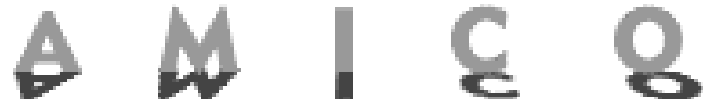


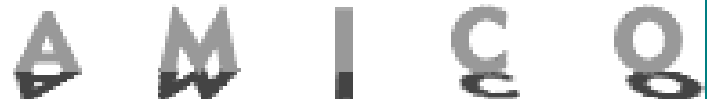
A Preliminary Study of the
Content of the AMICO
Library
with Recommendations for
Future Development

March, 2000



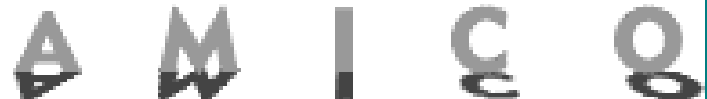
What methodology was used?

- Broad mandate to explore the contents of the AMICO Library.
- Needed objective yardsticks to measure content against as a way to focus approach.
- Chose to look at AMICO Library primarily from the point of view of the “canon” used by the “academic art historian.”



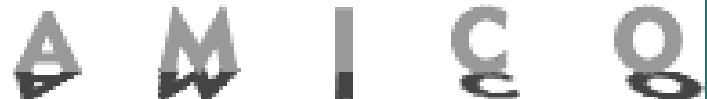
What is the Canon?

- Often assumed, rarely precisely defined, lately challenged by art historians.
- For the purposes of this study, the canon is more or less what academic art historians think is significant for teaching purposes.
- Academic art historical canon and the museum canon are quite different.



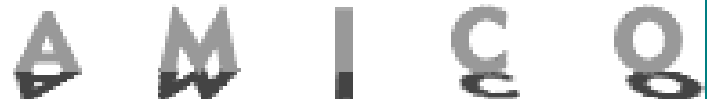
Museum or Academic Canon?

- Museum is real objects.
- Museum limited by what it can physically acquire.
- Choices are unique.
- Choices partly determined by accident.
- Academic is slides, books, photographs.
- Academic limited only by what has been photographed.
- Choices tend to be uniform.
- Choices mostly deliberate.



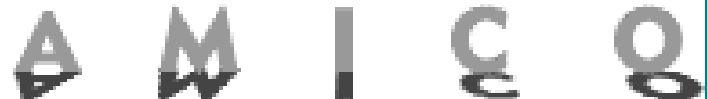
What determines the “Academic Canon?”

- Works of art that are used in university teaching, especially slide lectures.
- A large percentage (up to 70%) from text books (slide sets, copied from book).
- Contents of academic slide library very important (also often from books).
- Except for architectural historians, slides made by academics seem less important.



What is the “text canon?”

- Defined for this study as “works of art illustrated in text books used in college teaching.”
- No need to reinvent the wheel.
- Put together by recognized authorities.
- Books easy to access, browse, and survey.
- Self-reinforcing: each edition based on past books and editions.





160. Gerard ter Borch: The Evening of the Guild of St. Nicholas of the Trinity of Middelburg, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

161. Gerard ter Borch: The Artist at Work, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

162. Gerard ter Borch: The Artist at Work, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

163. Gerard ter Borch: The Artist at Work, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.



164. Gerard ter Borch: The Artist at Work, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.



165. Gerard ter Borch: The Artist at Work, 1633, oil on canvas, National Gallery, London.

were usually asked to represent (parallel scenes from Scripture, classical mythology, or from their own early natural history, not actual contemporary events. Ter Borch was apparently unable to sell his paintings of one of the most important episodes in the history of the Dutch people. The picture was in the collection of a Dissenter relative in 1673-4, and remained in the hands of the family for about a century. (Though ter Borch was unable to sell it because of the price he asked for the work, Houbraken reports that he demanded 4,000 guilders for it (about 4,500 guilders more than Rembrandt received for the *Night Watch*) and, because he was disliked, he kept it.)

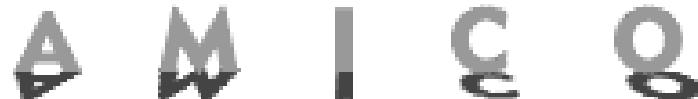
Ter Borch continued to be perpetually until his marriage in 1644 when he finally settled in the Netherlands and made Dordrecht his home. He continued to paint miniature-like pictures of great reserve and decorum, specializing in small (although in interiors which are always painted in a subdued reality. Their restrained nobility, even when his figures appear overblown in their finery (214), distinguishes them from those made by his contemporaries. None of his late pictures show any sign that he attempted to satisfy the taste for license that bore in a light, dissolving manner that became ever more popular during his late decades.

