

## **From Preservation to Productivity**

### **Databases, access and collaboration in Japanese art libraries**

2nd Group: Mary Redfern, Kevin Trent McDowell, Jiyeon Wood

Until now, the preservation of and accumulation of data have been key concerns guiding the production of databases by art libraries in Japan. Looking forward, these valuable resources should be used more widely. For that reason, we have chosen to consider the following points:

1. The database as resource :  
Mary Redfern
2. Promoting access :  
Jiyeon Wood
3. Collaboration for collecting :  
Kevin Trent McDowell

#### **1. The Database as Resource**

Over the course of the JAL project, we encountered numerous databases of important data, images of precious works, and the results of detailed research. In this way, we came to understand the richness of the resources in art libraries within Japan. As a researcher and curator, the value of those databases is readily apparent, and I can see that I will use them in my own research. However, depending on the user needs can vary.

In that regard, two issues emerge. Firstly, within Japan if the data in a database is even a little incomplete, it may not be made public. And yet, for a researcher it is very important to be able to find a record, even if there is no image or detailed data. Secondly, translating entire databases into English (or other languages) and making them public for people overseas would be difficult. However, if a new resource can be made for the general public that uses these digitized images then their potential might be realized more widely.

For those reasons, I would like to introduce two case studies from overseas. These case studies are the Victoria and Albert Museum's 'Search the Collections' and MIT's 'Visualizing Cultures'. While both have their advantages and drawbacks, they may be helpful for comparison.

#### **Case Study 1: The Victoria and Albert Museum's 'Search the Collections'**

**<http://collections.vam.ac.uk>**

The Victoria and Albert Museum in London (V&A) has collections of art objects

from across the world. On its website, both researchers and the general public can easily access images and information about those collections. Details of objects and makers are given, and Hi-Res photographs and PDFs are available for download. The user interface has a clear and attractive design and layout, and a label-style explanation is provided for the general public.

Of course, producing this kind of information requires both staffing and time. As such, objects that are on display in the galleries are prioritized. However, as a publicly funded institution, the disclosure of information is an important matter for the V&A. As such, even where information is lacking, data on the works in the V&A's own collections is generally made available. Even if a record has no image or detailed information, it is still made available to the public.

For a researcher, it is still important to know that an item exists even if there is little information or metadata available. Knowing of its existence, they can then make further enquiries. However, even though the level of information required by the general public, beginners and researchers will vary, they might all seek to use the same database. For that reason, the V&A's website has a toggle button that allows you to select whether you want to

only see records that have an image or rich data. For the user's convenience, this is placed next to the search box.

### **Case Study 2: MIT's 'Visualizing Cultures'**

<http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu>

Databases on *yōkai* or *shunga* have the potential to be of significant interest to people across the world, but if they are only in Japanese then that potential is surely limited. However, issues of budget, staffing and technology mean that translating an entire database into English or other languages can be extremely difficult. Furthermore, it is not only a matter of language. Many people might not have the understanding of Japanese culture needed to make full use of these resources. For this reason, I would like to introduce my second case study.

MIT's website 'Visualizing Cultures' brings together digitized images and easy to read essays written by experts in the field. It covers various themes, which are clearly and elegantly arranged. If, as MIT has done, digitized images could be brought together with contextual essays in English to make a new resource for people overseas who cannot read Japanese, then it would be much more user friendly. Even without translating everything into English (or other languages) it could then be of great use to people across the world.

MIT's 'Visualizing Cultures' has been a great success. Thanks to the participating researchers, the number of illustrated essays has increased, covering a wide range of themes. Since launching the website itself, educational materials for schools and free online courses have been prepared that use the website as a resource. In this way, diverse people now have the opportunity to learn about Asian art history.

\* \* \*

Having a user-oriented database doesn't necessarily mean that it will be useful. The user must also be able to find the database. For that reason, we come to our next topic.

## **2. Promoting Access to Japanese Art Resources**

During our time on the JAL project we noticed, through meeting specialists at the various institutions we visited, that the many Japanese art resources available within Japan could benefit the rest of world if accessibility was further promoted. We highlight here some of the issues that are affecting access at the moment and provide some suggestions that would encourage use of the Japanese art

resources' databases on an international forum.

