



Art Museum Image Consortium

**Educational Access to
Digital Art Documentation**

**A Preliminary Proposal
to the
Mellon Foundation**

November 1997

CONFIDENTIAL



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Executive Summary

Applicant

The Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO), a consortium of 23 of the largest art museums in North America, a program of the Association of Art Museum Directors Educational Foundation, Inc.

Purpose

To create and implement new economic and administrative systems supporting educational uses of art documentation including management of intellectual property rights, distribution of the multimedia database resources, and provision of access to students of all ages.

Rationale

The current system is incapable of supporting the growth and new uses desired by educators and students interested in exploiting networked resources in teaching, learning, and research. Economic and legal barriers stand in the way of digital access within the parameters of the current system. Existing procedures and infrastructures are themselves impediments to creating a greatly expanded and democratically accessible resource.

Funding Requirement

- \$650,000 over first 18 months to run test-bed project
- \$1,850,000 for first three years of operation to establish a self-sufficient system



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Background - The Present Situation

Despite the promise of the Internet, educators do not have easy access to a critical mass of art and its documentation. Their options for obtaining access to art in digital form are limited, in practice often problematic, and at times prohibitive.

Traditional access to visual information in universities is supported by large slide libraries built up over many years. But these are often poorly documented, contain increasing portions of fading and otherwise degraded images and include large quantities of images for which the universities do not have rights. Although some individual educators are urging otherwise, university counsels are unlikely to authorize systematic copying of these libraries without diligent efforts to acquire rights. Ad hoc copying under "Fair Use" cannot be the basis for courses which are taught on a regular basis; materials compiled in this way would require rights clearance. Experience shows that such searches are themselves very laborious and costly both in time and in fees. In addition, quality digital copying is expensive, without considering costs for documentation, storage and delivery. Each element in this chain alone is typically enough to stop plans for the digitization of slide libraries.

Educational institutions and individual educators could contact individual museums to obtain digital images with rights to use them in their classes, but the cost of identifying the rights holders and making these requests is high. Simply knowing what images are available for licensing is relatively expensive. Academic Press has announced a \$1500 per year subscription price for the *Image Directory*, its locator database. The costs of corresponding to negotiate rights, establish fees and agree on uses, and of keeping records is also high.

Despite the interest of museums in encouraging academic use of museum documentation, if educators resorted to one by one licensing, the costs to museums of processing such requests would be prohibitive. Studies of museum 'rights and reproductions offices' show that even many commercial fee structures fail to recover the true cost to the museum of responding to license requests. Museums have generally begun to establish fees for digital rights and would likely charge educators for regular usage, such as providing access to images across local intranets. The time periods and usage terms for such rights agreements would vary from museum to museum, adding to the administrative burden for the educator. In addition, there are many rights desired by educators that are not covered by standard museum practice: While granting permissions for classroom display and/or student study is becoming fairly common, allowing students to incorporate these images into their works, granting rights to use the licensed works in presentations off the campus, or granting rights for users other than the requesting faculty member is seldom done.

New Economic and Social Models for Access to Digital Art Resources

The Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO), formed by 23 of the largest art museums in North America in October 1997, is proposing a new economic and social partnership between content holders and educational users in the digital age. The goal is to satisfy the needs of the educational

community (K-12 as well as higher education) for quality content through a joint investment by educational institutions and content holding institutions. At its heart is a license allowing a wide range of educational uses of quality museum documentation for a predictable and reasonable fee.

AMICO member institutions (currently 23, but open to art holding institutions anywhere) are bearing the costs of creating digital documentation of their collections and are paying a fee annual membership in the consortium. They are asking educational institutions to pay a similar licensing fee which will support AMICO operations, and to pay the costs of distribution of the AMICO library as charged by one of a number of competing distributors.