His great fame, however, rests mainly upon the picture which he made after the middle of the century which help define the subjects and general solutions used by many artists of his generation and those who worked later. What was his secret in his mastery of subtle narrative which can sweep every episode with subdued tension. Few genre pictures ever revealed more delicately the character of these individuals and their relation to each other as they naturally

go about their business of making music in a drawing-room (*The Artist's Lesson*, Chiswick Art Museum) (161). His rendering of simple themes, such as a boy who has put aside his school work to concentrate upon detaching a patient dog (162), shows the same knowledge of people as his more ambitious pieces. In contrast to Pieter de Hooch, ter Borch maintains his fine taste and craftsmanship in his genre pieces until the very end. His contact with Vermeer in Delft in 1663 may have had an impact on the younger master. Then there undoubtedly was a shift, some of ter Borch's late works seem to show a sign of Vermeer's influence. The fullness and clarity of the foreground figure playing the cello in *The Concert at Berlin* (167) and the bright illumination of the room recall the Delft master; but it is also possible that the two artists arrived at similar solutions independently. In any event, in the ter Borch, the explicit and minute treatment of musical instruments and staves with the most intricate light accents is completely personal. The spatial relationships are not grasped with Vermeer's subtlety, and the composition lacks the Delft painter's masterly consideration of the surface plane and the adjustment of the spatial accents to the overall design. It will be noted that the figure playing the harpsichord has no ter Borch character. Originally this figure represented a man. Ter Borch subsequently transformed the man into a woman, and a whitered restorer, who worked on the picture at the end of the nineteenth century because of its bad state of preservation, changed the woman's gown and gave the model his wife's features.¹⁴

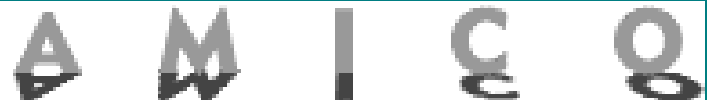
Ter Borch's influence is unmistakable upon a number of leading genre painters (Metsu, Frans van Mieris the Elder, Ochtervelt, Egloos van der Neer) but he never attracted

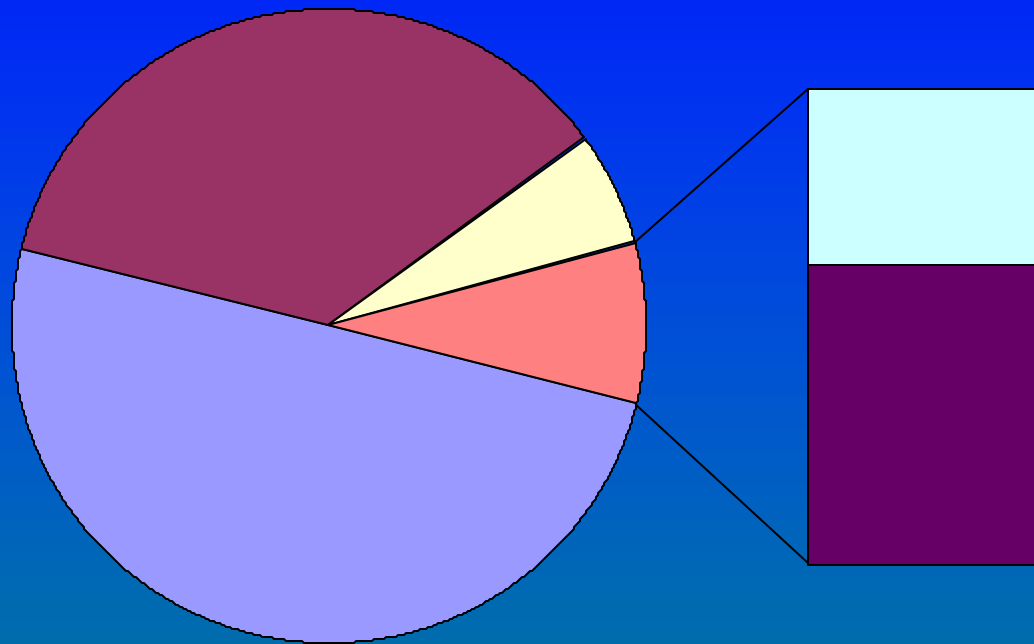
Slive, "Genre Painting" spread in Dutch Painting 1600-1800, pgs. 162-163



How does the AMICO Library compare to the text canons?