### **Necessity of Portal Site**

Many specialised databases developed by academic institutions are available online but they are not easy to find. Unless users have a high level of Japanese language or pre-knowledge about art specialised institutions in Japan, finding these resources is difficult for researchers from overseas. The National Diet Library and Art Libraries' Consortium have built a cross-search so that users can search a wide range of library catalogues and find more collections. If more libraries build a portal site that brings information about their specialised databases and digital archives together, this will increase discoverability of their art resources.

### **Design and Language**

There are many researchers and graduate students overseas who can benefit from art resources available within Japan. In order to target overseas' graduate students and researchers, the site needs to be concise with a simple design. Some institutions' sites contain a lot of information. A text heavy front page can be intimidating for users who do not have language skills. Users may not expect to find all of the contents translated into English, but, at a minimum, a clear

overview about the collection, specialised areas and how to access resources should be written in English. When a researcher starts research, “where to find it”, “what resources are available” and “how to obtain it” is essential.

### **Promote Art Specialised Institutions**

As mentioned above, language skills and finding information about art specialised institutions can be barriers for researchers and students from overseas. At LAHLF (London Art History Libraries Forum), which represents 24 libraries across higher education as well as the cultural and museum sectors in London, is currently building a website. The design is very simple and although it does not offer cross-search, it offers a short description about each member institution and their specialised collection remit. The site aims to be a gateway for students and any member of public to discover art libraries in London. After reading an overview of the institutions, users can click the logos of the institutions which link to each institution’s homepage. If Art Libraries Consortium site could provide more detailed overviews about member libraries and their special collections remit, it would be an excellent gateway for users to discover more resources in various libraries across Japan.

### **Providing Resources Via International Educational Databases**

The next suggestion is to disseminate visual resources within Japan using established international databases. If the materials are no longer under the copyright, these resources can be provided via international educational databases such as ARTStor or Bridgeman Education. These are well used databases in Europe and America. For example, ARTstor allows students and researchers from the institution that subscribe to this database to use images for non-commercial use. If a researcher wishes to use images for commercial use, the user must contact the institution where the image is held and obtain permission. Although Japanese arts related visual resources are currently available on ARTStor, most of them are provided by institutions in Europe and America. In the UK, major museums and galleries such as Victoria & Albert Museum, London National Gallery and British Museum also provided their visual resources to the database. Outstanding Japanese visual resources, for both quantity and quality, are available within Japan. For example, Tokyo National Museum provides image search and digital archives where users can download images free of charge for non-commercial use. If these digital images held by Tokyo National Museum were searchable via

these international academic databases, this would be a good starting point for overseas' researchers to discover more resources maintained in Japan.

\* \* \*

Next is the group's suggestion on Collaboration for Collecting from McDowell.

### **3. Collaboration for Collecting Budgetary Limitations on Collecting and Managing Materials**

To begin with, many libraries are facing strict budgetary limitations. However, if museum libraries form consortiums, individual institutions can focus on collecting narrower areas of specialization and by cooperating as a consortium, libraries can, as a whole, offer a greater number of materials to their users.

#### **Space Limitations**

In addition to budgetary limitations, for many libraries the expansion of collections is restricted by a lack of space. Here again, membership in a consortium can act as a solution to this issue, since individual libraries can focus on their own areas of academic strength and avoid duplicating materials held in other institutions,

thereby freeing up space, while still providing access to a wide variety of materials through the other consortium libraries.

#### **Instituting Formalized Collecting Development Policies**

The University of Oregon Libraries, like many other academic libraries, have policies that regulate and help to manage collection development. This ensures that collection development is highly efficient and focused on purchasing and acquiring materials that best meet the research and instructional needs of their faculty and students. These policies apply not only to new acquisitions, but also serve to set parameters for the kinds of materials that institutions will accept as donations. In addition, if consortiums have collection development principles that set standards for the consortium as a whole, they will be better able to meet the needs of their users and more efficiently develop their collections. For example, in the Orbis-Cascade Alliance, which the University of Oregon belongs to, if three or more libraries in the alliance hold a particular item there are limitations on purchasing the same item at other institutions.

