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CMA Is Founding Member of Digital Imaging Consortium

Imagine being able to compare, say, Renaissance drawings from collections in Cleveland, Boston, Toronto, and San Francisco without leaving your office or classroom.
—Robert P. Bergman, Director, the Cleveland Museum of Art

(CLEVELAND, OH) Cleveland Museum of Art director Robert P. Bergman has announced that the museum has become a founding member of the Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO), a new not-for-profit group organized to provide images and information about art to the educational community using emerging digital technologies. Comprising twenty-three museums, AMICO will license access to a shared digital library illustrating and documenting works in the collections of these and other major North American art museums. The new organization is formed under the auspices of the Association of Art Museum Directors Educational Foundation, Inc.

Dr. Bergman explains:

The idea is to make great works from all of our collections accessible for study in the form of high-quality digital images and explanatory information. In the past, access to actual works of art and to curatorial documentation has necessarily been limited by concerns of conservation and security—and also by the wide geographic dispersal of the material. Here, the digital age offers great opportunities: imagine being able to compare, say, Renaissance drawings from collections in Cleveland, Boston, Toronto, and San Francisco without leaving your office or classroom. AMICO is about establishing the necessary technological and collaborative infrastructure to make this possible. We who are participating believe that this initiative supports our institutional missions and will lead to broader appreciation for our collections and increased in-person use of our facilities.

The AMICO library will function as a “virtual museum” built around digitally-scanned pictures of the selected works plus identifying text. Each item would be analogous to the work of art in a gallery with its accompanying wall label. Additional layers could be added to that—published articles, conservation

information, multimedia ‘virtual’ tours, and so on. Working together through a six-month planning process, representatives of the member museums defined mechanisms to collect and distribute this library. Agreements reflecting this consensus were drafted by the Pittsburgh-based consulting firm Archives & Museum Informatics, which helped facilitate the AMICO planning process. AMICO’s framework documents are available for public comment at: <http://www.amn.org/AMICO>.

Prior to announcing the full availability of its digital library next year, AMICO is launching a year-long test project in order to validate the proposed framework, and to evaluate various means of delivering library content to the educational community. The testing period will also increase AMICO’s understanding of the ways that universities are adopting digital teaching and reference tools, and enable the AMICO member museums to offer a library that meets the needs of its users. A call for participation in this test project—called the AMICO University Testbed—can be found at <http://www.amn.org/AMICO>.

AMICO Founding Members:

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Asia Society Galleries, New York, NY
Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, AZ
Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
Davis Museum and Cultural Center, Wellesley, MA
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
George Eastman House, Rochester, NY
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN
Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal, Quebec
Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montreal, Montreal, Quebec
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario
National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN

About the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD):

The AAMD consists of 170 directors of the largest art museums in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The membership meets twice a year to explore topics in the arts and education as well as to participate in programs on professional development and management. CMA director Robert P. Bergman is a former president of AAMD. The current president is Hugh M. Davies, Director of the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego. The Executive Director is Millicent Hall Gaudieri. Further information about AAMD can be found at www.amn.org. Further information about the consulting firm Archives & Museum Informatics can be found at www.archimuse.com.

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