FAB) initiative of the Getty Research Institute as its bibliographic component. The fact that the system is being developed in Europe provides an excellent equilibrium between Europe and America within the project. Following the invitation to participate, over 80 libraries have so far expressed interest, of which 60 have joined the catalogue. This project is a major step in one of the FAB goals of making art bibliographical information available worldwide through collaboration.

The Art Discovery Group Catalogue enables researchers to discover materials from the combined collections of participating art libraries as represented in OCLC’s WorldCat, including pertinent articles from more than 200 million records in 78,000 journals based on the holdings information of the aggregated libraries. This Group Catalogue view of WorldCat, based on the collections of globally-distributed art libraries, defines Art Discovery as a highly useful and promising, discipline-specific bibliographic tool for art historical research.

The need for new ways to facilitate art historical research

The cessation of the Getty’s support for the Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA) in 2010 caused the current crisis in art bibliography. It is hard to imagine what could be more important to the scholarly community than a healthy Bibliography of the History of Art. The BHA has for decades indexed 20,000-odd records a year, serving thousands of users around the world. The Future of Art Bibliography (FAB) initiative developed out of various conversations among colleagues in the United States and Europe. Several meetings followed and, as a result, it was agreed to seek new ways of facilitating art historical research. It was acknowledged that professional cooperation among scholars, librarians, and publishers is needed. The discovery of resources should be made much easier. We need to take advantage of what already exists, in publishers’ catalogues, in websites, in digital information that is available, and to identify the gaps in what does not exist or is already discoverable.¹

This vision to create a new freely-available, virtual bibliography using a modular architecture emerged at the same time as the technical shortcomings of artlibraries.net appeared as a result of its popularity and ongoing expansion. Searching for solutions for frequent time-outs and long lists full of duplicate
records, the artlibraries.net committee members stayed on the track of selectively networking library catalogues to fulfill services similar to bibliographies. The artlibraries.net approach has always been the amalgamation of selected catalogues to one virtual source. Yet the FAB initiative identified the need for a discovery environment for discipline-specific information and sources. Facing the reality that most of the artlibraries.net catalogues were included in the WorldCat database, the starting point for a new information retrieval model was the solid and forward-thinking architecture of WorldCat. It contains, as of December 2014, more than 330 million records, representing over 2 billion physical and digital assets in 485 languages. It is the world’s largest bibliographic database, using Apache HBase, a distributed platform in use by many global information providers, including Facebook, Adobe and Salesforce.com.

However, the concept of the group catalogue based on WorldCat at that time was limited to libraries belonging to geographically-defined areas. There was, at the time, only one precedent for a subject specific catalogue: the Transportation Libraries Group Catalogue. The AdamNet Group Catalogue, which is based on the catalogues of the 25 libraries organized as the Amsterdam library consortium AdamNet, served as the group catalogue example. The Netherlands office of OCLC for activities in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) supported the development of the AdamNet Group Catalogue concept into a successful working tool and this was of decisive importance. A group catalogue is created for a group of libraries and available for use by anyone. Although WorldCat has global reach, you will always see information about the collections of the libraries belonging to the specific group and links to their services on the front page. The group catalogue provides a scoped view of WorldCat, links to the catalogues of the libraries belonging to the group, bibliographic, article, citation, and institutional repository records. Everything you need is displayed right within the WorldCat record, including the location.

Artlibraries.net is a meta search interface based on the technology of the Karlsruhe Virtual Catalogue (VVK), which conducts a simultaneous search in a number of web catalogues. As artlibraries.net does not have its own database, it depends on the availability of target systems. Artlibraries.net produces standardized short-title hit lists with separate links to each specific library’s catalogue to see the expanded record.

The WorldCat data harvesting model offers significant advantages over the distributed searching model. It enables a single, consolidated result set, better response times and a more robust search service. From the single result set it is possible to display facets for narrowing the result set, the presentation can include thumbnail images and the scope of the display can be varied, from group catalogue to libraries world-wide. With the distributed search model there is a limited number of targets that can be effectively accommodated; this is overcome with the data harvesting model.

