Library and IT Partnerships with Campus Museums and Archives

Report of a CNI Executive Roundtable
Held December 12, 2016
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Background and Synthesis

At the December 2016 CNI meeting in Washington, DC, we held an Executive Roundtable on the topic of **Library and IT Partnerships with Campus Museums and Archives.** We discussed a wide range of topics related to the development of institution-wide strategies for describing, managing, curating, enhancing access, preserving, and disseminating surrogates or born-digital representations of objects housed in those institutions, and ways in which these collections can be brought more effectively into the mainstream of teaching and research. This proved to be a very rich topic and we clearly would have benefited from some extra time.

Museums and libraries share the need to make their collections discoverable and accessible, to curate them, and to provide mechanisms for long-term access and preservation. A recent report, *Prospects and Strategies for Deep Collaboration in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums Sector,*[1] describes strategies and opportunities that emerged from a meeting hosted by the University of Miami and convened by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Association of Art Museums and Galleries, and the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), with support from The Andrew W. Mellon and Samuel H. Kress Foundations. The meeting focused specifically on collaborations between art museums and research libraries. The report notes that museums could do more to embrace new technologies, for example in digital imaging and in 3-D representation of museum artifacts. In addition, it suggests that new approaches are needed in developing infrastructure for museums, in terms of both the digital and physical environments. Libraries and IT organizations would seem to be essential partners in these endeavors, as very few university museums or archives have the expertise and resources to meet the challenges and opportunities of the digital world alone. In a small but growing number of cases, provosts and presidents are recognizing the advantages of such partnerships, and they are explicitly tasking leadership (typically the university librarian, though often with an extended title) with

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[1] Jill Deupi and Charles Eckman, *Prospects and Strategies for Deep Collaboration in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums Sector*, 2016, http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/con_events_aamls2016/1.

a role in coordinating cultural heritage resources across the institution.

Another aspect of an institution's cultural heritage collections is the university archives, containing materials, often in a variety of media, documenting the history and major events of the institution.[2] There are potential synergies in the information held in library, archives, and museum collections; for example, the museum might hold a sculpture by a particular artist, the library may have books about that artist, and the archives might have a video of a talk the artist gave on campus when her sculpture was accessioned by the museum, or even the papers of that particular artist. At present, few institutions have mechanisms for discovering or accessing the material across these disparate, siloed, collections in a straightforward way, much less a means of connecting them to faculty who want to use them for teaching or research purposes.

When discussing university museums, many people assume that this really means art museums, which is too narrow: natural history and science museums, herbaria, and similar institutions need to be a part of the discussion (and we were fortunate to have a good deal of diversity represented at this roundtable). Oxford joins together "gardens, libraries and museums" for example. Further, many of these science-oriented organizations have enormous needs to provide access to and ensure preservation of their resources (not just physical collections, but materials like video from ocean expeditions) that are not well understood at an institutional level. In addition, many campuses have a lot of (often independent) small museums or sub-museum level collections (e.g. departmental level teaching and research collections). This means that IT and libraries need to collaborate to develop strategies to offer platforms for digitizing, discovering and describing these collections that can work across the campus, particularly for resource-poor departments or curators. Cloud hosting strategies and institutional-level funding models are going to be key here.

Libraries, archives, and museum staff also have opportunities to coordinate programs to work with classes to explore and analyze artifacts related to their coursework. They may partner with faculty in a variety of departments to expose students to experiences with authentic materials in their field of study.

Participants in this roundtable included library, IT, archives, and museum professionals from universities, colleges, museums, consortia, and service providers in the US and Europe. Institutions represented included some with mineralogical collections, herbaria, gardens, art museums, as well as libraries and archival collections. Many of the institutions reported that both the library and museum reported to the institution's provost, and in some cases, the museum director reported to the head of the library.

Institutional Perspectives

- Many institutions see value in developing systems for shared collections access across museums, library materials, and archives, which involves consolidating

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[2] A few institutions also have large, frequently internationally famous, separate archives that typically deal with the papers of major artistic and public figures; none of them were represented at this roundtable.

catalogs and integrating discovery systems. Challenges include resources for consolidation (staff, money), differences in resource description practices, metadata schema, and migration to a common system. Some believe that technologies now allow for a more agnostic coming together of collections built in different silos, but it is not always easy to separate the technical issues from the organizational and professional culture issues.

