

Promoting Innovation: Standards and Dialogue for Public Art Resources

R. Arvid Nelsen
Head of Special Collections, Rare Books, and Manuscripts
Curator of Northwest Architectural Archives
Rare Materials Conservation Coordinator
Elmer L. Andersen Library
Minneapolis, MN + 612.625.4867
email: nels0307@umn.edu

Helen Lessick
Independent Artist and Project Manager
Web Resources for Art in Public
Los Angeles, CA +213.304.4466
email: wresources4publicart@gmail.com

Abstract:

This paper aims to review practices in cataloguing public art collection archives and recent efforts to publicly present those records. We examine how to improve communication between knowledge bases to educate, inform and improve search results. Re-examining contemporary public arts a national, civic collection of permanent, temporary and ephemeral artworks, we explore current online standards and auxiliary applications. This paper reveals the failure of vocabulary standards in traditional collections to reflect contemporary artists' diverse toolkit to address site and engage audience beyond traditional venues. With this paper we present the University of Minnesota's digitization of *Public Art Review* in international print magazine with 23 years of publication history published by Forecast Public Art, and examine municipal collections and examine grassroots efforts to promote dialog and sharing between communities through Web Resources of Art in Public (WRAP).

Background: Public Art, Collected

Public art is an evolving field. Today's practitioners use traditional formats including bronze sculptures, painted murals and tile mosaics, as well as cross-media and multi-authored practices including performed parades, temporary installations, digital video and site-integrated, functional design in civic architecture. Public art practice also includes policies and contracts addressing the unique combination of art and public space, civic life and aesthetic discussion, art actions and community arts.

Some major search agents use outdated definitions of the practice. A Google search on 'public art' generates 641 million citations with diverse parameters and controversies appearing on the first search page. The Library of Congress defines public art as 'artwork sponsored or paid for by public entities,' a definition that excludes guerilla works, flash mobs, and Christo's entire practice. At present, searches

for public art are siloed by funds: commissioning agencies, commercial entities or artist-initiated projects, even as public art is experienced in public situations.

Municipal public art collections are tethered to government web sites often difficult to navigate. Public art in online archives frequently use specialized art historical vocabulary written for specific clientele. Researchers need to access funding entities, such as municipal art commissions or airport authorities to find specific works. Independent artists and festival events, public art blogs and news opinions would not be found by current search standards, due to their limited cataloguing metadata.

Local redevelopment agencies and academic institutions have created smart phone applications to identify and aggregate local public art regardless of collection ownership. Public art encompasses grant-based projects and percent for art commissions, theory and policies as well as projects, toolkits for community groups and archives for public art educators and historians, cultural tourists and private developers.

Simply put, accessing the digital data of public art projects, collections, policies and critical analyses is a daunting task. Accessing public art policies, and artists' initiated projects, festivals and fairs, requires specialized knowledge in the field to appropriately assign cataloguing terms. To do so requires resource standardization, shared vocabulary and metadata, and the assistance and expertise of library and information professionals such as a cataloguer-in-residence working with arts agencies. These steps have been taken recently in transitioning *Public Art Review* publications, Public Art Archives, municipal collections and independent projects into web-accessible digital records.

WRAP: Web Resources for Art in Public

At an initial meeting in Baltimore, MD on June 23, 2010, twenty-three participants representing museums, academic institutions, independent research organizations, government agencies, non-profit arts organizations, library- and museum-professional organizations, and commercial online content providers discussed currently offered web-based resources, opportunities for collaboration, and desired outcomes.² Communities served by these organizations include artists seeking commissions, grants and audiences, municipalities and private entities looking to initiate public art projects, students and educators looking for educational information, and the general public looking to public art for education, entertainment, and inspiration. These audience communities have widely diverse interests and needs and the entities that serve them have widely varying resources, talents, and professional interests. A comprehensive resource spanning these interests would require the participation of experts in art, grants, museums, libraries, and education as well as the needed technologies and funding partners.