- Most “text canon” images not in North American museums.
- Most “text canon” *images* in AMICO museums *not* in AMICO Library.
- Most “text canon” artists *are* in AMICO Library.
- Most North American museums with “text canon” images are *already* AMICO members.



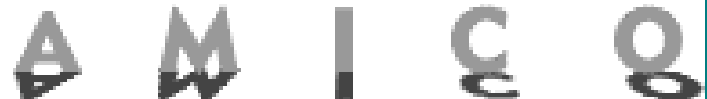


**Illustrations in Janson,
*History of Art***

- Works in non-museum locations (50%)
- Works in museums outside N. America (36%)
- Works in non-AMICO museums in N. America (6%)
- Works in AMICO member museums in Library (3%)
- Works in AMICO member museums not in Library (5%)

How does the technology affect the canon?

- Technology does not give “clues” like the pages of a book.
- Searching requires patience and familiarity and comfort with the technology.
- Technology is “value free” and does not rank images.
- Search technology is “hard edge,” art history is “soft edge.”



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Items for FIND Keyword Dutch genre

22 Items sorted by creator — To display more information and a larger image, select a thumbnail image.



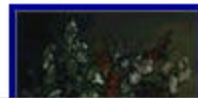
5. **Bartholomeus Breenbergh**
The Stoning of St. Stephen. 1632
Oil on panel — 67.5 x 92 cm
J. Paul Getty Museum
[Rights](#)

SAVE



6. **Jan van de Cappelle**
Shipping in a Calm at Flushing. 1649
Oil on panel — 69.7 x 92.2 cm
J. Paul Getty Museum
[Rights](#)

SAVE

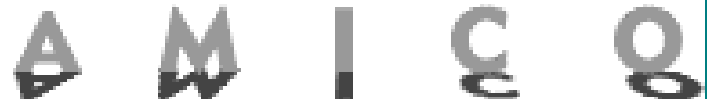


7. **Gustave Courbet**
Bouquet of Flowers in a Vase. 1862
Oil on canvas — 100.5 x 73 cm

AMICO search on Keywords
“Dutch genre”

What are the “anomalies?”

- Some artists richly represented with hundreds of images; others represented by only one or two.
- Images seem uncoordinated across member institutions.
- Library defeats expectations by not including images in text canons.





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Items for FIND Keyword Nighthawks

17 Items sorted by creator — To display more information and a larger image, select a thumbnail image.

SAVE



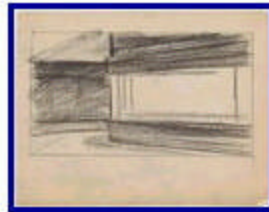
16. Hopper, Edward

Study for Nighthawks. (1942)

Conté crayon on paper — Whole - 8 x 8 in. (20.3 x 20.3 cm.)

Josephine N. Hopper Bequest
Whitney Museum of American Art[Rights](#)

SAVE



17. Hopper, Edward

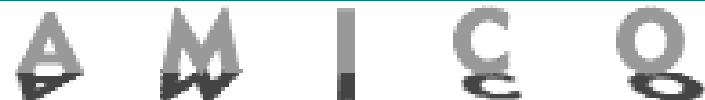
Study for Nighthawks. (1942)

Conté crayon on paper — Whole - 8 1/2 x 11 in. (21.6 x 27.9 cm.)

Josephine N. Hopper Bequest
Whitney Museum of American Art[Rights](#)

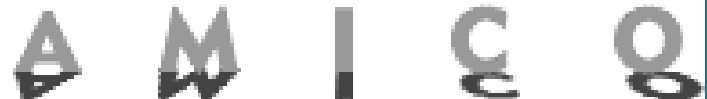
SAVE

AMICO Search on Keyword
“Nighthawks”

