The Future of Art Indexing
Moderator: Carole Ann Fabian

11:58 Heather G. Welcome everyone! Thank you for joining us today.

11:58 Heather G. While we're chatting, don't sweat it too much if you misspell anything.

11:58 Heather G. And feel free to introduce yourselves!

11:59 Heather G. I'm Heather Gendron, Chair of the Education Subcommittee.

11:59 Heather G. We are very happy to have Carole Ann Fabian here with us today to lead our chat!

11:59 Heather G. Carole Ann Fabian is Director of the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library. Previously, she served as Planning, Outreach and Communications Officer for ARTstor.

11:59 Cara HI I'm Cara List, member of the Education Subcommittee, and Art Librarian at the U of Oregon

12:00 Bryan Loar Hi everyone! Bryan Loar here, incoming chair for the Membership Committee & Co-Moderator of ArLiSNAP

12:00 janice janice is a former Avery indexer, back of book indexer, and has done thesis work indexing

12:00 Heather G. We'll spend about 45 minutes today chatting about the future of art indexing.

12:00 Carole Ann Hi everyone, this is Carole Ann -- thanks for joing our chat session on the Future of Art Indexing. This a fascinating though complicated topic and I'm eager to hear thoughts, ideas, concerns from everyone, so let's get started!

12:00 Heather G. welcome janice!

12:01 Carole Ann You all will have read our session intro on ARLIS-L, so what do you all think? How important are indexes to today's (and tomorrow's) researchers?

12:02 janice access to indexer info is important but not the indexes per se

12:02 Sarah F. Hey Carole Ann! Something that I'm curious about--how does the indexing in the full text arena compare to that of an index like Avery?

12:02 janice I meant indexed info

12:02 Carole Ann I'm not sure what you mean Janice -- can you clarify?

12:03 Cara I still think they're important! I'd be lost without them as would most of my students. Faculty may rely more on the "invisible college", but I think for most researchers, indexes are still critical.

12:03 janice today's users want the google kind of relevance retrieval instead of needing to know authorized heading forms

12:04 Cara Of course many of my faculty don't use the old indexes that we're used to, but other portals to information that (I think) essentially data mine the indexes for their content

12:04 Carole Ann So, we're talking about the relative value of formal indexing versus the value of full-text keyword searching. Does indexing offer a significant added value to discovery byond keyword indexing in full-text?

12:05 janice depends on the style of indexing; important if the indexer is synthesizing big ideas, but not if just describing, if that makes any sense

12:05 Marywho Well most of us find it does if the users don't

12:05 Cara one problem with full text searching is the overwhelming number of hits researchers need to weed through to find the valuable stuff

12:06 sharisalisbury I second what Cara said. Formal indexing retrieves more relevant results.

12:06 janice much valuable stuff is missed with wilson style indexing, imho

12:06 Carole Ann Full-text has the benefit of natural language keyword searching. Would folksonomic or controlled-term tagging provide better more accessible access to content?

12:07 sherman clarke But it probably isn't an either/or situation with tagging on top of formal indexing.

12:07 janice hi sherman

12:07 Heather G. Researchers appreciate full text searching in JSTOR and have become more reliant on it than other databases.

12:07 Carole Ann So perhaps some blended approach would be useful.

12:07 Heather G. But JSTOR would be better with some indexing (IMHO)

12:07 sherman clarke some blended approach is inevitable

12:08 hrkoopmans I think it depends on the full-text interface. Some allow you to narrow down or specify where the searching is done (ie title only vs full text) and others do not

12:08 janice yes, application of metadata is a good thing, but I think we need to rethink the vocabulary used

12:08 Cara I like that idea. I'm seeing a movement towards offering folksonomic tagging in catalogs, contentdm-- why not idexes too?

12:08 Carole Ann Since we have limited availability to full-text for much of our literature, perhaps indexing does continue as a primary discovery mechanism for some foreseeable time?

12:09 Heather G. Right, it seems unrealistic to expect full-text coverage for what we get now via indexes.

12:09 guest6915258 Many (even sophisticated) users are so enamored of being able to search full-text that they often stop with JSTOR, and consider it a prime resource in art...that's a hard impression to dismantle

12:10 janice what about when everything is google-bookized? = complete full text searching?

12:10 Heather G. Welcome to those of you just joining our chat. Feel free to change your "guest" name to your real name. :~)

12:10 Guenter So now it sounds like indexing is just a way to manage the meantime until full-text access replaces it?

12:10 sherman clarke Do those sophisticated users think of JSTOR as a prime resource or primary resource?

