

Art History and Its Publications in the Electronic Age

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C O N N E X I O N S

Rice University, Houston, Texas

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Introduction¹

When this study began, scholarly publishing in art history appeared at serious risk. The crisis of the monograph, which other fields experienced as a slow decline, hit art history with an abrupt force: a major publisher of monographs ended its art history line; other lists were shrinking or refocusing on cross-over and more commercial books. Meanwhile art history was squeezed by the strictures of copyright and exorbitant image-related fees, problems unique to our field. The Department of Art History and Archaeology at Columbia² and the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University³ have two of the largest and most distinguished doctoral programs in the field. We feared our recent graduates would not be able to publish their dissertation research and infuse the field with new work. If that were the case, the intellectual vitality of the discipline as well as the professional advancement of a generation of graduate students and beginning professors would be jeopardized. These concerns motivated our study, which was initiated in September 2005.

In gathering information over the past ten months from a wide variety of stakeholders—scholars, editors, publishers, leaders of research institutes, museum officials, librarians—our sense of the problem changed. We confirmed the retrenchment of publishing of monographs but found emerging publication opportunities. Growing scholarly interest in the constitution of the visual world is prompting some university presses to launch new lines incorporating art history, and the increased number of exhibition catalogues with their wide readership offers a fertile resource for the field. We also found a remarkable responsiveness among art historians to electronic communication. Yet e-publishing programs have not emerged and taken advantage of the field's rapidly growing sophistication in the use of digital images and electronic research techniques.

Traditional solutions are failing, but we do not see a crisis. In our view digital technology is opening new opportunities and posing transitional problems that are soluble. While acknowledging the continued value of monographic scholarship in print, this study aims to identify specific transition issues and points of blockage and recommends concrete measures to allow art history scholarship to flourish.

We are grateful to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation⁴ for funding the study, and we especially wish to thank Donald Waters, Suzanne Lodato, Harriet Zuckerman, Joseph Meisel, and Angelica Zander Rudenstine for their interest in the project. Their sustained commitment to art history and to confronting large-scale problems of humanities scholarship was evident throughout this study. The Mellon Foundation introduced us to Lawrence T. McGill, Director of Research and Planning at the Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies at Princeton University⁵, who served as consultant to the study and conducted the data research. His findings are summarized in this publication, and described fully in his report *The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture*⁶. We also drew on the deep expertise of Kate Wittenberg, Director of the Electronic Publishing Initiative at Columbia University⁷, in electronic publication, libraries, and university presses. Her pioneering work with Gutenberg-e⁸, another Mellon-supported venture, helped us understand the challenges and promise of electronic monographs. Eric Ramírez-Weaver, doctoral candidate

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13916/1.3/>>.

²<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arhistory/>

³<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/>

⁴<http://www.mellon.org/>

⁵<http://www.princeton.edu/~artspol/>

⁶*The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture* <<http://cnx.org/content/col10377/latest/>>

⁷<http://www.epic.columbia.edu/>

⁸<http://www.gutenberg-e.org/>

at the Institute of Fine Arts, provided crucial research assistance at several stages of the project. Fronia W. Simpson lent us her sharp editorial eye.

We owe a very special debt of gratitude to the large circle of scholars, editors, and other field leaders who gave generously of their time and shared their concerns and perspectives with us. The remarkable level of participation reflected a pervasive concern about publishing challenges in art history. After a series of meetings with scholars at different career stages and with art history editors, we convened a daylong summit of decision makers who affect policy concerning research, publication, and scholarly communication. We are indebted to the more than thirty leaders of university presses, research libraries, art history institutes, scholarly societies, art history departments, and museums for the robust and serious conversation that day, which helped shape in particular the recommendations contained in this report. The illuminating colloquium "Art History and Its Publishers" at the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute⁹ in the spring of 2006, supported by the Mellon Foundation, enriched our understanding of the editorial process. We thank Michael Ann Holly and Mark Ledbury, Director and Associate Director of Research at the Clark, and Catherine Soussloff and Ken Wissoker, external hosts of the event, for inviting us to participate. Our work was also informed by conversations with Eileen Gardiner and Ronald Musto, founding directors of the ACLS History E-Book Project¹⁰; James Shulman, Executive Director of ARTstor¹¹; and Peter Osnos, founder of the Caravan Project. Patricia Rubin generously informed us about the contents of two meetings about art history research and academic publishing that took place at the Courtauld Institute of Art in 2005 and 2006. Carol Mandel and James Neal, the visionary leaders of the NYU and Columbia library systems, respectively, gave us the benefit of their strategic thinking and insight.