² Summit Report & Preliminary Recommendations. Exploring Web-based Public Art Resources: A Leadership Summit, June 23, 2010, Baltimore, Maryland. Organized by Forecast Public Art, Co-hosted by the Public Art Network @ Americans for the Arts. Cinder Hypki, Hypki Consulting, October 6, 2010. <http://forecastpublicart.org/par-report.php>

In November 2010 the ad hoc group launched WRAP, Web Resources for Art in Public, with Helen Lessick, an experienced public art activist, administrator, and artist, as the project coordinator. The goal of WRAP is a collaborative dialog about digital resources of contemporary public art so accurate information can be easily found through on-line searches. WRAP is an ambitious, visionary project with the intent to include participation by and resources for a wide variety of communities. A participant in the Baltimore meeting, Helen was recruited to research methods and develops models for WRAP.

This is a daunting task in and of itself, but made all the more difficult due to the demands and workloads faced by individuals and organizations simply in meeting their own primary missions, and especially in an economic environment that offers fewer financial and – often – personnel resources. Grant opportunities themselves may remain available and can provide some support, but even grant-funded projects can introduce further administrative requirements for staff struggling to maintain current organizational objectives. Furthermore, while collaboration is increasingly the watchword for both private and public entities seeking to share costs and tasks, at least in some communities activities around collaboration remain centered on determining how exactly to implement it. Questions faced by potential collaborators include: Who takes the lead? Who bear what costs or which specific responsibilities? How is long-term stability and open communication ensured in order to engender trust in the partnerships themselves?

Multi-institutional collaboration is not yet mature. For all of the excitement that can be – and has been – generated by discussion of a universal resource for public art on the web, efforts toward its accomplishment are threatened by the daunting scope of the project, limited institutional resources, and even limited understanding of the needs of partner organizations or indeed what, exactly, the end result should look like. Such impediments can easily cause potential contributors to pull away, opting instead to wait and see who takes lead responsibility, what vision they craft, ultimately what is accomplished. They may choose to stay close to home and to their own institution's mission, working toward more clearly perceived and manageable goals. Rather than see this reaction as an impediment to the development of an integrated resource, it is possible to see the logic in such an approach and the potential for a model that harnesses the strengths and capabilities of independent units.

This discussion of how to provide universal access to public art resources on the web starts from the idea of a centrally designed, built, and managed resource, incorporating both existing and newly created resources, and pulling in many experts but organized as a cohesive structure designed to anticipate and meet the needs of a wide range of potential users. Indeed, that is essentially the concept discussed at the two WRAP meetings pulling together potential partners, a second having been held in New York on February 13, 2011. At this second meeting, as requests were made for volunteer teams to begin some preliminary assignments, some participants did in fact decline because of lack of clarity regarding the project aims and their own current commitments. Through their own experiences balancing institutional priorities and resources as well as with collaborative efforts across professional organizations, the authors perceive that such reluctance to participate in a centrally organized, multi-institutional project may be common. Even institutions supportive of the idea have current projects and priorities they are struggling to maintain. A project of this potential magnitude would require dedicated, ongoing commitment in terms of real time spent actively working on it and communicating with representatives from other institutions as part of their regular work routine. Few, if any, institutions have the luxury of the time required to conceptualize, design, and build such a resource.

There are other impediments to the development of a single, universal resource. Even with contributing partners representing multiple areas of interest and expertise, it would be difficult – if not impossible –

to anticipate the needs of all potential users of the resource. Organizations working with but one constituency from the range of artists, art critics, students, educators, government, and granting agencies (and even this list is surely incomplete) would be hard pressed to say that they can meet all current needs or anticipate the future needs of their target audiences. A centrally conceived and managed resource expecting to fulfill this goal would surely require a long planning process and inevitably fall short once the product went live. As a centrally managed piece, it would also risk being slow and (depending on the platform) difficult to modify and could fall quickly out of date.

Contemporary audiences have high expectations in respect to how they access and interact with web-based information. Contemporary websites are not simply places for individual persons and organizations to post their own authoritative messages but rather serve as dynamic loci for multiple persons to add and modify content with uploads and comments. Nimble applications also permit people without advanced technology skills to easily publish text, still and moving images, and sound via personally-created blogs, wikis, and websites. Social media outlets make this even easier by providing fully designed (though less customizable) platforms for sharing content. Technology allows for information to be shared between sites and among viewers and readers. People also actively repurpose objects found on the web. Such developments should permit organizations to focus on specific goals without undertaking the responsibility to provide for the interests of every possible community. For example, libraries can focus on their mission to preserve and provide access to content while allowing parties with the requisite knowledge of materials and the interests of specific viewing communities to publicize their own ideas regarding that content either through tagging and posting on a library site or by making it easy for people to pull content into sites of their own creation.