The AMICO model can work over the long-term if it is accepted by as little as 10% of the market - universities, public libraries and school districts. Initial interest in the AMICO product suggests that these levels of licensed use should be achievable within five years of the launch of the AMICO library product in each of the three market sectors. Preliminary budget projections indicate that self-sufficiency can be reached in the fourth year after launch of the first product, the University licensed library.

Major development costs and hurdles need to be overcome during this startup period. We have identified three major challenges which face AMICO over the coming years. Each involves acceptance of a new social and economic mechanism, so the outcomes are neither certain nor entirely within our control. Nevertheless, we can position ourselves to enable change and take maximum advantage of its consequences.

The three areas in which we need to be effective are:

- the creation of digital documentation by museums and its integration into value-added libraries
- the distribution of access to vast digital libraries in ways that can be used in education
- the development of an economic system to support educational licensing

I. Creation Of Digital Documentation By Museums And Its Integration Into Value-Added Libraries

A. Sustainable Membership Growth / A Library with Critical Mass

Ultimately AMICO aims to create a comprehensive library documenting the world's art resources. It must balance the desire to build a huge library with the reality of maintaining an organization that can provide services of value to its members.

By joining AMICO, major museums have signaled their desire to create a shared library of digital documentation for educational use. Expressions of interest by other museums, including many outside the AAMD, make it clear that if this effort can succeed, many others will join. AMICO's long-term success depends on attracting quality art content from the largest possible number of museums, libraries and archives worldwide. In the shorter term, managed growth in membership is essential to success and planned development of the Library.

Challenge: We must define a sustainable level of membership growth and attracting the right institutions to participate given that the number of members of AMICO cannot grow exponentially at the outset.

Challenge: Ways for the AMICO Library to grow must be identified, that do not produce concomitant increases in the number of members to be served. These include obtaining content

from licensees in return for license discounts and "exchanging" content with similar bodies in other countries which have or could create large libraries of digital art documentation.

B. Creation of a Library with Breadth and Depth Suited for Academic Use

The formation of AMICO reflects the realization that commercial interests will not create a resource with sufficient breadth and depth of documentation for academic purposes. The commitment to creating such a value-added resource, however, presumes that we know (or can establish) what data quality is needed in different educational applications and that museums, universities, public libraries and schools can collaborate to create the kinds of data and tools required.

Challenge: Iterative research is required with user communities to identify those qualities of digital resources that lend value to different applications and to specify them in community standards.

Challenge: Art collections are international and the study of art does not reasonably end with the resources that happen to be in any given country. Mechanisms must be developed for bringing art from institutions around the world into AMICO and for making the AMICO Library available worldwide.

II. Distribution Of Access To Vast Digital Libraries In Ways That Can Be Used In Education

A. Distributing Large Volumes of Data

No networked resources of the size which the AMICO Library will be in five years have been created in the past. This is not a reflection of AMICO undertaking an effort of unprecedented scale, but rather that reflection of the way in which networked resources are measured (in bits) and the technologies for representation of images.

Every work of art documented in the AMICO Library will require a minimum of 3MB and an average of approximately 5MB of data. This means that a library documenting 200,000 works of art (a conservative AMICO target for the first five years), represents approximately one Terabyte of data. Delivering this resource to institutions, including some which are technically not highly sophisticated, poses problems. Simply finding the means of transmitting these volumes of data is a major issue.

Challenge: The Internet as currently configured cannot handle this volume of data transfer. Working with Internet 2 designers, with companies developing software architectures that increase throughput in the Internet for heavily trafficked items, with developers of standards for layered image delivery, and with licensees prepared to load some data locally, or support regional user communities, will all be necessary to ensure usable network response.

B. Standards and Tools to Enable Discovery and Use

Assisting educators to find objects of interest in the AMICO Library requires appropriate access tools, that enable access in the language of the learner. This may be the language of a generalist vs. that of the specialist, or the provision of access to a multi-lingual database. Developing multi-lingual interfaces to the AMICO library, and assuring that distributors provide access to the library in the languages of their clients, will be a focus of both research and marketing.