**Organization, sponsors and membership**

The Art Discovery Project has been developed by an international working group within the context of the Future of Art Bibliography initiative, with the members of the artlibraries.net committee acting as the core task force. Kathleen Salomon, assistant director at the Getty Research Institute, acts as the linchpin with the FAB group. As the new project develops, this group of volunteers will serve as the initial task force. It is expected that membership will evolve to include other participants as the project progresses.

Several institutions financially supported the project: the most important are the Getty Research Institute and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation. The initial fee of 10,000 Euros for the development of the Art Discovery group catalogue has been funded by the Getty Research Institute. These initial one-off costs for professional services cover the implementation of the group catalogue. Furthermore, the Kress Foundation generously approved the application for a grant to fund the loads of five libraries and the IRIS consortium of seven more libraries. These libraries are member of artlibraries.net transferring to Art Discovery but needed a WorldCat subscription first. The proposal requested a total of $45,432 to cover the data load and clean-up costs, start-up fees, and one-year subscription fees. Additionally, the Getty Research Institute is committing to a cost-share for the management of the grant. This was a one-time opportunity. The working group is considering whether to ask for more funding from the Kress Foundation if more libraries want to join.

The Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon will develop and host the Art Discovery website. The relation to OCLC should be made clear. Art Discovery is a product of the international art libraries community, managed by the task force,
powered by WorldCat. Art Discovery is not a service provided by OCLC, but it is using the infrastructure developed for WorldCat. The libraries included in the group catalogue are proposed by the task force and agreed by the community. As a result of using the infrastructure developed for WorldCat, libraries first have to sign an agreement with OCLC and secondly pay an annual subscription fee and a one-time set-up fee to join Art Discovery.97

Content

While developing the Art Libraries Group Catalogue as it was originally called,6 it came as a surprise that a large number of records for articles were retrieved. Investigating the origins of these articles, it appeared that most of them originated from repositories and databases. A major advantage of Art Discovery when compared to the current arlibraries.net model is this ability to discover aggregated bibliographic data from the participating art libraries, as well as from the large meta-data pool derived from thousands of commercial and freely-accessible collections, portals and repositories provided by OCLC.

Since journal articles are rarely indexed in library catalogues, this junction of relevant sources will greatly enrich the discovery of bibliographic information. This meta-data pool contains more than 200 million articles from over 96,000 journal titles (in all disciplines), of which 78,000 titles are accessible without authentication and no subscription is needed for full-text access. The bibliographic meta-data of the rest, about 18,000 journals, are accessible with restrictions (authentication, normally IP-based).8 These sources will be visible in searches processed in IP-domains with the relevant subscription.

As a result of this wealth of bibliographic information, it was soon understood that a true discovery tool for art historical research could be realized. We called it Art Discovery.

Why, if your results are already in WorldCat do you need to join Art Discovery? It looks like an extra layer of bureaucracy and cost that a lot of smaller or less financially well-endowed libraries could not afford even though their holdings would be a huge asset. There are several reasons to join. The ideological reason is to join forces with other art libraries worldwide to build on this collaborative bibliographic tool for art related research and make the range of coverage as broad as possible. Another reason is to make your collections more visible for art historians. A leading study pointed out the specific desire of many scholars for a single, discipline-based research tool, as I will discuss in the Added value section below. In my 25 years of experience as librarian of the Rijksmuseum Research Library, curators and conservators in the museum rarely search separate bibliographic databases like Art Index, BHA and IBA. They simply forget about their existence, they do not remember where to find them, or it takes too much effort. Joining Art Discovery is all about adding value to your collections.

Many of the world's leading art libraries joined the discovery tool, such as the National Art Library in London, the Watson Library at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Getty Research Library, the Rijksmuseum Research Library, several art libraries in Australia and Japan, the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University and consortia such as IRIS in Florence and NYARC consisting of the New York libraries of the Museum of Modern Art, The Brooklyn Museum, and The Frick Art Reference Library. By late 2014, the one and a half million records of the four German Kubikat libraries had been added. But also smaller libraries have become members, such as the libraries of the Accademia di Architettura in Mendrisio and the Kunsthau Zürich, both in Switzerland, and the Albertina in Vienna, Austria. A link to the list of participating libraries and subscription costs are included in the references at the end of the article.19