- There is a great need to build a consensus on metadata standards and interchange between what have historically been library and museum silos. Also, flexible export of metadata needs to be a greater priority for museums in selecting collection management strategies and systems.

- Linked open data is another area where there are great opportunities for collaboration,[3] not only on standards, but also on practices such as provenance documentation or correcting errors. The International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF)[4] is also going to be an important common theme here. There are opportunities here for the development of institution-wide genuine knowledge documentation, sharing and stewardship strategies that parallel some of the developments in the biomedical sciences see the work of the National Library of Medicine/ National Center for Biotechnology Information, for example), though obtaining funding and other resources will obviously be much more difficult.

- Developing a community joint library-museum strategy surrounding platforms for providing access to and perhaps even for managing museums and special collections is essential in the next few years; there is considerable commonality of function. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has been very generous in funding both CollectionSpace and ArchivesSpace, both of which are now supported and managed by Lyrasis. Should these platforms be converged in some fashion? What should be the support models, development agendas, governance frameworks, etc.?

- An overarching issue for many participants is developing an institutional asset management strategy.

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[3] Robert Sanderson and Joshua Gomez, "The Provenance of Madame Bonnier: Linked Open Data and Intra-Institutional Collaboration," Presentation at the Coalition for Networked Information Fall 2016 Membership Meeting, https://www.cni.org/topics/special-collections/the-provenance-of-madame-bonnier-linked-open-data-and-intra-institutional-collaboration; Dean Krafft, et al, "Linked Data for Libraries and Archives: LD4L and Europeana," Presentation at the Coalition for Networked Information Fall 2015 Membership Meeting, https://www.cni.org/topics/special-collections/linked-data-for-libraries-and-archives-ld4l-and-europeana.
[4] Tom Cramer, "IIIF: The International Image Interoperability Framework," Presentation at the Coalition for Networked Information Spring 2014 Membership Meeting, https://www.cni.org/topics/information-access-retrieval/iiif.

- One institution described the university's digital roadmap for its diverse collections; the plan includes digitization, consolidation (catalogs, digital access management, discovery), support for open scholarship and science, digital preservation, building infrastructure, and developing a program for teaching with digital objects. Can these types of plans be shared to serve both as models for others undertaking such planning and as exemplars for institutions trying to make the case for the importance of undertaking such a planning process?

- 3D digitization is a very important development that is not strongly on library agendas; it needs to be, along with standards and preservation issues. Also, there is a very fertile area of 2½-D digitization (numismatic collections being a primary example) that needs to be coordinated between libraries and museums.

- Institutions are considering whether to approach the services associated with digitized cultural object collections (digitizing, hosting, providing access, linking) within the institution, through consortia (often state or regional), or through commercial service providers; for many, all are relevant and the challenge is finding the right mix of approaches. The emergence of national programs such as the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), and the associated regional center or "hub" supporting organizational structure, offers yet another possible source of services.

- While historically libraries have tended to "own" the relationships to national organizations (with the exception of herbaria and perhaps some other science collections), efforts like DPLA or Europeana have raised new questions about these relationships. Libraries are often most comfortable with "fine arts" type material rather than things that are closer to scientific data archives. Campus-level strategies will likely be necessary to resolve them. There are enormous opportunities for collaboration on conservation, backup, resilience and disaster recovery strategies.

- One area in which museum and library professionals may have different points of view is on the topic of copyright and licensing. Many academic librarians are open access proponents while many museums have protected their assets and occasionally gained some (usually modest) income through licensing programs. However, there is some trend for museums to apply open access licensing to their collections. Museums need to be connected and engaged in university-wide discussion and policy making about intellectual property and copyright. Also, it's important to note the huge gap between older museum materials and those under current copyright, and particularly created in the last half-century, which are often sold, licensed or gifted to museums with complex IP constraints, reserved rights, and other constraints; some, but not all, of the challenges here may be common with those faced by many current special collection acquisitions.

- A number of institutions reported that central IT does not support campus museums or units such as herbaria; generally this is not the case with libraries (though in many cases libraries have also chosen to develop very substantial internal IT resources and are largely independent of campus IT operationally).

This may be one more reason for museums lagging behind libraries in their implementation of collection management software and digitization programs, and may merit policy re-consideration, particularly in the context of new library-museum collaborations; another interesting policy option here is to have a library with strong internal IT handle primary museum IT support.

- Library/museum collaborations with faculty can result in experiential learning opportunities for students. One institution described undergraduate learning goals that include use of primary sources and suggested that libraries and museums should be seen as key sites for co-curricular learning.