These facts –nimble technologies; community expectations; the limited time and resources of potential contributors – point to the need for a decentralized model for public art on the web. But, is this not already happening? Organizations are publishing their own resources and marketing it to their own user communities. Yet the needs and opportunities identified by the group that initially conceived of WRAP endure – information, resources, and communities remain isolated. There persists an opportunity for increasing communication between content providers, raising awareness of resources among diverse audiences, and promoting opportunities for the creation of new resources through the recontextualization of existing materials so as not to anticipate the needs and desires of interested communities, but to allow them to create their own solutions.

There are many ways in which the diverse communities interested in public art may be connected to one another and to resources. The idea outlined above was the creation of a universal resource created with many partners and containing content addressing the needs of many audiences. As a counterpoint to this idea – and a starting point for further discussion – the model suggested here is far simpler. A small partnership of interested parties³ could publish a page with basic recommended guidelines for content providers and viewers including: 1) recommended standards for content creation and metadata, 2) suggested strategies for finding resources aimed at specific audiences and needs, and 3) discussion space to address a variety of issues and needs such as terminology – or how we talk about art – to facilitate both content promotion and discovery. Content providers may include artists, scholars and critics, institutional repositories, advocacy agencies. Audiences may be artists seeking grants,

³ This is a hypothetical group of people that may or may not come out of WRAP itself. This scenario recommends WRAP's initial strategy to include experts from universities, libraries, museums, grants agencies, etc. but only in the identification of their individual goals, target audiences, professional standards, and emergent issues.

organizations seeking art, students seeking source material or inspirations, tourists and aficionados seeking information and entertainment. A list of basic categories would start to direct people to areas containing suggestions and discussion forums appropriate to their interests. If the site were fully participatory, this basic list could grow as communities of interest identify themselves. It could additionally serve as a “portal” in so far as people could post information about and links to resources they manage or recommend.

Such a site would not seek to be an aggregator of existing content nor to create a new search engine for finding materials. It would seek to improve resource promotion by identifying existing standards for providers unfamiliar with professional practices and to facilitate resource discovery by suggesting existing formal vocabularies to searchers and providing discussion them space to share how they talk about art. Content providers may find a toolkit offering guides to: identification of roles, definition of projects, obtaining permissions, crediting sources, sharing information, metadata standards and requirements. Contributing institutions may be provided with suggested standards for sharing their content. For example, resource links to administrative metadata standards in place for images on the web might be provided, along with guidelines for suggested minimum requirements for sharing resources, and permitting those who use resources to add any further metadata needed for their specific use. Guidelines for the use and recontextualization of content might be provided. In this way a library or museum could focus on what they do best, acquiring, preserving, and serving primary source material and artifacts, while writers and interpreters could download images provided to their own sites and provide the interpretation and contextualization they desire.

The site could also provide discussion space for the evolution of the extensible and interconnected community resource. As institutions identify themselves as having resources or ideas they wish to share and the role they wish to play, new categories of contributor could be added, as well as new links to guidelines and standards and directories of participating organizations and their content sites. Perhaps even users of content could identify their own interests and needs to alert providers of opportunities for new outreach projects.

Rather than being a centrally designed and managed site seeking to accommodate all foreseeable interests related to public art, the resource group would be a catalyst for creative activity and a hub for communication. Thus, the individuals back at their offices in museums, libraries, granting agencies, and others could spend their time working within their own areas of expertise and institutional priorities to develop component parts to an extensible structure. One resource that may provide a model for the public art community is EthicShare, a research and collaboration website developed for the Bioethics research community through a collaboration between the Center for Bioethics, University Libraries, and Department of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Minnesota and funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Further information about EthicShare can be found at <http://www.clir.org/pubs/issues/issues67.html#eth> and www.ethicshare.org.

Communicating Through a Common Language

A persistent element in discussions about needs for public art communities has been for consistent vocabularies describing instances of public art projects, policies, and critical writing. These generally come to a point of suggesting the development of subject headings that clearly and precisely define public art in its myriad forms, forms which are often difficult to describe and are not represented in library catalogs. While the development of a controlled vocabulary may, indeed, sound appealing, there are a number of issues to bear in mind before pursuing such a course of action.