Just as we were finishing our report, Rice University Press announced that it would re-launch itself as a fully electronic press with a special commitment to art history. We were delighted to find Rice willing to partner with the Council on Library and Information Resources¹² (CLIR) to publish our report electronically, with the kinds of hyper-linking, response capability, and print-on-demand options we consider vital to the success of scholarly publication on line. At Rice University Press, Chuck Henry, Chuck Bearden, and Kathi Fletcher generously steered us through the technological and legal process. We received enthusiastic support at CLIR from Susan Perry, Michael Ann Holly, Kathlin Smith, and Ann Okerson.

This study is the beginning, not the end, of our work. We are eager to take the next steps to advance scholarship in the electronic age, and we welcome your comments toward that end.

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Mariët Westermann, Institute of Fine Arts – New York University

New York City, September 2006

⁹<http://www.clarkart.edu/>

¹⁰<http://www.historyebook.org/>

¹¹<http://www.artstor.org/info/>

¹²<http://www.clir.org/>

Executive Summary¹³

Over the past two decades, the expansion of art history graduate programs and the emergence of new fields of inquiry into the visual world have resulted in steady growth in the population of scholars of art and architecture. In the same period, economic pressures on academic publishers have caused thematic shifts and numerical reductions in the publication of the types of monographs that have traditionally nurtured the discipline. Since the 1960s, such monographs, often based on dissertations, have served as the primary criterion for academic tenure and promotion in North America. These field conditions have led to considerable concern in the art historical community about the professional advancement of younger scholars and the long-term vitality of the discipline.

It should be noted, however, that several still-recent developments have given art history new alternatives for rigorous and creative publication and dialogue. The rapidly improving quality of digital images and modes of electronic publication offer expanded publishing opportunities to scholars and potential economic benefits to academic publishers, in print as well as electronic media. The remarkable and continuing growth of museum exhibitions with large audiences and handsomely produced catalogues presents a singular resource for art historians and their publishers. Thus far, these assets have not been exploited to their full potential—not because of an a priori resistance on the part of scholars, but because electronic and museum publication poses several challenges, particularly in the domains of high-quality image (re)production, copyright claims, and academic credentialing.

This report maps these circumstances of scholarly publication in the history of art and architecture and is supported by quantitative analysis of publishing and educational trends. The report makes recommendations of actions that address obstacles to vigorous scholarly communication and mobilize more optimally the special resources and instruments of the discipline, while also benefiting the wide range of fields that involve illustrated publication.

¹³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13915/1.1/>>.

Available for free at Connexions <<http://cnx.org/content/col10376/1.1>>

Primary Recommendations¹⁴

1. Organize a campaign to break down barriers to access and distribution of images, in all media and at affordable prices, for scholarly research and publication.
2. Launch electronic extensions of the scholarly journals of record (*Art Bulletin* and *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*) to take advantage of innovations in digital research and publication, to issue extended versions of articles, and to publish electronic alternatives to the printed scholarly monograph.
3. Form a consortium for the publication of art and architectural history online sponsored by the College Art Association¹⁵ and the Society of Architectural Historians¹⁶, to leverage resources, seek appropriate partners with image expertise, bundle journals in a subscription package, and eventually host third-party journals in art history and visual culture.
4. Develop the benefits of electronic publication for museum publications so that they may become even more productive sites of scholarly collaboration.

¹⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13945/1.2/>>.

¹⁵<http://www.collegeart.org/>

¹⁶<http://www.sah.org/>

Chapter 1

Dynamics of Art History Publication

1.1 Dynamics of Art History Publication: Introduction¹

Scholarly publication in art and architectural history can be mapped as a dynamic field of genres produced and consumed by different kinds of writers, publishers, buyers, and readers. The field is not stable and never has been, but, to most participants in our study, its current unpredictability appears pronounced because of a confluence of disciplinary growth, intellectual shifts, and a retrenchment in the publication of monographs. The uncertain shape of digital publications to come enhances this sense of insecurity. This part of our report describes and analyzes the current genres, participants, and trends affecting scholarly publication.

