

Project Proposal

The enhancement of digital publishing prototypes on the history of photography to determine the benefits of collaborative data collection, validation and sharing within the Getty and externally.

www.luminous-lint.com

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Introduction

Luminous-Lint is an online scholarly resource that has been constructed collaboratively over the last eight years to share information on the history of photography worldwide. Over 2,300 people, estates and institutions have provided information: the website is robust, highly interconnected, and has over 10 million page views a year.

This is an online project where little paper is involved and there are millions of interconnections. I recommend that some time is allocated to examine www.luminous-lint.com to understand the scale of the project and its long term implications.

The goal of this project is to improve the ways that scholarship in the history of photography can be enhanced through practical prototypes that will show the benefits of collaborative digital publishing with open content.

Background

Traditionally institutions concentrate on their own collections, exhibitions and how their items relate to those in other collections. Although there are initiatives involving multiple institutions such as the Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative (OSCI) these address holdings at the institutional level and not, at this stage, private collections or estates where a significant proportion of photographs are located. Curatorial resistance to change and information architecture issues have delayed the manifest opportunities of digital publishing within most institutions.

Luminous-Lint was announced in December 2005 as an initiative to address some of these issues by developing a non-commercial online resource for the benefit of curators and those interested in

the history of photography. The following steps build on each other and overlap as part of an ongoing project.

1. Establishing a canon of photographers and seeking non-canonical exemplars

In order to create as diverse a resource as possible, Luminous Lint is based on key publications covering 7,286 photographers. Photographers have ULAN ids for authority control and VIAF (Virtual International Authority File) will be added later. Biographies, sample images, references and themes are included. Exemplars from outside the canon are sought out to ensure thematic coverage.

2. Selection of significant photographs and images

As photography is a visual medium scans are stored to highlight the range of photographers, themes (genres), techniques and periods used. 51,326 images from over 2,000 collections are included with captions, source details and inventory numbers where appropriate as the base dataset. Where gaps have been isolated within institutional collections private collectors and estates have provided material. Luminous Lint is frequently the only source for such rare content.

3. Understanding the context of photographs

A CRM system, such as TMS used by the Getty, is a starting point for establishing record control and Luminous-Lint uses software that goes beyond this. Within Luminous Lint there are 675 online exhibitions, some are similar to physical exhibitions run by institutions, on topics such as *The Pencil of Nature* by William Henry Fox Talbot or an exhibition on how *Hands* have been photographed. However, the most significant difference between institutional exhibitions and Luminous-Lint is that exhibitions on Luminous-Lint are under constant development and improvement based on incoming content from an ever-expanding group of collections.

4. Adding granularity

Tagging systems for images and related images fields in TMS do not maintain multiple ordering within the sets of images shown. On Luminous-Lint there are multiple visual indexes that highlight connections between images, show variants, provide historical context and highlight techniques.

5. Content on Luminous-Lint

As the online exhibitions and visual indexes are prepared explanatory texts, original sources, reading lists and appropriate Internet links are added in to support the images. Since June 2012 re-usable fragments (images, texts with footnotes and rich-media) have been created providing evidence for issues related to the history of photography. These fragments constantly improve as further collections are added and new research discoveries are incorporated.

Fragments can be added to as many themes (analogous to categories) as required whilst retaining the appropriate reading lists and footnotes. To date 2,830 fragments have been created and this number is expected to increase rapidly.

Each fragment is linked and ordered within the 1,116 themes used on Luminous-Lint. Themes can be mapped to Art & Architecture ids and other classification systems as required.

6. Consolidation

As the fragments are added a highly interconnected network of over a thousand histories of photography is emerging with self-adjusting footnotes and references. This framework evolves with each fact, reference set, argument or theoretical framework being supported by visual evidence from thousands of public and private collections.

The main point to notice here is that a single theme is made up of fragments which consist of texts, original sources, images, video, footnotes, reading lists, online exhibitions and visual indexes. The last two ensure that scholars have access to a vast range of additional material that is time consuming, if not impossible, to locate outside of Luminous-Lint.

Work during the nine month Getty Scholarship period

Luminous-Lint is well advanced and the scholarship period will be used to:

1. Enhance existing datasets
2. Demonstrate through software prototypes how the interlinking of diverse datasets within the Getty (for example: TMS, ULAN and The Atlas of Analytical Signatures of Photographic Processes) can be used to further open scholarship through digital publishing
3. Encourage collaborative approaches to knowledge sharing and
4. Create an automated Legacy Project that can preserve and output the content of Luminous-Lint for future scholars.

Collaboration with the Getty is sought to ensure continuity of what is becoming a significant resource for the history of photography worldwide. Luminous-Lint is a unique project that brings together photographs and content from highly diverse collections from around the world and academic sources into a coherent framework.

Open approaches to sharing knowledge

There can be curatorial resistance to outside use of content and this is based upon issues of ownership, fear of a loss of scholarship and reduced control over dissemination. Initiatives in digital publishing need to ensure that all content has the clear rights, authorship statements and links to original sources. Luminous-Lint has these controls built into the core and will work with Getty staff and departments to address concerns.

Getty resources required

1. Access to subsets of Getty ULAN data
2. Access to subsets of TMS records for photographs (includes Getty Museum, GRI and potentially some GCI records) for prototyping
3. Access to a digital subset of GRI bibliographic records and library access
4. Permission to use sections of The Atlas of Analytical Signatures of Photographic Processes (GCI) as a trial for interlinking content. (Not essential but useful for a prototype.)
5. Access to extracts of Getty digital content and/or publications where the rights are clearly defined.

6. This project is timely as it complements the Getty Open Content Program (OCP) and Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative (OSCI) and will show how recently released high-resolution images can be used effectively within complex networks of knowledge.
7. Three computer monitors

Advice will be requested from Getty information architecture and technical staff on the database standards used for the storage of existing photographic data. The use of open-source software tools, such as those being developed under the Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative (OSCI), will be investigated for the output of personalized multi-platform digital publications on the history of photography.

This project will use resources related to the history of photography at the Getty and demonstrate through online prototypes how they can be enhanced and their use maximized. The result will be a paradigm shift in the way that existing Getty content on history of photography enhanced by external datasets can be accessed through simple interfaces to rich media content.

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