

**Title:** Online art museum collections in the United States: textual, visual, and media-based information

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**Abstract**

This in-process study analyzes the publicly available information accompanying cultural objects in online art museum collections in the United States. The project examines the presentation of information (textual, visual, and media-based) about museum objects in the online setting, in order to codify and report on shared practices. The museums' fielded object records are being investigated to determine semantic commonalities, depth of available item descriptions, the adoption of controlled vocabularies, and to identify and explore further shared descriptive practices. Several fields are commonly found in the object records of the art museums examined to date. However, many semantically discrete fields are unique or found in use among only a few museums. While this suggests a lack of coherent descriptive practices among art museums, controlled vocabularies have been found among nearly all of the museums examined. As digital surrogates are important to knowledge construction, images and media accompanying the museums' collections are investigated. Still images are the primary media provided by the museums to explore their collections, with the majority providing basic tools with which to

explore these more closely. Several museums also include media content for select items, thereby producing rich cognitive experiences for users.