Sustaining a long-term retrospective documentation project while performing museum collection’s management daily activities

Fernanda D'Agostino
Coordinator / Chief-Registrar
Museum Collection Department
Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo

Participation supported by the Getty Foundation
Founded in 1905 by the São Paulo State Government
São Paulo, Brazil

10,008 artworks in the collection

Museum of visual arts with an emphasis on Brazilian production from the 19th century to the present day.
Museum Collection Department activities and numbers:

- Management of the acquisition processes - approx. 250 artworks acquired by year

- Cataloging of the museum’s collection and other artworks related to long-term loans

- Management of 13 processes of long-term loans with Pinacoteca totaling 475 artworks

- Management of the collection’s loans-out - 536 artworks loaned in the last 4 years

- Management of the artworks’ high resolution images for reproduction purposes

- Support to professionals and researchers from other institutions and general public on questions and researches related to the collection’s artworks.
Artistic collection documentation:

1905-1970’s: no information on the existence of individual cataloging records for the artworks in the first decades of the museum;

1970’s: oldest individual cataloging documentation preserved;

1988: year of the last catalogue of the entire collection published;

2004: first valid digital database implemented for the museum artistic collection;

Today: individual files for the artworks organized by the inventory numbers (containing cataloging sheet, installation manuals, images, certificates, receipts etc.) + database system with individual records for the artworks and information related to the collection.
Artworks cataloging information reviewed:

2009-2011 (by the curatorial team): 255 records
August 2011- August 2012 (special project team*): 1,340 records
June 2013- Today: 1,260 records

*Reorganization of systems for storage, organization, access and promotion of the art and document collection of Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo – project developed with funds provided by the FAPESP – São Paulo Research Foundation (http://www.fapesp.br/en/)

Interruptions in the activities of retrospective documentation:

August 2012- May 2013: no special project
September 2015-March 2016: database migration project
October-December 2015: reception of 178 artworks as long-term loan and cataloging process of this collection

During the 2013-2017 period the museum has acquired 1,181 artworks corresponding to 1,691 records by means of Donations and Purchases. The NAM team has worked with a total of 2,961 cataloging records during the period of June 2013 until today (the number corresponds to the creation of new cataloging information for the artworks acquired and the activities of the collection's revision).
Procedures for the collection's documentation and cataloging revision:
- Reading of the previous cataloging records;
- Reading of the acquisition processes;
- Reading of the conservation and restoration reports;
- Checking of the artworks to gather information on dimensions, materials and techniques, inscriptions and marks;
- Researches in the museum's library;
- Summary of the research;
- Publishing of the results in the museum's database.
Documents created by NAM team to support the activities of cataloging and revision since 2013:

- Artistic Collection Cataloging Manual (2014);

- Update of the Manual for Identification and Description of Artworks Materials and Techniques based on the museum’s collection (2012-Today);

- A Form containing questions on preservation, requirements and technical information to be applied for audiovisual and digital artworks created with the collaboration of the Conservation Department (2015);

- Procedures and guidelines for acquisition, cataloging, lending and images reproductions of the works incorporated to the Museum Collection's Policy (2015);

- Manual for cataloging the Photograph collection (2016)
Thank you :-) 

fdagostino@pinacoteca.org.br

Fernanda D'Agostino
Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo