

Documentary standards in the digital environment

Dutch museums: 50 year trajectory

Trilce Navarrete

Erasmus University Rotterdam @TrilceNavarrete



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Today

- My context
 - Theory = Art History, IS, Cultural Economics
 - Becoming Digital = process to renew oneself
 - Stats = EGMUS, Eurostat, Enumerate
- The adoption of standards NL
 - The Start / Wide Adoption / New Frontiers
 - Stages, dynamics, finances
 - Big picture *ALWAYS* in sight
- One thought to take home

The start

- Once upon a time ... in the Netherlands ...
 - **1950s** post war was period of reconstruction.
 - Museums realized importance of documentation
 - To register and account for (lost) objects
 - To increase efficiency of collection management
 - CIDOC was founded
 - *White Book* was published with general acquisition process.
 - Iconclass index system started

ObjectID started in 1997

The start

- Bottom up formation of standards
 - 1969 Start
 - Sea Water Fishing Museum library received grant to explore the use of computers for the registration of collections.
 - International efforts served to advocate
 - ICOM conference + ICOM magazine about computers 1967
 - **1974** first national standards were developed
 - Build from international standards
 - Section on registration and documentation
 - Stressed use of unified terminology

The start

- Joint efforts to advance
 - 1977 Association formed to coordinate, advise and advance documentation.
 - Development of standards for images, objects / by topic
 - Advocated for funding (adoption of computers, training)
 - Developed software for museums
 - First remote access to joint collections
 - First stats:
 - Registration of collections= 1,600 objects
 - Museums using standard card= 22 (25 cards)

Standards not yet adopted

Wide adoption

- All museums to get a computer
 - Government supported adoption and training
 - 1986 Software developed for (basic) registration, books and references, natural history
 - Museums with computers: 25 in 1987 and 122 in 1990
 - Slow adoption for registration
 - Seen as impoverishment of paper documentation records
 - Still, work continued as usual
 - Kept work / organizational structure
 - Information distribution remained closed

Making of silos
Adoption of standards

Wide adoption

- Resources remained scarce
 - Imaging was too expensive
 - Digitization project were limited in scope
 - Museums with website: 5 in 1995 and 670 in 2002
 - The Internet provided potential ... but
 - The network was not yet strong
 - Few images were available for online publication
 - The use of the Internet for communication would emerge later....

More stats

New frontiers

- The web makes sense
 - 2000s ...
 - The isolated, task oriented, data input hid the goal of it all
 - to improve access and enhance museum work
 - The Internet reminded everybody of the reachable joys
 - Further coordination was needed
 - National efforts divided tasks / expertise
 - New resources were (initially) made available

New frontiers

- *Does it make sense ... ?*
 - 2010s...
 - Top down funding, policy, approach
 - Isolated solutions
 - (large) Research (project) base
 - Appears disconnected from museum reality

New frontiers

- Back to the basics
 - 2020s...
 - Global pressing issues shift focus of work
 - Preservation of collections
 - To deliver a social return (sustainable development goals 11.4)
 - Solutions require long-term approach
 - Standards for definitions, relations, processes

1950

1977 - 1985

1986 - 1995

1996 - 2005

2006 - 2010

2020 -

Post war reconstruction

First scattered efforts

National advocacy association

Continuous effort

Development of standards

Slow adoption of computers

The start

National policies

Wide adoption

First explorations online

Slow adoption of standards

Wide adoption

The web makes sense

Remote and wider access

New frontiers

Interoperability ...
(what is that ...?)

Back to basics
Mixed Realities

Take home

- Join the digital
 - Using (existing) standards allows:
 - Reuse past effort
 - Harmonization / interoperability / benchmarking

Thank you !