12:10 Carole Ann That prompts me to ask, then, what should we be indexing? Does the inherently selecitive indexing process help researchers find themost improtant content, or does it maks literature that is not indexed?

12:11 janice So far full text analysis still cannot capture "meaning", we still need humans to capture that

12:11 Marywho Except "WE" are not doing the indexing. Are companies (like wilson) finding it cost prohiibitive?

12:12 Carole Ann Yes, so subject analysis and/or tagging helps understand concepts that full-text searching may not capture.

12:12 Heather G. Great question mary. Carole Ann - can you bring us up to speed a tad on who's indexing?

12:12 Anna Hi, I'm Anna from Indiana University. Would it be impractical to have weighted searches? Key word searches would return title and indexed terms first, and then bring up full text results?

12:12 sherman clarke When an index like one of the Wilson ones or Avery select their universe of indexing, they are already picking what will be in the result.

12:13 janice back in the day I don't remember doing much concept indexing for the Avery

12:13 Carole Ann Indexes are produced by many organizations with many different business and editorial models.

12:13 janice Anna, I think that's already done

12:15 Beth I am interested in hearing opinion on what a novic indexer wanting to specialize in art book indexing should take into consideration when wanting to obtain further training.

12:15 Carole Ann I think it's a very good question for the community to consider -- can we afford indexing based on current business models? Can we capture all that we need to with a finite number of indexers or index resources?

12:15 Guenter I'd start on the other end - does indexing provide value to art researchers and historians, or are better ways to support their activities?

12:16 Carole Ann Hi Beth -- I think we won't be discussing back-of-book indexing today, but contact me offline and I'd be happy to refer you to some knowlegeable folks.

12:16 janice I agree with Guenter, what is the market willing to pay for

12:16 Guenter Or, in other words, does the investment of indexing today still achieve the desired return for researchers?

12:16 guest9814546 That's an interesting question from Beth, esp. in light of Carole Ann's cost question! Beth, are you an art librarian who would like to index? *Should* "WE" index? Stop relying on companies who cannot afford it?

12:16 Beth Thank You Carole Ann, I will do that.

12:17 Sarah F. I had wondered about the value question as well. It seems that while indexes are needed by scholars they are not used by most students. and while yes, this is unfortunate, it is what's happening, and will continue to happen.

12:17 janice on the other hand back of the book indexing is really helpful stuff -- if done well

12:17 Heather G. students use indexes more frequently when they are doing deeper level research

12:17 sherman clarke Does anyone have experience with a shared Zotero or other tagging software?

12:17 Heather G. like a longer paper, thesis, or dissertation

12:18 Beth A novice art librarian and novice indexer who has a background in programming and sees trends with ebooks which benefit from the back of the book style to keep those who are not so technically wise feeling comfortable with transitioning to ebooks.

12:18 sherman clarke I mean shared experience, attempt to gain control of a universe of information.

12:18 Marywho It seems like most indexes could do better with even just expanding to include a bigger range of journals for the most basic of citations, author, title of article.

12:18 Carole Ann Yes -- this is where we began today... is indexing valued by current (and future) scholars?

12:18 Heather G. interesting idea mary

12:19 Marywho That comes from doing ILL!

12:19 Guenter Is there any research on that? Any data on how much A&I resources are used in art history?

12:19 sherman clarke The BHA controversy has certainly brought a lot of comments from art historians on CAAH.

12:19 Carole Ann I'd like to expand a little into what needs to be indexed for what audience. Is the global expansion of our literature in all languages adequately covered?

12:19 janice I think we should separate out known item searching from topical or conceptual research

12:20 Suzanne Walsh @ sherman, what was the BHA controversy?

12:20 sherman clarke interesting idea, janice. what about serendipity?

12:20 Heather G. Tons of literature from China not being indexed...

12:21 sherman clarke When the Getty announced that they weren't going to publish BHA anymore. Lots of horrified art historians, and librarians.

12:21 Carole Ann I'd also like to learn more about people's interest in retrospective indexing coverage having more, less or equal value to indexing current titles?

12:21 hrkoopmans Good point @ Carole Ann @ Heather G. BHA is pretty euro-centric. Not sure if a lot from Latin America is out there either

12:22 janice By known item, I meant the "descriptive cataloging" vs. "subject cataloging" -- the former can be done by machines so not as vexing of an issue

12:22 Heather G. thanks janice

12:23 Heather G. There are some gaps in Art Index Retro that are in the print Ryerson...frustrating.