Artlibraries.net and the Art Discovery Group Catalogue

The task force group understands that the question of sustaining two bibliographic services is of concern to the arlibraries.net community. The future of both projects was addressed during the arlibraries.net and FAB conference in Copenhagen, in October 2014. The conclusion of the Copenhagen discussions was to gain more experience with the Art Discovery Group Catalogue and consider the benefits to the broader art libraries community before taking any decision about the future of arlibraries.net.
Added value

The first goal has been to find a stable, sustainable and, above all, functional platform to allow unified searching of the bibliographic data from art libraries worldwide – with no cost involved to search the system!

While the core of the libraries in the Art Discovery Group Catalogue is from the arlibraries.net group, the benefit of this move to the OCLC WorldCat platform is how scalable it is. Libraries that were not members of the arlibraries.net can now join the group catalogue and even libraries such as the Marquand Library at Princeton University or the Avery Library at Columbia University will be found where previously in arlibraries.net their holdings could not be included due to technical reasons. Another important feature is the remarkably higher speed of obtaining results. At the same time the discovery process is enriched with additional sources like bibliographic databases, full-text repositories, and image collections. This results in hit lists far richer than those retrieved in the arlibraries.net environment.

It’s difficult to know exactly who the global audience for Art Discovery is, but a recent publication from Ithaka S+R called Supporting the Changing Research Practices of Art Historians provides some insight. This study underscores the desire of many scholars for discipline-based research tools. Another conclusion is that the ability of researchers to borrow materials from a wide network through established lending agreements is very important, as is the ability to use multiple libraries in a geographic region. The availability of various collection types including auction catalogues, rare books, articles, ephemera, curatorial records, photo archives is also of importance.11

The value of such a discipline-specific view into the larger WorldCat pool will be proven over the next few years. We hope to be able to expand the breadth of the group catalogue over time, both in the number of participating libraries, but also by adding in certain discipline-specific tools and more digital collections, in order to move toward the vision of a central and global discovery system for art historical bibliography. That 60 libraries from 12 countries have already signed up to participate seems a strong vote of confidence that this project might be on the right track. A future step will be to develop an advisory committee of both scholars and students. I believe that with bibliographical and digital repositories expanding exponentially, there needs to be technical solutions to help researchers find trusted information. It is possible that, if Art Discovery is successful and keeps evolving, it could relieve the need for libraries to purchase and implement expensive and untested commercial discovery products.

The future prospect

We are now in the initial phase of Art Discovery. Sixty art libraries joining the discovery tool is not bad for a start. We expect many more art libraries will be willing to participate. Thanks to the Kress grant, the records of 12 libraries will be uploaded during 2015. Letters of interest from another 16 libraries have been received since May 2014.12

With the support of the community, the task force will also identify and prioritize important art-related databases, journals, and other sources that require group subscriptions to be delivered through the Art Discovery Catalogue. Databases to which only some individual libraries have subscriptions cannot be included in Art Discovery. However, the number of freely-accessible sources is so high and comprehensive that negotiations with providers will be required for only a few exceptional cases. Furthermore, repositories of interest and with a relationship to our discipline like image collections, museum archives and so on can be integrated in the discovery environment when certain (technical and legal) requirements are satisfied.

The coverage in Art Discovery of 22 art-related databases, that we think are important for art historical research, has been analysed by OCLC.13 This forms an expanding wish list, depending on our demands. Six databases have already been included: Art Index and Art Index Full Text, JSTOR, SCPIO, Oxford Art Online, and CAMIO. There is the intention to add the entire legacy corpus of the Bibliography of the History of Art (BHA) soon. The indexing of auction catalogues is another concern. Currently, the SCPIO records are available, but many libraries catalogue their auction catalogues in a different manner. As a result duplicate records will appear. And more specific indexes are needed in order to find auction catalogues from this large pool of bibliographic records.