## **Shared Consortial Catalogues as a Tool to Improve Collecting Strategies**

To further explain, the Orbis-Cascade Alliance is a consortium that includes 37 academic libraries that have a shared catalog. When researchers and students need materials from another library in the Alliance, they can request items from the libraries in the Alliance and usually receive them within four or five days. Through this system, each individual library can develop collections that strengthen and support their institutions areas of special strength in academic subject areas. In addition, users of the Alliance collections can make full use of the consortiums resources.

In addition, the Orbis-Cascade Alliance has created a shared database called Archives West that consists of digitized materials, such as letters, diaries, and photographs that allows users to find primary resources. Through this database, researchers, not only in America, but also scholars throughout the world can access the materials that are essential to their research.

## **Conclusion**

The resources made and preserved by Japan's art libraries have great value both

within and beyond Japan. Now we need to unlock that value by making these resources more widely available and putting them to use. If we can work together to make these resources into something that everyone can utilize, they will be of great help to researchers and the general public in Japan and overseas.

## 第2グループ



### 保護から、効率化へ From Preservation to Productivity

日本美術図書館におけるデータベース、アクセス、コラボレーション

Databases, access and collaboration in Japanese art libraries

+

- リソースとしてのデータベース  
The database as resource
- 入門者のためにアクセスを推進  
Promoting access
- コレクション収集に関するコラボレーション  
Collaboration for collecting

### + リソースとしてのデータベース The database as resource

- データベースは誰のために作りますか？

Who is the database made for?

- 研究者・一般の人々の役に立つリソース

A resource for researchers and the public

### + リソースとしてのデータベース The database as resource

- 事例① ヴィクトリア・アンド・アルバート博物館

Case Study 1: Victoria and Albert Museum

「Search the Collections」 <http://collections.vam.ac.uk>

- 事例② マサチューセッツ工科大学

Case Study 2: MIT

「Visualizing Cultures」 <http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu>

### + 事例① ヴィクトリア・アンド・アルバート博物館 Case Study 1: Victoria and Albert Museum <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

### + 事例① ヴィクトリア・アンド・アルバート博物館 Case Study 1: Victoria and Albert Museum <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

## 第2グループ

+ 事例① ヴィクトリア・アンド・アルバート博物館  
Case Study 1: Victoria and Albert Museum  
<http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

+ 事例② マサチューセッツ工科大学  
Case Study 2: MIT 「Visualizing Cultures」  
[visualizingcultures.mit.edu](http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu)

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

事例② マサチューセッツ工科大学  
Case Study 2: MIT 「Visualizing Cultures」  
■ [visualizingcultures.mit.edu](http://visualizingcultures.mit.edu)

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

+ 入門者のためにアクセス推進  
Promoting access

■ JAL Project: 新しい資料とデータベースを見つける旅

JAL Project as journey of discovery

■ ポータルサイトの必要性:

Necessity of Portal site:

■ 例① 国立国会図書館 サーチ

Case study ① National Diet Library Search

■ 例② 美術図書館横断検索

Case study ② Art Libraries Consortium cross search

+ 例①

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

<http://iss.ndl.go.jp/>

例②

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

<http://alc.opac.jp/>



## 第2グループ

### + 入門者のためにアクセスを推進 Promoting access

- 事例①: London Art History Libraries Forum
- 事例②: ARTStor
- 大学院生をターゲットとした資料  
Resources targeting graduate students
  - もっとシンプルなデザイン  
Simple, clear design
  - 参加図書館と所蔵資料についての概要 (英語)  
Description about member libraries and their holding collections (English)
  - 使用方法 (英語)  
Clear instructions about how to use the site (English)

### 事例

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

<http://lahlf.weebly.com/libraries.html>

### 事例: ARTStor

<http://library.artstor.org>

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

### + コレクション収集に関するコラボレーション

- コレクションの予算の問題  
Budgetary issues
- 所蔵場所の問題: すべての図書館に共通の問題  
Issues of space: a problem for many libraries
- コレクション収集原則の制定: 購入だけではなく寄贈品にも適用  
Formalized collecting policies: purchases and donations
- カタログの共有化  
Catalogue collectivization

### + Orbis-Cascade Alliance

- オレゴン州, ワシントン州の37学術図書館

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

+

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

<https://www.orbiscascade.org/>

## 第2グループ

Image unavailable for copyright reasons

<https://www.orbiscascade.org/>