12:23 Carole Ann Yes, descriptive cataloging can be harvested to some extent -- if systems can interact. There is still considerable hand-crafting required for most indexing in our literature.

12:24 janice Wasn't it only in the last half of the 20th century that scholars had all these indexes (in art)

12:24 sherman clarke and that gap between Art Index and Ryerson (etc.) invites one to want federated searching.

12:25 Heather G. well it's great when one vendor can offer multiple indexes - closest we can get right now to federated search

12:25 Cara but things need to be available digitally to be federated.

12:25 sherman clarke no, the indexing needs to be available or is that what you meant?

12:25 Heather G. welcome to those of you who've just joined us - jump in :~)

12:25 Cara I mean that if something is only indexed and available in print, then you can't federate

12:26 Marilyn Can Google scholar actually be the ONE INDEX to Rule them all?(ninja)

12:26 janice if it's actually indexed and printed, not that big of a job converting to digital

12:27 Carole Ann There are many meta-search utitlities and more "federation"; protocols releasing all the time. These help discovery across resources from disparate sources, but all of them rely on the availability of standardized presentation of fielded metadata.

12:27 janice Marilyn, I hope not, bet OCLC would like to give them a run for their money

12:28 Cara @janice and sherman. Ok, but back to what heather g said about art index retro-- still frustrating, because it isn't necessarily done. and that takes us back to Guenter-- is it worthwhile?

12:28 sherman clarke Even if the index metadata isn't fielded, one could do a federated search across disparate sources. It should be smarter than keywording across text that is not at all controlled.

12:28 Marilyn Has anyone compared the results of a google scholar search with a search of BHA? Any overlap?

12:28 janice I'd like to return to what scholars and students actually need

12:28 Carole Ann But the conversion to digital facsimile of a printed volume does not yield the same features from a discovery standpoint as constructed metadata enhanced with subject analysis.

12:29 janice Carole Ann -- I was thinking about the conversion of the GK Hall indexing for instance

12:30 Heather G. Google Scholar is very limited...

12:30 Suzanne Walsh @ Carole Ann, what specifically?

12:30 Heather G. I think someone may have done a googlescholar comparison for art histoyr - mybe in Art Doc?

12:30 Heather G. Can you pls explain Carole Ann - GK Hall?

12:31 janice Avery Index was published in big volumes by GK Hall that later got scanned to digital for online access

12:31 Carole Ann Janice – let's return as you suggest to the question of what scholars actually need. Do indexes enhance discovery or does reliance on indexes wield too much influence (and therefore potentially limit) discovery within the literature?

12:32 janice I think indexes can help one get started, but the real discovery is reading the source material

12:32 sherman clarke I think I HAVE to believe that indexing enhance discovery.

12:33 Marywho ditto w. sherman

12:33 Cara I agree with Sherman. and lets not forget that indexing serves different segments of the scholarly community differently. Freshmen need them for one thing, faculty may do their work differently etc

12:33 Anna What is the alternative?

12:33 hrkoopmans @Heather G - is this the paper you were thinking of (Google Scholar vs Art databases)

 http://ils.unc.edu/MSpapers/3400.pdf

12:34 sherman clarke CAF, what do you mean that indexing limits discovery?

12:34 janice footnote chasing is still invaluable, not to mention all kinds of references that can be gleaned from google (tho often not relevant)

12:34 Carole Ann Enhances discovery for those items that are indexed -- YES! but what about the universe of material that isn't chosen for indexing? Do we "trust" the indexing resources to select the most important material?

12:34 janice right, think of all the archival material that's not indexed

12:35 sherman clarke Back in the olden days, we were disappointed that certain titles weren't in Art Index so you lobbied for them.

12:35 Anna It seems to me that indexing is part of a searcher's arsenal, but not all of it.

12:35 Anna Indexing and indices, that is.

12:35 sherman clarke And of course the libraries are arguing that cataloging effort should go into archives and special collections too.

12:36 Cara @ Anna YES. There are many paths to the truth:)

12:36 Heather G. Great find Heather K.! I was thinking of this one but I'll look at the one you sent...

12:36 sherman clarke Google searches and federated searching change our expectations on our arsenal and they are sometimes spectacularly successful.

12:36 Heather G. Rozear, H. Where "Google Scholar" stands on art: an evaluation of content coverage in online databases Art Libraries Journal v. 34 no. 2 (2009) p. 21-5

12:37 Carole Ann So, it's the rich mix of indexes, full-text, special collection cataloging, etc that we will all rely on for the foreseeable future. How can the community guide resource producers on how to best support the research needs?