1.2 Genres of Scholarly Publication²

Scholarly publication in art history takes several forms, each with specific goals, advantages, and limitations. Their functions are well understood within the discipline, and they are reviewed here in the expectation that current pressures on monographic publication may require a rebalancing of these roles.

1.2.1 Monographs

An art historical monograph presents a tightly focused examination of a carefully framed topic, often an artist, group of artists, or a site, form, practice, or theme of artistic production within a given culture. A monograph is usually expected to offer new analytic and critical perspectives on its historical material and to sustain its arguments by detailed research, be it archival, stylistic, iconographic, technical, or socio-historical. Its structure tends to be sequential and linear, with any transcriptions of documents and technical data gathered in appendices. Ph.D. dissertations have traditionally been a primary source of monographs for academic publishers, but conversations with publishers and editors indicate that economic and intellectual imperatives toward broader themes of interdisciplinary appeal have reduced this role of dissertations in recent years.

For several decades, monographs published by North American university presses and their European counterparts have set the gold standard for promotion and tenure, not only because of the thorough research on which they are based but also because of the peer review built into the publication process. In the course of our study, the mechanisms and functions of the peer review process appeared poorly understood by scholars and variously interpreted by editors. While scholars generally think peer review is aimed at improving as well as vetting manuscripts, for publishers and editors the process serves the function of validating (or, more

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13932/1.3/>>.

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13921/1.2/>>.

rarely, rejecting) manuscripts already considered worthy of publication.³ The university press monograph continues to prevail as the primary criterion for academic advancement in North American universities and colleges, despite stresses on the system caused by the economics of academic publication in all humanities and especially art history.

1.2.2 Surveys

The survey offers a deliberately distanced perspective on a broader field of observation, with synthetic accounts of themes and arguments rather than detailed new study. Although supported by broad and deep reading and knowledge, they tend to give extended bibliographies rather than a full scholarly apparatus. Surveys often serve as textbooks and as general interest introductions to a field, and they have traditionally been the preserve of senior scholars. In recent years, however, several new series of surveying "studies" rather than textbooks have also selected their authors from a younger pool of promising scholars. When seen as critical interventions as much as textbooks, these books are now sometimes accepted as significant contributions toward tenure and promotion in their fields of study.⁴

1.2.3 Museum Publications

Art museums and their curators are major producers and disseminators of art historical scholarship. Museums offer rich opportunities specific to art history to advance research through exhibitions and publications based on individual collections and works of art. Because of their large and growing audiences, museums are often able to raise funds for abundantly illustrated, handsomely produced publications, particularly catalogues and journal issues related to exhibitions. Since the 1970s, museum publication has shifted from curatorially focused museum journals and collection catalogues to summary handbooks and exhibition-driven publications. Exhibition catalogues in recent decades have generally grown in page count and illustration program. They usually contain a section of synthetic and thematic essays written by the curator and additional experts from inside and outside the museum, and a catalogue proper of entries dedicated to the works of art on display. Full entries tend to include the kind of detailed information that sustains art historical scholarship, including measurements and information about medium, technique, condition, patronage, subject matter, style, date, provenance, exhibition history, and bibliographic record.

In the academic credentialing process, publications based on collections and exhibitions tend not to be considered as seriously as single-author monographs or peer-reviewed journal articles. As catalogues often synthesize prior scholarship, in the manner of a survey, and as their content is constrained by considerations of audience and availability of loans, questions are occasionally raised about the originality of the research or the factors demarcating the field of study. Because of the exceptionally time-constrained editorial process in museums, catalogue manuscripts are rarely subjected to effective peer review. Promotion and tenure committees are aware of these limitations. Their redress will take rethinking of the museum publication genre by art history scholars within the museum and the academy.

Part III (Section 3.1) of this report includes further thoughts about the potential of museum publications as sites of disciplinary nurture and collaboration.