- Some libraries and museums noted that they are trying to forge partnerships with their university's digital humanities or digital scholarship programs.

- Shared physical spaces are very important, and should be considered in ongoing physical space planning for both libraries and museums.

- Several institutional representatives highlighted the importance of public engagement for both libraries and museums, through exhibits and programs, in some cases as a mechanism to secure funding.

- There are many opportunities for collaborative development (fund-raising), and even for joint museum-library special collections acquisitions.

- A number of institutions reported that their libraries and museums are collaborating on exhibits. For example, the library might promote an exhibit that is taking place in the campus museum and also provide the museum with relevant items from its archives or special collections. In addition, one library that is planning a makerspace stated that its art museum may provide some of the programming in that space. Another institution described a digital exhibition system in development to support both the campus museum and library special collections.

- The role of the university press is a very interesting question going forward, both in terms of documenting scholarship related to local special collections and museum holdings, and in documenting their exhibitions.

- Permanent digital documentation of exhibitions of special collections or museums should be standard practice. It is not uncommon to find various other kinds of special events (symposia, performances, etc.) being held in conjunction with exhibitions, and these should also be systematically documented and placed in the IR.

- So-called "uncurated" collections (cultural heritage material not held or curated by one of the cultural memory organizations within a university, whether museum, library or archive and often scattered around the campus) are a significant problem from many perspectives: discovery, documentation,

conservation and preservation, and risk management. Very few institutions have any reasonable strategy for even quantifying the scale of this problem, much less dealing with it. CNI would be particularly interested to hear from institutions that have any experience to share in this area.

Concluding Thoughts

Libraries, archives, and museums compete for resources with other institutional units, and developing good practice for assessing the impact of their collections, programs, and services may assist them in securing or maintaining support. The resources provided through these collections can enrich research, teaching, and learning. Developing systems that *unlock* content rather than merely *expose* content (making it more usable in digital scholarship) will make these institutional resources even more valuable.

While campus libraries and museums may be finding areas of commonality, especially in the digital sphere, the organizational and professional culture traditions and practices may impede them from establishing strong collaborations. One participant noted that he would like to better understand how to move people from talking about collaboration to doing it. One way to address this would be to have iSchools and museum studies programs develop courses and provide internships that assist future professionals to see the opportunities of common approaches to a wide variety of collections.

We must think beyond the ways that we traditionally disseminate content through libraries, archives, and museums and imagine how to integrate a wide variety of collections from a systems perspective. In particular, museums have struggled independently to do things in the digital environment that really need to be done at scale, and cloud-hosted services, coupled with new IT and library collaborations, change what is possible for small museums and archives.

For libraries with campus museums and archives to make progress, it's essential that senior leadership (e.g. provostial and presidential) understand both the needs and the potential payoffs from (at the least) greater collaboration and cooperation here. It's going to be important to seek strategic visions that span the campus. Common cross-campus policy, including OA related policy, is also part of the challenge. It is vital that campus senior leadership understands that there must be some explicit vehicle or position with the responsibility of coordinating collections across the institution at a very minimum; beyond this it may well be appropriate to reconsider organizational structures, reporting lines and budgetary strategies, particularly in the longer term.

CNI Executive Roundtables, held at CNI's semi-annual membership meetings, bring together a group of campus partners, usually senior library and information technology leaders, to discuss a key digital information topic and its strategic implications. The

roundtables build on the theme of collaboration that is at the foundation of the Coalition; they serve as a forum for frank, unattributed intra and inter-institutional dialogue on digital information issues and their organizational and strategic implications. In addition, CNI uses roundtable discussions to inform our ongoing program planning process.

The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) is a joint program of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and EDUCAUSE that promotes the use of information technology to advance scholarship and education. Some 230 institutions representing higher education, publishing, information technology, scholarly and professional organizations, foundations, and libraries and library organizations, make up CNI's members. Learn more at cni.org.

Coalition for Networked Information

Addendum I

CNI Executive Roundtable
Call for Expressions of Interest
Library and IT Partnerships with Campus Museums and Archives
Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC
Monday, December 12, 2016
8:30 – 11:00 AM

At the Fall CNI meeting in Washington, DC we will continue our series of Executive Roundtables. The topic for this Fall's Roundtable will be **Library and IT Partnerships with Campus Museums and Archives.** We will discuss a wide range of topics related to the development of institution-wide strategies for describing, managing, curating, enhancing access, preserving, and disseminating surrogates or born-digital representations of objects housed in those institutions, and ways in which these collections can be brought more effectively into the mainstream of teaching and research.