Project member Paolo Leitão, library of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal, is currently developing and hosting the dedicated website for Art Discovery, artdiscovery.net.14 The Art Discovery Group Catalogue search box will be embedded in its home page. Important information about coverage and search strategies, as well as how to join the project, will be added to the Art Discovery website. In the meantime OCLC is
working hard to redesign the user interface and experience for their discovery services, including Art Discovery. The result of this new interface will be a much nicer discovery experience which is device-independent and offers advanced search features, adjustable filters, customized lists, and several ways to connect and share results. Although already online, a lot of development still needs to be done. The expected official release of the new interface is autumn 2015.

Some local catalogues, for instance the Arcade Catalogue of the NYARC libraries, contain thousands of records for photo-archive images of works of art and documentation files which are not in WorldCat. It might be of great value to add these records. In support of this effort, OCLC has developed the WorldCat Digital Collection Gateway, a web-based, self-service tool that enables institutions to control harvesting of metadata for their open access digital collections into WorldCat. Metadata added to WorldCat through the Gateway will gain higher visibility by being freely-available for discovery in WorldCat.org and in all of WorldCat’s syndications and views, including Art Discovery.

Publicity

Since the launch at the ARLIS/NA Conference, in Washington in May 2014, accompanied by press releases in several languages, a lecture and a reception, several task force members have given presentations in Manchester at the ARLIS/UK & Ireland Conference, during the IFLA Art Libraries Section pre-conference in Paris, and on the occasion of the main IFLA Conference in Lyon. A separate time slot has been devoted to Art Discovery during the OCLC EMEA Regional Board and Members Meeting in Florence in February 2015. OCLC supported Art Discovery further by publishing a Rijksmuseum member story on its website, and by producing a 2.5 minute video-clip which is available on YouTube and also embedded in the 2014 Annual Report. This video clip has been shown on many occasions all over the world.

The IFLA Art Libraries Section endorsed the project during the Lyon standing committee meetings. Many news clippings based on the official press release have been published, not only in library news bulletins and blogs, but also in newsletters aimed at art historians and curators such as Codart, the international network for art curators from the Low Countries.

Use and reviews

The first reviews are positive, although doubts have been expressed by scholars and subject specialists because of the lack of scope, the limitations of subject-specific searches and the multiple listing of the same article records.

On the occasion of the 6th artlibraries.net
members meeting in Copenhagen in October 2014, Jan Simane demonstrated the importance of the interrelation of metadata for the quality of retrieval results in his lecture ‘Art Discovery Group Catalogue, Final Goal or Starting Point?’ He explained the consequences of the gap between the potential of the discovery infrastructure on the one hand and the data we are providing for new services on the other. “The high degree of redundancy in subject descriptions reduces even further the usefulness of these indicators for both faceting and relevance ranking. … It is the interaction of the data, and not its mere aggregation, that is so decisive for the discovery experience in an environment like the WorldCat. … The results would be more accurate, relevant and easier to process if the filtering principles of the discovery tool were more efficiently supported by corresponding data types. In this respect the ADGC is indeed a starting point.”

Another problem is that Google and other web indexing agents are unable to find the home page of Art Discovery. The reason why the group catalogue itself cannot be found is due to the existence of a tag in every WorldCat Local and group catalogue which tells indexing engines (like Google) not to index them. If all the individual (sub) sites were indexed, the whole of WorldCat would be indexed by web robots a couple of thousand times over. The best solution we could think of is to secure a domain for Art Discovery, like artdiscovery.net, to use for search engine optimization. The domain registered is artdiscovery.net.

Opportunity, luck and favourable moments

In Greek mythology, Caeros (Greek: Καέρος) was the personification of opportunity, luck and favourable situations that must be grabbed while one has the chance. He was shown with only one lock of hair. Caeros can be seized by the hair hanging over his face when he arrives. But once he has passed by, no one can grasp him, the back of his head being bald. The moment of action is gone with his hair: a neglected occasion cannot be recovered. He balances scales on a sharp edge, the attribute illustrating the fleeting instant in which occasions appear and disappear. Caeros was the god of the fleeting moment; a favourable opportunity opposing the fate of man. Such a moment must be grasped; otherwise the moment is gone and cannot be re-captured. Caeros can also be related to the principle of serendipity, the “pleasant surprise”, the unexpected discovery essential for scientific innovation. In this fresco the rewards for grabbing the right moment are pictured above his head. The message is clear: Caeros is generous. He overloads us with fruitful insights if we prepare well enough for his arrival. So let us grab this moment, this opportunity, to join and develop our Art Discovery Group Catalogue into the global bibliographic discovery tool for art historical research. Together we can enhance the quality of our discovery tool by identifying and integrating relevant resources and data collections as well as new participating libraries.