1.2.4 Edited Volumes

In the past two decades, art history's methodological diversification and interdisciplinary moves have yielded increased publication of books of essays by several authors, edited by the lead author(s). A preliminary review of the titles published by eight key university presses in the field suggests that edited volumes make up a larger percentage of all titles published in art history today than was the case during the early 1990s. Perhaps as

³See Parts IV (<<http://cnx.org/content/m13994/latest/>>) and V (<<http://cnx.org/content/m13995/latest/>>) of Lawrence T. McGill's report *The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture* (<<http://cnx.org/content/col10377/latest/>>).

⁴Examples are the new Oxford History of Art, Phaidon's Art and Ideas, and the recent, now discontinued Abrams/Prentice Hall's Perspectives series; the Pelican History of Art has long carried such weight.

many as 20 percent of the art history titles published by these eight presses between 2000 and 2004 were edited volumes, compared to roughly 15 percent a decade earlier.⁵ Some of these volumes result from conference proceedings, others by commission from an academic editor. They tend to approach a particular topic or research question from a variety of viewpoints, and they thus meet the interest of academic publishers in titles that may reach cross-over audiences. Publishers often position such works as course readers or supplementary textbooks.

Nevertheless, the market for most of these books is not especially vigorous, and production values are usually kept lower than for monographs and museum publications. Peer review tends to be minimal, and usually happens at the stage of the commissioned prospectus rather than for the completed manuscript. In many cases, the genre may not be so different in scholarly content and rigor from that of the time-pressured, surveying exhibition catalogue. Not surprisingly, concerns about originality and scholarly weight of chapters in edited volumes arise in promotion and tenure review, even though the genre incorporates a wide range of scholarly activity. The editorship of volumes with contributions from leading scholars or with sharp new perspectives tends to carry greater prestige.

⁵Preliminary analysis by Lawrence T. McGill in context of this study, July 5, 2006.

1.2.5 Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

For many art historians, a peer-reviewed journal article was and is the first step from Ph.D. dissertation to monograph. Before the establishment of the university press monograph as the sine qua non for tenure in leading universities and colleges, sometime in the 1970s, a series of such articles could suffice to establish a scholar's academic credentials. It is easy to see why. The all-field journals of record in the discipline, as well as many field-specific journals, have traditionally been edited by leading scholars in the field and supported by editorial boards of similar caliber. Many have parent organizations that lend professional weight to the publication. The journals maintain high standards of multiple, double-blind peer review and academic copy-editing. Given the continuous vigor of these editorial practices, peer-reviewed journal publication could again play a much more central role in academic credentialing, as such articles do in the sciences and social sciences.

In their present formats, however, even journals with the most liberal word counts, footnote policies, and illustration programs, are unlikely to support publications of monographic scope, depth, and density. Part III (Section 3.1) of this report gives further thought to the potential of the peer-reviewed journal for the electronic publication of the kinds of extended argument, archival documentation, image programs, and referencing that sustain the discipline.

1.2.6 Electronic Publications

In principle, each of the publication genres of art history discussed so far could be issued electronically. In the sciences, and increasingly the social sciences, electronic publication has become the standard mode of scholarly communication. The humanities have been slow to follow, particularly art history and other disciplines traditionally dependent on sustained, linear argumentation that stands in an ostensive relation to illustrations. The discipline-wide journals of record do not appear in electronic form, born-digital journals are rare, and few such initiatives appear to be in the pipeline (welcome exceptions include *19th-Century Art Worldwide*, *caa.reviews*, and the Smithsonian Institution's *American Art*).

Extant electronic publications in art history and visual culture are still based on print forms, rather than fully exploiting the analytic and dialogic potential of electronic media. Such traditional forms do not communicate scholarship in a way optimally suited to the kinds of reading done well on desktop or handheld monitors. In its length and sequential form, the monograph may always be more suited to print, but, as the sciences have found, more compartmentalized and collaborative kinds of scholarship such as catalogues and documentary publications might be more useful to readers as networked publications that allow searching and non-sequential accessing of the parts.⁶ The serious image copyright issues discussed in Part II (Section 2.1) of this report partly explain art history's delayed adoption of electronic publication. Part III (Section 3.1) analyzes other factors impeding electronic publication in art history, and examines the untapped potential of the digital environment for new kinds of art historical publication that might supplement and complement, rather than fully replace, genres that may be as or more effective in print.