Many universities and colleges have archives but there is a wide variety of reporting lines and organizational structures for archives functions; this has become even more complex with the increasing number of electronic records and other digital materials in archival collections and, more recently, the move of many campus email services to external cloud providers. A smaller number of institutions have museums, but for those campuses that house them, there are also a variety of reporting lines and, importantly, types of collections: art, archaeological, natural history, musical instrument collections, anthropological, and others. A few campuses also host major scholarly archival collections separate from the library.

Museums and libraries share the need to make their collections discoverable and accessible, to curate them, and to provide mechanisms for long-term access and preservation. A recent report *Prospects and Strategies for Deep Collaboration in the Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums Sector,* described strategies that emerged from a meeting hosted by University of Miami with coordination by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI). The report noted that there are challenges and opportunities for museums to do more to embrace new technologies, for example in digital

imaging and in 3-D representation of museum artifacts. In addition, the report suggested that new approaches are needed in developing infrastructure for museums, in terms of both the digital and physical environments. Libraries and IT organizations would seem to be essential partners in these endeavors, as very few university museums or archives have the expertise and resources to meet the challenges and opportunities of the digital world alone.

Another aspect of an institution's cultural heritage is their university archives, containing materials, often in a variety of media, documenting the history and major events of the institution. There are potential synergies in the information held in library, archives, and museum collections; for example, the museum might hold a sculpture by a particular artist, the library may have books about that artist, and the archives might have a video of a talk the artist gave on campus when her sculpture was accessioned by the museum. At present, few institutions have mechanisms for discovering or accessing the material across these disparate collections in a straightforward way.

Libraries, archives, and museum staff may also coordinate programs to work with classes to explore and analyze artifacts related to their coursework. They may partner with faculty in a variety of departments to expose students to experiences with authentic materials in their field of study.

We will hold the Executive Roundtable on Monday, December 12, the morning of the first day of the fall membership meeting. **Any CNI institutional representative may apply to participate in this Roundtable, and the institution can be represented by either one individual or a pair of individuals who have different roles, e.g. a library director, a CIO, an archivist, or a museum director. If you wish to propose a team of more than two people, please contact Joan Lippincott.**

Cliff Lynch will moderate this session and provide some framing remarks, and then participants will have an opportunity to discuss issues with peers from other institutions. The Roundtables build on the theme of collaboration that is at the foundation of the Coalition. We want to promote institutional dialogue and inter- and intra-institutional information exchange on digital information issues. We see these Roundtables as one means of bringing together stakeholders.

CNI uses Roundtable discussions to inform our program planning process. We will disseminate a summary of the issues that emerge from the Roundtable, but in order to encourage frank discussion, there will be no individual or institutional attribution of statements without prior permission from the relevant party. Reports from previous Executive Roundtables are here https://www.cni.org/resources/publications/other-publications-by-cni-staff

In order to have in-depth discussion, participation in the Roundtable will be limited to approximately 20 representatives**.**

The meeting will be held at the Capital Hilton Hotel on Monday, December 12, 2016 from 8:30 AM – 11 AM.

Potential topics to be explored – time permitting – could include:

- Institutional approaches to curating and making accessible cultural heritage materials in libraries, archives, and museums
- Common discovery mechanisms to span libraries, museums and archives
- Shared digitization strategies
- Shared preservation strategies
- Approaches to "unstewarded" institutional collections (e.g. those not within the management of a museum, library or archive)
- Approaches to sharing technology resources and expertise among museum, library, archives, and IT organizations
- Identification of key organizational partnerships needed to move ahead
- Development of strategies for partnership with faculty to bring material from collections more directly into the student experience.

To express interest in participating, please send a message by end of day Friday, October 14 to Joan Lippincott joan@cni.org with the name(s), title(s), and e-mail address(es) of the **one or two individuals** from your institution who would like to attend **along with a brief description of your work in this area**. We will choose approximately 20 individuals, using the criteria of position, experience, and balance of institutions (type, geographic area, etc.) to determine who will attend. **We will notify you by Friday, October 21 as to whether you have been accepted or whether you will be on a waiting list for participation.** If you have any questions about the Roundtable, please contact Joan Lippincott at joan@cni.org.