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CCO Cataloging Cultural Objects - A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images (www.vraweb.org/CCOweb)

Summary

The Getty's CDWA "Categories for the description of works of art" has been in existence for quite a while, as have been the VRA (Visual Resources Association) Core Categories. Though wide-spread and used by many Anglo-American museums in one way or another (as reference in full or in part) a need has been felt for an integration of the rule sets and for their application in the broader community, as a cooperative product and on a network basis. Therefore, *Cataloguing Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and their Images* (CCO) has been in development since 2001: Part 1 (General Guidelines); Part II (Elements); and Part III (Authorities) (<http://vraweb.org/CCOweb/index.html>). It is a manual for describing, documenting, and cataloguing cultural works and images of them, their visual surrogates, and consists of 9 chapters. The CCO project team consisted, i.e. of members of the Visual Resources Association (VRA) and the Getty Research Institute, with an Advisory board of experts from the museum, library, and archives communities. The CCO comprises a subset of elements from the *Categories for the Description of Works of Art* (CDWA). CCO will be published as a print publication by the American Library Association end of 2005.

As a subset and a guideline to satisfy minimum requirements, "CCO Lite" has been developed, with 19 elements (8 of them mandatory) for minimum cataloguing of cultural objects.

An XML schema to describe core records for works of art and material culture based on CCO is under development. Such records are intended for contribution to union catalogues and other repositories using the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) harvesting protocol. Mapping to some other electronic cataloguing formats has also been undertaken, others are in progress.

(The short version of the paper)

What are the main functions and needs of "cataloguing" museum objects ?
The most basic principle, generally agreed upon by the experts, for the description of museum objects is that

- it calls the object by a correct object name, and always applies the same name for a same thing,
- it groups the object in its correct class/group, often by also supplying the respective correct broader term for the superordinate entity which this thing belongs to,
- it supplies a formal recording which is precise enough to distinguish this object from all other objects, thus fixes its individuality,
- it supplies a recording/description allowing to retrieve the object under all required aspects (name, creator, date, class, place(s) where found or acquired, owner(s),), and at any time.

Museum objects fall under the greatest possible variety of different object groups or kinds, whereas library objects by and large fall within a much smaller number of groups, mainly that of objects produced for reference. The very different physical composition, makeup, shape, and quality of the very many different types of museum objects require very different elements for description in each group's case.

Moreover, useum objects much less than books in libraries do have a formal reference. Often, there is no title, and even less often is a title and/or a creator inscribed on the object. So, **making a formal reference - by simply transcribing** data (which already exist there in scriptural form) from the object into the catalogue is not possible and not adequate.

Up to now, most prominent examples, obviously, of data dictionaries/data element lists for museum documentation were the CIDOC Information Categories (reproduced, i.a., in the UK SPECTRUM Standard) and Getty's CDWA.

To further proceed on the road to more exact and uniform rules for describing museum objects, an undertaking has been started not too long ago by a group which has set up a manual called "Cataloging Cultural Objects".

This manual, to be published in print in late 2005 in the USA, has seven chapters, which treat of the following main subjects:

The editors of the manual are:

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The work on the manual has been supported by an advisory board:

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Cataloguing Cultural Objects provides guidelines for selecting, ordering, and formatting data used to populate elements in a catalogue record; this manual is designed to promote good descriptive cataloguing, shared documentation, and enhanced end-user access. Whether used locally as an aid in developing training manuals or in-house cataloguing rules, or more broadly in a shared environment as a guide to building consistent cultural heritage documentation, it is hoped that this tool will advance the increasing move toward shared cataloguing and contribute to improved documentation and access to cultural heritage information.

The publication has three main parts.

Part 1: General Guidelines

I. How to Use This Guide

II. What Are You Cataloguing?

III. Minimal Descriptions

IV. Work and Image

V. Related works

VI. Database Design and Relationships

VII. Authority Files and Controlled Vocabularies

VIII. Examples of Work Records

Part 2: Elements

Chapter 1: Object Naming

Work Type / Title

Chapter 2: Creator Information

Creator / Creator Role

Chapter 3: Physical Characteristics

Measurements / Materials and Techniques /

State and Edition/ Additional Physical Characteristics

Chapter 4: Stylistic and Chronological Information

Style / Culture / Date

Chapter 5: Location and Geography

Current Location / Creation Location / Discovery Location/ Former Location

Chapter 6: Subject [iconographic]

Chapter 7: Class [verbal]

Chapter 8: Description [running text]

Description / Other Descriptive Notes

Chapter 9. View Information

View Description / View Type / View Subject / View Date

Part 3: The Authorities

Authority 1: Personal and Corporate Name Authority

Authority 2: Geographic Place Authority

Authority 3: Concept Authority

Authority 4: Subject Authority

At the CIDOC 2005 Conference in Zagreb, we will look at parts of this upcoming standard more in detail. In addition, everybody is invited to look at the document on the homepage: www.vraweb.org/CCOweb.