Controlled vocabularies, when well constructed, follow the guidelines set by ANSI/NISO standard Z39.19, *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Controlled Vocabularies*.⁴ Even a brief glance at the standard will reveal the complexity of creating a controlled vocabulary. The careful selection of terms, the creation of their definitions, their placement in the hierarchy of terms to establish relationships between like works are all necessary functions to the formulation of a language that is understandable to and agreed upon by a large number of people, each of whom may have very different perspectives from their own context and experiences.⁵ A poorly constructed vocabulary will create confusion and engender frustration among the community it is intended to serve, and use may simply cease. The creation of a controlled vocabulary requires an ongoing commitment of a group of people to research and vet terms suggested by user communities. A thorough understanding of the standard and of the commitment involved should be held before even considering such an undertaking, and this article advocates against it.

The creation of a controlled vocabulary – of a new standard – may be tempting but is not always recommended. One observation on standards was provided by Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, which sends “valentines” bearing pithy statements to its Friends group every February. The 2002 edition read: “The nice thing about standards is that there are so many of them to choose from.” This highlights one of the pitfalls not just of the library, archives and museum worlds, but indeed nearly all of contemporary society by virtue of the ubiquity of computer applications. Standards are created so that work accomplished by one individual or institution is sharable with others. This, ideally, eliminates the need for duplicative work and ensures interoperability when we begin to communicate and collaborate across broader communities. Nevertheless, multiple standards may be developed as one community creates near-duplicate standards through ignorance of existing standards, either in respect to their availability or their utility. Currently there are many controlled vocabularies created for the purpose of describing library, archive, and museum materials on the basis of subject, form, and genre. MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data specifies six vocabularies used routinely enough to warrant special identification within the standard itself: *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, *LC Subject Headings for Children's Literature*, *Medical Subject Headings*, *National Agricultural Library Subject Authority File*, *Canadian Subject Headings*, *Répertoire de Vedettes-Matière*.⁶ Other sources may be specified in a subfield and these may include (and are certainly not limited to) the *Art and Architecture*

⁴ Bethesda, MD, NISO Press, 2005.

http://www.niso.org/kst/reports/standards/kfile_download?id%3Austring%3Aiso-8859-1=Z39-19-2005.pdf&pt=RkGKiXzW643YeUaYUqZ1BFwDhIG4-24RjbcZBWg8uE4vWdpZsJDs4RjLz0t90_d5_ymGsj_IKVAGZww13HuDIYn5U74YdfA-3TffjxYQ25QrtR8PONuJLqxvo-I0NIr5

⁵ From 2004 to 2007, Nelsen served on the Controlled Vocabularies Subcommittee of the Bibliographic Standards Committee of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). Starting in 2003, Nelsen investigated requirements for online management of controlled vocabularies, investigated and tested alternative software applications, made a successful recommendation to the Bibliographic Standards Committee regarding applications, and spearheaded implementation of the project to publish online (previously only available in print) the seven controlled vocabularies created and managed by RBMS/ACRL.

http://www.rbms.info/committees/bibliographic_standards/controlled_vocabularies/index.shtml

⁶ <http://www.loc.gov/marc/bibliographic/bd600.html>

Thesaurus published by the Getty Research Institute, six form/genre vocabularies published by RBMS, *Moving Image Genre-Form Guide*, and *Thesaurus for Graphic Materials: Subject and Genre Terms*.

When different thesauri have overlapping areas of interest they may duplicate terms. Beyond simply being a potential waste of time – going through the research and discussions required to establish a term – duplicate terms can introduce further problems. In shared environments different institutions are likely to employ different vocabularies. Variant construction of terms intended to describe an identical concept or construct will cause records containing terms drawn from different sources to file separately, dislocating records for materials that should belong together. Variation in scope notes for identically formed terms may also collate materials that do not belong together. Thus the creation of additional vocabularies introduces the potential for less universal clarity and understanding.