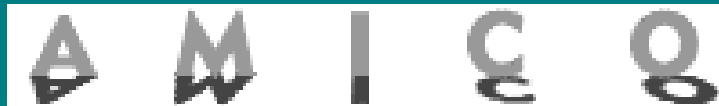
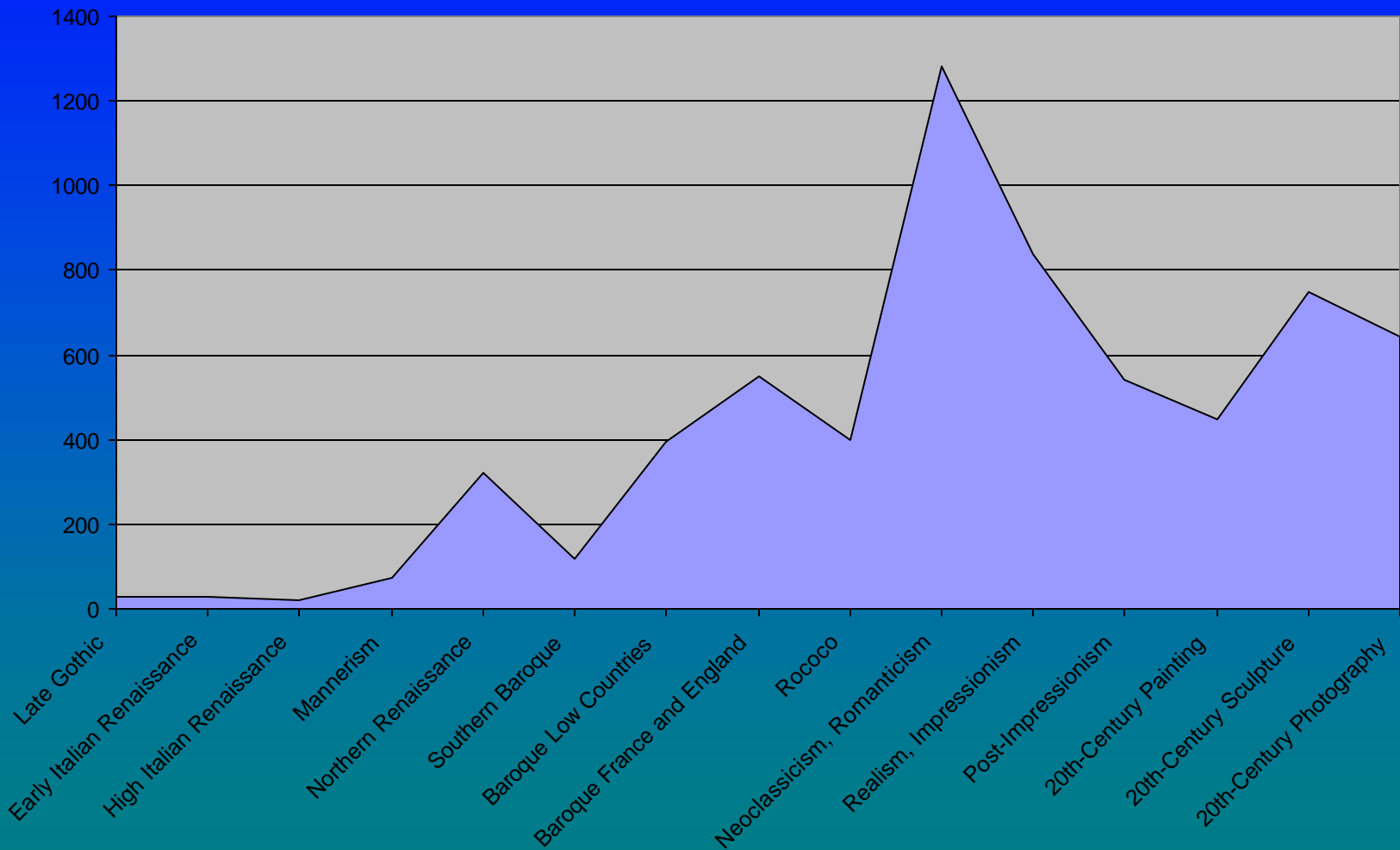


What are the special strengths?

- AMICO Library large and broad-based including many areas poorly represented elsewhere and not in the “canon.”
- AMICO Library especially strong in 19th-century, Old Master prints, photographs.
- Image quality far more consistent than typical slide library.

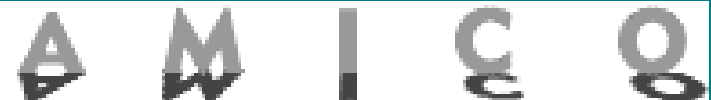


Works by artists in Janson in AMICO Library



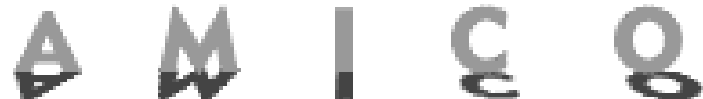
What are the marketing implications of this study?

- AMICO's greatest strength is being the only thing of its kind on the market.
- AMICO's greatest weakness is being the only thing of its kind on the market.
- Users tend to look for AMICO to be things it is not, e.g., a digital slide library.
- "Tilt point" for digital images is when they serve entire courses.



What are possible future courses for the Library's development?

- Continue as before and let market take care of other needs and uses.
- Package library content in ways that emphasize its special nature and strengths.
- Act as “curator” to content to lessen apparent anomalies.
- Acquire images to enhance Library’s “text canon” content.



What should AMICO be when it
grows up?