Challenge: Standards for metadata and methods for its indexing that enable resources such as the AMICO Library to be discovered, retrieved, and used in the educational environment are still being developed. AMICO needs to work with the standards development community as these are proposed to test their utility.

Challenge: Distributors who can reach each sector of institutions must be identified. Developing products from the AMICO Library with them which serve that market sector's needs will require an on-going effort. Identifying tools required for users to work with the library will require ongoing research and development.

III. Development Of Economic System To Support Educational Licensing

The museums which have formed AMICO are committed to creating a self-sustaining mechanism that will combine the resources of institutions holding art and of institutions with an educational interest in these holdings to support a growing Library with improved facilities for use. AMICO members are not interested in making a profit, though they can see potential cost savings to both museums and educational institutions in by-passing the current inefficiencies of systems for acquiring intellectual property permission.

A. Increasing Use/Decreasing Fees

Preliminary models of how such an economic system can be supported indicate that a charge which is perceived as "reasonable" by the players can support the system with only 10% of the potential institutions involved. The members of AMICO would be happy to see a much larger percentage of potential licensees actively using the materials, which would also permit a concomitant reduction in fees, but it is extremely difficult at this point to determine whether reducing fees now would actually enable a sufficiently rapid uptake of licenses to cover the income needs in the short term. Other barriers to participation, including technological ones, are still too high for many institutions.

Challenge: Fee structures must be established that are reasonable to users and that support the activities of the Consortium. Ongoing analysis of user requirements, and barriers to uptake is essential.

B. Expanding Partnerships and Encouraging Added-Value

In addition to income, the AMICO systems seeks documentation of content, distribution to underserved populations, and creation of curriculum. A fee structure has been designed which rewards licensees for these activities, creating a partnership with licensees.

Challenge: Similar incentives, including membership fee discounts, will need to be developed over time to encourage behaviors contributing to the mission of AMICO.

C. Expanding Circles of Understanding Intellectual Property Rights

AMICO is built on recognition of the value of intellectual property. As such, it values the rights of artists, photographers and others whose intellectual property is in works of art or forms part of the documentation of such works. AMICO must bring the owners of copyright in art and its documentation into a system of educational use licensing in an equitable fashion. AMICO needs to work with artists and artists rights societies, here and abroad, to develop such frameworks.

Challenge: Structure must be created that both ensure the necessary levels of income to AMICO and reward participation by licensees, is a priority for the research in the testbed year.

Challenge: Developing model license agreements between artists and museums, and between artists and AMICO, will be an important focus of activity.

Conclusion

Enabling educational access to the multimedia documentation of museums collections requires a rethinking of traditional methods for distributing information, and the development of new economic structures to support such a redesigned system. In forming the Art Museum Image Consortium (AMICO) twenty-three of the largest art museums in North America have indicated their willingness to change their operational procedures in order to meet a growing demand for digital materials in education. They have made this step in recognition of the educational role fundamental to their organizational missions. However, the Consortium needs support in order to plan, implement, evaluate and refine the data collection, enhancement and distribution systems that will enable this. Over a period of five years, AMICO will move from a start-up collaboration to a self-supporting not-for-profit, making access available to educators in universities, primary and secondary education, as well as to life-long-learners in Public Libraries.

- meeting report, Minneapolis, June 3-4, 1997
- Preliminary Report, March 1997 [following the first planning meeting]

Letters from Institutional Collaborators

- Getty Information Institute
- Research Libraries Group
- U.S. Copyright Office
- OCLC Department of Research and Development

Background Documents

- J. Trant, Enabling Educational Use of Museum Digital Materials: The Museum Educational Site Licensing (MESL) Project, a paper for the Electronic Imaging and the Visual Arts Conference (EVA) Florence, Italy, February 9, 1996.
- D. Bearman, New Economic Models for Administering Cultural Intellectual Property, Digital Knowledge Conference, Toronto, Ontario, February 7, 1996 and EVA Florence, February 9, 1996