1.3 Participants⁷

The most crucial participants in the system of scholarly publication in art history are scholars, university presses, libraries, museums, and readers. This section introduces their various and overlapping roles, interests, and concerns; Lawrence T. McGill's report *The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture*⁸ contains fuller accounts of our private conversations and group discussions involving junior and senior scholars, publishers, and representatives of libraries and museums.

⁶This point is developed well by Clifford Lynch, "The Scholarly Monograph's Descendants" (1997), <http://www.arl.org/scomm/epub/papers/cliff.html> (<<http://www.arl.org/scomm/epub/papers/cliff.html>>).

⁷This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m13933/1.2/>>.

⁸*The State of Scholarly Publishing in the History of Art and Architecture* <<http://cnx.org/content/col10377/latest/>>

1.3.1 Junior and Senior Scholars

As the main producers and readers of art historical publications, scholars identified numerous concerns in the course of our study. Junior scholars (defined as untenured or recently tenured faculty) and senior scholars (defined as scholars who have had tenure in leading research institutions for some time) share these interests to different degrees.

Scholars consulted in our study focused on the following concerns.

1. Tensions between the requirements of scholarship and the requirements of publishers.
2. The relative values of different genres of scholarly publication, both with respect to advancing the field and with respect to tenure and promotion.
3. The costs of publication in the field of art and architectural history.
4. Understanding the challenges facing "art history publishing" in comprehensive terms and finding solutions, including more effective ways of mobilizing and accessing digital resources.

Ad 1 (list, item 1, p. 11). Scholars, particularly at the junior level, detail experiences and perceptions that academic press editors, in seeking to broaden the appeal of their titles in trans- or interdisciplinary ways, ask for shorter manuscripts and changes that may affect the scholarly contribution in undesirable ways without necessarily becoming more marketable. Junior scholars also express concerns about a lack of transparency in the process of obtaining a contract and of the functions of peer review. Senior scholars are concerned that peer review is rarely followed up effectively and that it has something of a rubber-stamp function.

Ad 2 (list, item 2, p. 11). Senior as well as junior scholars note that Ph.D. dissertations, formerly one of the major sources of monographs, have less of a chance of getting published by university presses without serious revisions of the kind described above. Some senior scholars remark, however, that dissertations are now so narrowly focused that many would not make for very good books, and some try to steer their students' dissertations in such a way that the product is effectively a book-length argument rather than an accumulation of data. All the same, scholars noted that the production and dissemination of such dissertation data remains vital to the health of the discipline. Scholars at all levels would like to ensure that the full range of dissertation research is disseminated effectively in monographic as well as other forms.

Given an apparent retrenchment in monograph publication, scholars generally wish for promotion and tenure committees to acknowledge that other genres of art historical publication may make equally distinguished and transformative contributions to the discipline. Some emerging fields appear to have fewer monograph publication opportunities available to them, and they may be driven more strongly by exhibitions or articles. Many scholars bemoan the relative devaluation in the credentialing process of the peer-reviewed article, noting its timely, cutting-edge, and thoroughly vetted character. Senior scholars recall that a series of such articles in the past constituted grounds for tenure and promotion, and that they may nurture the discipline in ways that are as essential as longer monographs. They recommend a reevaluation of the scholarly article based on a dissertation chapter. Scholars also note that museum publications inherently command the larger audiences so sought after by presses.

Ad 3 (list, item 3, p. 11). Scholars across the board are shouldering increasing costs associated with publishing monographs and journal articles. These costs are almost exclusively due to the illustration programs required in art history publication. As editors confirm, scholars bear the lion's share of the costs of image acquisitions and reproduction permission fees. Assuming a modest average of \$25 per black-and-white illustration, a book with 100 figures would cost the author \$2,500. Most illustration programs easily double that figure, as discussed in Part II (Section 2.1) of this report.

Color plates tend to command higher permission fees, and their production is significantly more costly to publishers. Scholars are often asked to contribute subventions for color illustrations, and sometimes for larger-than-average image programs. Subventions for illustrations are frequently sought from the scholars' home institutions, professional organizations, foundations, and private philanthropists. Scholars would welcome a clear guide to such opportunities.

Apart from direct costs, scholars incur opportunity costs in the time-consuming navigation of the image and permission request system. They find the complexities of copyright law opaque and the request process

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