References

2. National Transportation Library http://ntl.bts.gov/about_
4. Artlibraries.net: http://artlibraries.net/
5. WorldCat database: http://worldcat.org/
6. Updated list of the project team members: http://library.rijksmuseum.nl/ArtDiscovery.htm
   Initiating artlibraries.net committee members: Geert-Jan Koot (Library of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands); Wendy Fish (Library Royal Institute of British Architects, London, Great Britain); Véronique Gencerut Estèbe (Bibliothèque d’art et d’archéologie des Musées d’art et d’histoire de la Ville de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland); Rüdiger Hoyer (Library of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich, Germany); Deborah Kempe (Library of the Frick Collection, New York, USA); Paulo Leitão (Library of the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, Portugal); Michael Rocke (Biblioteca Berenson, Villa I Tatti – The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Florence, Italy); Kathleen Salomon (The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, USA); Jan Simane (Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Max-Planck-Institut, Florence, Italy)
7. Fees for joining the Art Discovery Group Catalogue (ADGC) 2015. In order to participate in the Art Discovery Group Catalogue, libraries must have their bibliographic data in the WorldCat database and qualify for WorldCat on FirstSearch or in EMEA visibility in WorldCat. org and continue those agreements.
   A. Annual subscription fee for adding records to ADGC: Categories 1 and 2 = libraries that meet all prerequisites through existing agreements with OCLC:

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<th>EUR</th>
<th>USD</th>
<th>YEN</th>
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<td>&lt; 200,000</td>
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<td>909</td>
<td>70,862</td>
<td>1,010</td>
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   Category 3 = libraries that have no current agreement for WorldCat on FirstSearch or (in EMEA) an agreement for visibility in WorldCat.org:

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<td>1,470</td>
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   This fee only includes participation in the WorldCat Group Catalog. It does not include WorldCat on FirstSearch, it does not include cataloguing and does not include a metadata conversion or batch load.

B. One-time set-up fee for adding records to ADGC

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<td>310</td>
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</table>

8. The Art Discovery Group Catalogue is freely-available: http://artlibraries.worldcat.org/
9. WorldCat® Discovery Services, Content available through WorldCat Discovery Services https://oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/worldcat-discovery/contentlist.xls
10. Costs for joining ADGC – see 7. Updated list of current participating libraries: http://library.rijksmuseum.nl/ArtDiscovery.htm
12. Letters of interest for joining Art Discovery Group Catalogue received (May–December 2014): Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, USA; Ringling Museum of Art Library in Sarasota, Florida, USA; New York Public Library, New York, USA; Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas, USA; Tate Gallery, London, UK; University of the Arts London, UK; National Gallery, London, UK; Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, Austria; Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, Québec, Canada; Prado Museum Library, Madrid, Spain; Cité de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Bibliothèque, Paris, France; Terra Foundation of American Art (Europe), Paris, France; Anet, a consortium of 20 academic libraries in Antwerp, Belgium; Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, Japan; Pinacoteca Sao Paulo, Brazil
13. Coverage of art related databases in Art Discovery Group Catalogue
   Art Index (75% of ISSN); Art Index Full Text (75% of ISSN); Art Index Retrospective (no known coverage); Artbibliographies Modern (no known coverage); DAAL: Art and Design Index (no known coverage); Avery Index (no known coverage); Bibliography of the History of Art (no known coverage); International Bibliography of Art (no known coverage); JSTOR (100% of records); AskART (no known coverage); Index to 19th Century American Art Periodicals (no known coverage); SCIPPO (100% of records); Oxford Art Online (100% of records); Getty Provenance Index (no known coverage); ASCO Art Sales Catalogues Online
is huge, free, and works equally well for the research needs of both undergraduates or the advanced researcher." https://blogs.commons.georgetown.edu/ajs299/2014/05/28/the-biggest-art-catalogue-in-the-world/


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