

# Letter from the Chair and President

Summer 2010

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Of the 1,250 institutions using the ARTstor Digital Library, 195 are outside of the United States—including institutions in more than 30 countries. International collaboration is critical for any organization, but a library of cultural heritage images needs to be global in every dimension: those whom we serve; what we create; and how we collaborate:

- In the spring, we reached an agreement to collaborate with the photo agency of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN). The RMN licenses images from the national and regional museums of France, including the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Centre Georges Pompidou, and the Musée Picasso. "It will surely make an enormous difference to all scholars of French art that the RMN's collection is available in ARTstor. Nostalgia for long hours spent researching in the rue de l'Abbaye in Paris will certainly be overcome as we enjoy the privilege of gaining access to this treasure from all over the world," noted Thomas Gaeghtens, Director of the Getty Research Institute.
- ARTstor will be collaborating with the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong, which houses the world's most comprehensive collection of contemporary Asian art materials, to share 10,000 images of works by major contemporary Asian artists, as well as photographs that document international biennials, triennials, exhibitions, and art installations.
- In January, several members of the Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries—including the universities of Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne, and Bern—joined the ARTstor community as subscribers. Other recent new international participants include the University of Florence, the University of Vienna, and the University of Bristol. "Of all of our databases, I receive the most positive comments from faculty about ARTstor by far," says Frank Simon-Ritz, Director of the Library, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar.
- As we look forward to deploying Shared Shelf (the networked image management platform for local collections), some of the needed tools must be built by a global community. We will collaborate with our Shared Shelf partners and with the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University to begin creating a Built Works Registry—essentially a list of works in the built environment to facilitate standardized and efficient cataloging, which will be submitted to the Getty Cultural Object Name Authority (CONA). While seeding such a project would be only the beginning of an ongoing effort of building and editing, we know that such an effort must be global from the beginning and for this reason we have enlisted authorities such as Tom Bilson (The Courtauld Institute), Jocelyn Gibbs (Canadian Centre for Architecture), Monika Hagedorn-Saupe (Institute for Museum Research, Berlin), Irena Murray (Royal Institute of British Architects), Jan Simane (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), and James Quo-Pin Lin (National Palace Museum, Taipei) to serve on our advisory committee along with representatives of the Getty Research Institute, OCLC, The Museum of Modern Art, Society of Architectural

Historians, Art Institute of Chicago, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Harvard University.

- Teachers, scholars, and students seeking images related to cultures other than the western tradition have not had the same image and pedagogical resources as those teaching the High Renaissance or Impressionism. Our “associated images” function, launched in February 2009 and modeled after the Amazon.com recommender function, initially offered suggestions of associated images for the 1,607 images that passed high thresholds of use. That logic was helpful, but it also tended only to reinforce existing canons. Our recent expansion of the function resulted in more than 73,949 associated image groups, dramatically expanding the range of networked image associations, whether a Benin mask or a lesser known Chinese album leaf painting. Over time, the collective community of users will continue to extend and expand these new canons.

Working to aggregate content and distribute it to educational users around the world is an essential goal, but should ARTstor be doing more, by providing, for example, a locus for discussion of works or by letting users add and share bibliographical links or commentary? “Conversation,” as Kwame Anthony Appiah, writes in *Cosmopolitanism*, “doesn’t have to lead to consensus about anything, especially not values; it’s enough that it helps people get used to one another.” No doubt, such conversations spring up from being exposed to the cultures of groups and societies different from one’s own. We look forward to hearing your thoughts about whether there are particular things that we might do to foster dialogue of this kind.

With all best regards –

James Shulman, *President*

Neil Rudenstine, *Chairman of the Board*

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