Another consideration with respect to controlled vocabularies for public art has to do with the very nature of the medium and the communities that create it. Contemporary artists often attempt to stretch definitions and break boundaries. Innovators look for new and unheard of means of expression. A controlled vocabulary is strongest when describing existing and historical phenomena – phenomena that are identifiable largely through duplication and proliferation. Artists who desire to transcend boundaries will create new forms and their followers may do the same. New and often unique manifestations tend to defy easy categorization and terms accurately describing them may best be discovered through simple keyword searches than through a codified system.⁷

Nevertheless, the use of controlled vocabularies can be necessary and justified in some contexts. When these cases arise a preferable approach would be to find an existing vocabulary that cover the subject, form, or genre in question and to see if there is a term that may be applied. If not, many agencies that manage controlled vocabularies have mechanisms by which interested persons can submit requests for new terms. When successful, a term can be created within the context of an existing hierarchy and employing existing expertise. Alternately, when a term is not mandatory for the operation of a catalog or similar system, social tagging functions may be employed to enable users to apply terms that are meaningful to them specifically or to their own, narrowly defined community. These can often be shared and those that prove meaningful to other individuals and communities will naturally become more widely used. An online resource for public art may host a specific blog or wiki to promote discussion of appropriate descriptive terminology, as well as provide a directory to existing controlled vocabularies and the contact information for groups that entertain requests for added terms.

Collaboration and the Development of a New Resource: The University of Minnesota and *Public Art Review*

In the latter half of 2010 the University of Minnesota Libraries formed a partnership with Forecast Public Art to digitize *Public Art Review*, a semi-annual journal offering analysis and criticism meaning and movements in public art nationally and internationally and published by Forecast, a non-profit organization founded to facilitate the creation and discussion of public art. This project fell within the context of a donation of the organization's records to the University's Department of Archives and Special Collections, whose primary activity is the preservation and service of archival and print resources. Housed in the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the University's Minneapolis campus, the

⁷ A similar discussion took place at an ARLIS meeting in Los Angeles in 2005, in respect to creating descriptors for artists' books. No such vocabulary seems to have been created yet and the question of such an activity was raised again at an ARLIS conference in Minneapolis in 2011.

Department has a state of the art underground storage facility providing security and a controlled environment; a comfortable and attractive building for offices, a reading room for researchers and exhibition areas; and a large professional and paraprofessional staff serving eight administratively distinct units and many more collecting areas. Initially accepted simply based on its own merits and without regard to specific collection context – the Department has no specific arts-oriented collection – the Forecast records were eventually placed within the Northwest Architectural Archives, due to the affinity that public art often has with architecture and landscape architecture.

In addition to the task of preserving, describing, and providing access to the physical materials – which include board minutes, public relations materials, consulting materials, newsletters, catalogs, clippings, newsletters, photographs, slides, film and video, conference materials, and a run of *Public Art Review* – the partnership involves the digitization of the complete back-run of the journal, as well as slides and videos, with the intent of providing free public access to this content on the University's website. This project was funded by an anonymous gift to Forecast Public Art.

Discussions about the digitization project indicated the desire of one or both parties to provide value-added content to the existing journal content in the form of supplemental images and video, geospatial metadata, and the creation of a website to contextualize the journal beyond the University's U Media Archive,ⁱ where much of the digital content provided by the Libraries is accessed by the public. Furthermore, Forecast's director, Jack Becker, indicated the opportunities for the University to participate in the development of a large-scale, web-based resource for public art that had been initiated by Becker and others in June 2010.

Archives and Special Collections (ASC) at the University of Minnesota Libraries is focused on the acquisition, preservation, and service to researchers of primary source materials – archival, print, and multi-media – as well as material communications as artifacts. Along with other Libraries departments, ASC provides access to an increasing number of materials reformatted digitally via the U Media Archive.⁸ ASC departments identify materials for digital collections, but the work of digitizing objects and managing their digital surrogates is accomplished by a dedicated unit, Digital Library Services (DLS). Having a dedicated unit is what has permitted ASC to partner with Forecast Public Art on the digitization of *Public Art Review*. The development and management of digital content has gone beyond the small projects eagerly undertaken by special collections librarians and archivists in the early days of the Internet. Preservation standards and procedures and content management require more sophisticated expertise – and time – than can be provided by most curators. The DLS website states:

The need to develop strategy and take action in the area of digital preservation and data archiving has grown significantly in the Libraries and at the University in recent years. In response, the Libraries aspire to take a campus leadership role in digital preservation and data archiving through the investigation of needs, requirements, best practices, standards, and policy development, and the establishment of exemplar operations. These efforts intend to fit into a larger and evolving

⁸ <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/>

expertise-base and leadership role in life-cycle digital data management that the Libraries seek to develop.⁹