12:38 Heather G. I agree with Sherman. Art Librarians need to speak up and ask for what needs to be revealed/indexed/made full text

12:38 janice I'd still like to know how we know what the real needs are

12:38 Heather G. Ask students, not just faculty.

12:38 Carole Ann Can ARLIS/NA take on advocacy roles? Will librarians devote effort to advisory functions for resource providers?

12:38 janice For instance, based on my faculty, I'd say the needs are minimal

12:39 Cara work at a reference desk. You'll find out what students need pretty quickly

12:39 sherman clarke cara, can you use that knowledge to help publishers produce the right indexing?

12:39 Sarah F. yeah, but what your students need at an academic library reference desk are very different from what mine need in an art and design library

12:39 Heather G. should we rethink a role for arlis/na - re "collections"? Do we need a more structured way to give input?

12:40 Suzanne Walsh Also hat do graduate students need vs. undergrads?

12:40 Heather G. good point suzanne

12:40 Sarah F. Even within our professional niche, there are a myriad of needs

12:40 Marywho In my case, it would help to ask a curator all the paths they'd take on a subject. but each ones will be unique, with their own favs.

12:40 Cara Sherman—I'm not sure what power I have as an individual to do that. I think that gets back to what can ARLIS do?

12:40 Heather G. Right Sarah...how about the indexing of plastic films, bricks, fabrics, etc. EG materials collections?

12:41 Sarah F. we grapple with materials here all the time.

12:41 Carole Ann I think our community of users cuts across many areas of activity -- members of the academic community, curators, independent scholars. They will all likely have some cross-over but also a high degree of differentiation in need.

12:41 Anna @ Marywho--or a provenance researcher

12:41 sherman clarke and of course we all, they all, play different roles at different times, e.g., baby researcher, advanced, fringe.

12:41 Marywho Yes, another different animal

12:41 Sarah F. I always go back to community tagging projects.

12:42 Karyn Hinkle Like Zotero, Sarah F. Sherman mentioned that too.

12:42 Karyn Hinkle Do any of your users and readers actually use it?

12:42 Suzanne Walsh Karyn, Zotero was exactly what I was thinking

12:42 Heather G. How does that work though? So little is tagged in Flickr, for instance. Will people really tag this stuff?

12:42 Cara I think ContentDM is working on, or has already produced a version that makes tagging possible too

12:42 Carole Ann The community generated tag/index could certainly be invaluable but might it still need a structured backbone and editorial support to be certain the work gets done?

12:43 sherman clarke At NYU, it seemed to be more RefWorks and EndNote.

12:43 Heather G. Tagging works well in special collections - people who knew people in the photos, were "there" etc.

12:43 sherman clarke that's usually descriptive cataloging, isn't it?

12:44 Cara Take a look at LibraryThing http://www.librarything.com/to see what a really random community can do with tagging

12:44 sherman clarke LT is good at clustering tags that seem to represent the same thing and allowing members to uncluster them as warranted.

12:44 Carole Ann Part of the benefit of produced indexing is that we can *depend* on it to be accomplished. We have certain guarantees of coverage, timeliness, authority, etc. An exclusively community-based model may not be able to deliver in the same predictable way.

12:45 Sarah F. yes, and tagging takes time.

12:45 janice We're thinking of having end user tag their own work in our institutional repository, but shudder to think about students tagging other students' work

12:46 Heather G. This has been a great conversation today everyone, thanks so much for joining us!

12:46 Heather G. Carole Ann, thanks so much.

12:46 Suzanne Walsh It seems that for something like that to work, one would need someone to maintain a national collection and help recruit/format entries from professors and librarians

12:46 Suzanne Walsh Thanks, Carole Ann!

12:46 sherman clarke CAF, maybe the predictability needs to be in the content and some basic access, and development of a really beneficial and efficient crowdsourcing tagability on top.

12:47 Carole Ann Thanks to you Heather and to our participants -- lots to think about and follow=up on!

12:47 Kari Ann Thank you.

12:47 Cara Thanks Carole Ann. It's been great to have you!

12:47 Karyn Hinkle Yes, thanks mucho!

12:47 Heather G. The transcript of this chat will be posted within the next week or so - on the ARLIS/NA Lunchtime Chats page. http://www.arlisna.org/chats/

12:49 Heather G. Bryan Loar, Ann Whiteside, and Jennifer Friedman will lead our Boston Bound chat.

12:49 Heather G. Have a great weekend.