Thus, within the expertise of the Libraries to acquire, preserve, and serve primary source materials, DLS provides the expertise to develop and manage systems that can accommodate a wide variety of content from a number of collecting areas. The expertise here is not focused on providing individualized context and design for each of the accessible digital collections, but to secure their online preservation and discoverability by means of a system designed to hold multiple digital collections. Technical infrastructure, metadata standards, dedicated staff, and relationships with external companies for outsourced work promote expedient accessibility to materials. Limited metadata is supplied to enable administrative functions of content management and basic context of materials for researchers. Thus, content of *Public Art Review* is directly accessible with minimal interpretative materials. As stated above, initial discussions included an expressed desire for a web site that would offer a design element and additional functionality. Focusing on the Libraries mission to provide access to materials to others to use as they need, the images and metadata found on the U Media Archive are accessible to Forecast to import to their own site so that they may provide the desired design and needed context.

In the same way, other sites may wish to use images found in the U Media Archives as well. Pending any restrictions imposed on material by donors or copyright law, and compliance with the University's use agreement when applicable, materials have the potential to be shared with other agencies that may wish to use or refer to an image. By way of example, if an article in *PAR* covers a piece found in New York and discoverable via CultureNow's app, that group may be able to link to the article or additional images or video that may be available in the U Media Archive. Thus for both the publisher of the journal and for other communities the University Libraries is performing its critical mission of preserving and providing access to materials for their own applications. Conversely, the possibility exists where a partner institution may add information to the University. For example, if CultureNow were able to provide geo-spatial data regarding a work of public art for which the Media Archive had images, it might be possible for that metadata to be imported and incorporated into the existing metadata created by the University. Thus, with the application of minimal metadata necessary for management and discoverability at the start of a project, the project can be made accessible sooner and value-added content can be applied later as it becomes available, without the redundant application of that content by two different organizations.

A little bit needs to be said about "context." In respect to digital collections, there still seems to be concern among special collections librarians and archivist about the need to provide "context" for researchers and the general public. This generally comes in the form of scholarly, historical, descriptive pieces accompanying or as an introduction to web-based images. Sometimes these are quite nicely done. However, when examining the other materials to which a library provides access, how much context do we provide? A catalog record offers descriptive information and some controlled terms such as subject headings and names in an authorized format. As content is easily loaded into records from other sources, summary information may supplement records. Yet, the purpose of the descriptions is to get the researcher or other patron to the resource so that they may make their own interpretation, form their own opinion, write their own research paper, scholarly article, or book. Librarians face some

⁹ <http://digital.lib.umn.edu/index.phtml>

reasons for going into more extensive work with the materials in their care: the development of outreach tools and promotional exhibits, the requirement to publish, or the simple joy of scholarship. Descriptive content for the resources themselves, including digital collections, should be restricted to what will promote discoverability for the patron. The interpretation, use, and recontextualization is the right and responsibility of the patron. We may assist them in identifying where they got the material for their work (and ensuring that others may find their sources), but we are responsible neither for the accuracy, validity, and quality of their work, nor for providing (or hindering) them with our own interpretations via scholarly context.

SUMMARY

Providing for better communication between the variety of parties interested in public art and making the wealth of available resources more accessible is a daunting task but it is important that steps forward be undertaken. We suggest that individuals and organizations involved move forward by keeping goals simple and implementing standards to take advantage of existing technology and allow for extensibility with project growth and the development of emerging technologies. Participants would be helped by clearly define roles, highlighting areas of expertise and available resources, as well as their boundaries and limitations. Communication is essential; current and emergent interactive online applications should be explored to best facilitate it as we seek to build bridges between metadata professionals, municipal art collections, public artists, critics, writers and educators, and provide tools to implement accurate cataloguing of digital assets.

Public Art Catalogue Challenges: A Sidebar

More should be said about the public art communities' attitudes towards 'digital collections.' Some practitioners, including generative artists, critics and consultants, take an especially proprietary attitude towards the digital representation of their work. Others do not understand the need for the most basic metadata to be embedded in the digital assets, preventing their work or services from discovery. Some municipal agencies adhere to strict IT policies which preclude outside publishing. Though changing, these attitudes die hard.

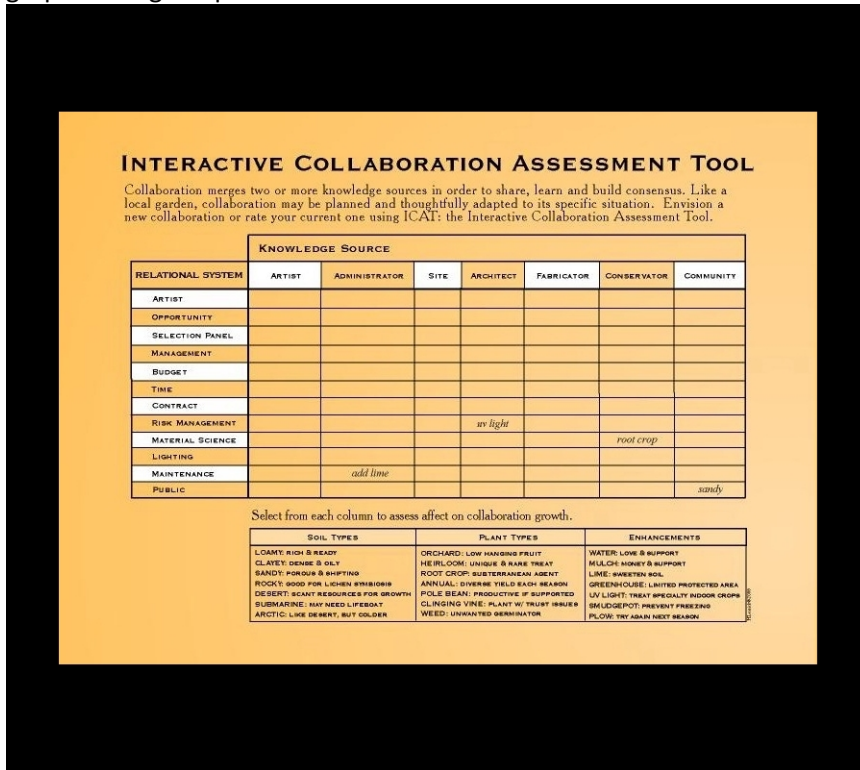
The artist winning a commission for a public collection is today one small element in a larger palette of public art. Artists fund their own projects, or receive grants to partially fund permanent and temporary visual art in public. Outdated ideas of public art as an object in a collection, rather than an experience in public, reinforce the digital access divide. Practitioners in the field will benefit from metadata education and collaboration with the special collections community. If each one could teach one, our contemporary public art would be accessible to the greatest possible public.

Appendix: Examples in Public Art

These images exemplify the challenges in cataloguing arts in public innovation. Each commissioned project is by an artist working in public with non-profit presenting organizations, commercial art fairs, billboard companies and collectives. The artwork is owned by the generative artist(s), but presented in a commercial or municipal context with a very limited duration.

1. Helen Lessick *ICAT (Interactive Collaboration Assessment Tool)*

Commission by *Public Art Review*, Issue #38, pages 40 – 41. Summer 2008
 2-part conceptual art print commissioned for publication's 'artist's pages;' made in collaboration with graphic design department.



(detail: ICAT page 1;), courtesy the artist.

2. Pavlov Andreevich, *GreatVodkaRiver*, Oceanpark, Miami Beach, FL Dec. 2 – 8, 2010.
 Week long installation with daily 10-hour performances by cast of 8
 Curated by Creative Time for Art Basel Miami Beach; presented in OceanPark, Miami Beach. Funded in part by a vodka company.



photo credit: Helen Lessick, 2010



photo credit: Courtesy Creative Time, 2010

3. Steve Roden, *Coast Lines* (detail)
 Commission for Glow, Santa Monica, Sept. 22, 2010. 7 hour site-related animated display near the Santa Monica Boardwalk.



photo credit: William Short, 2010

4. Nancy Popp: untitled 10 minute public performance, Feb. 2010. Tijuana, MX
Commission by Performing Public Space; Tijuana and Casa de Tunél, curated by Janet Owen Driggs and Matthew Driggs.



Photo Credit: Julio Orozco, 2010

5. Ken Gonzales-Day, untitled, March- April 2010
Commission for How Many Billboards: Art in Stead, a Project of MAK Center for Art and Architecture/Schindler House; curated by Kimberli Meyer; Olympic + Wilton, Los Angeles CA (billboard includes a statue from the J. Paul Getty Villa collection with a contemporary model)



Photo Credit: Courtesy MAK Center for Art and Architecture, 2010

ⁱ <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/>