

## VIUS Reports 8.3

### *Notes on Database Service Demo and Discussion*

January, 20, 2003 5:30 pm

Presentation by: Carolyn Luccarelli and Henry Pisciotta of the VIUS Prototype Database Service

This meeting was not a formal focus group study, but the discussion was a useful one, so we have recorded it for consideration with our more structured focus group discussions. As part of a series of presentations by Penn State Faculty on uses of technology in the arts, Lucarelli and Pisciotta were asked to demonstrate the prototype image database service that had recently been mounted for the use of the Penn State Community. They were also asked to describe the accompanying research project. The presentation was attendant by approximately 30 people, mostly faculty of the College of Arts and Architecture. Some students and administrators also attended. These notes capture highlights of the discussion during and after the presentation. Overall, response to the new service was positive. These notes omit the general compliments and focus upon the more informative criticisms and questions.

#### **RETRIEVAL & USE:**

*Question:* Is there a way to retrieve to a specific Palazzo, specific artist name, place?

*Answer:* Yes. [This was demonstrated.]

*Question:* Can the size of the image be adjusted

*Answer:* No. Only the thumbnail and one larger display can be managed by the software. Adjustments would need to be made after downloading. For our largest size, we chose something that would work well on data projectors. A negative aspect of this is that the image is slightly larger than is displayed on many monitors, so that scrolling is sometimes required.

*Comment:* The size of images is a problem if it can't be controlled. It would be helpful if size of image was indicated. [Sometimes it is in the metadata, sometimes not.]

*Question:* Is it possible to edit or rearrange font, etc.? Save links?

*Answer:* Yes, the web page you create with the "My Favorites" tool is yours to edit if you are willing to do the HTML.

*Questions:* Do you have to have a live connection to access the images? Can images be saved on the desktop? Burned on a CD? Can we cut apart storage and presentation tools?

*Answer:* Well you can download images, and store them where you wish. But the web pages created by the "My Favorites" tool does require a connection because it is only putting a URL for the image on the page you create and store.

*Questions:* Is there a way to store or manipulate searches? Can "My Favorites be subdivided?" Can I save and manipulate different groupings?

*Answer:* No. You can build and re-sequence one set per session. The software remembers what you've done with a cookie, not by any sort of authentication. The only way to save multiple groups is to output them, perhaps using the feature that builds web pages.

*Comment:* So "My Favorites" is just a group of the whole.

*Comment:* It seems too cumbersome for a student review function.

*Question:* Who has the server?

*Answer:* Its all on our hardware. [Explanation of Luna's *Insight™*, which once required using LUNA's servers.]

*Question:* How does the power point tool improve on drop and drag?

*Answer:* Well it might not, depending on what routines you like to use. It allows you to search CONTENTdm™ from "within" Power Point and it installs the images you download into slides. It can be a nice convenience if you are a Power Point user.

*Comment:* A Boolean "not" operator would be great.

*Comment:* I'm glad to see that you are trying to find the smallest amount of metadata that will make the image useful.

*Response:* The survey work has shown that faculty who use images primarily for teaching are the least concerned with search features and the quality of the descriptions. Students are the most concerned with these matters. That's probably why slide collections supporting teaching are often accessible only by the organized sequence of the slides of the drawers – teachers often know a lot about the images they want to use for teaching and can cope with this limited form of access. So we see more extensive descriptions as desirable, but primarily serving students and perhaps researchers.

## **RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS:**

*Question:* Do we have the right to say the images may be used by anyone?

*Answer:* We have a variety of sources for the images and these come with different permitted uses. We will be adding information about which images may be used in what ways. Until then, all images are only for Penn State consumption. They may not be posted on unrestricted web sites. However, we do have a number on pictures that we may, in the future, post openly and we have a plan to do so. In fact, we have good collections of pictures from two of our faculty that all parties are eager to post for the world to use. To have some images public and others Penn-State only requires a more complicated arrangement which we hope to have ready before the end of the project.

*Question:* The Teach Act says that born digital images are not covered under fair use. Would that preclude using someone else's digital photos for teaching?

*Answer:* I've read the Teach Act, and did not clearly understand every word, but am not aware of any special restriction on born-digital still images. We could check with John Harwood or Becky Albitz, who have been working more closely with the Teach Act. We know that people are currently sharing original digital photography for teaching.

## **OTHER MATTERS:**

*Question:* Your need for a large system that can handle simultaneous users and the like is understood, but what about those of us who just need to manage a collection that we use? Can't the University identify and support a package so that each of us isn't having to re-invent the wheel?

*Answer:* That would be great. We've heard of that desire from others. It wasn't in the scope of our original project proposal, but we have been talking about broadening into that area. Our best attempt will be the peer-to-peer service. We are hoping that it can be used as a simple tool for managing personal collections. There has also been talk about building an application of some readily accessible microcomputer software (like Access or something) but I don't know if we will get there. Licensing and supporting software for Penn State is a matter for Information Technology Services to handle. We have wondered if an informal "image users group" might develop. A few years ago, a group of GIS users, from several departments, formed and they have been effective at getting attention for that area.

*Question:* Could we add all the student work in Prof. M's [name removed] classes so students could look back to previous classes of paintings?

*Answer:* The Libraries are currently trying to discern what services we can provide without great additional expense. We certainly want to feed this database, keep as "under construction" while testing it and expanding it. We are currently taking a "core" collection approach. The idea is that if we stick with "major monuments" that we will appeal to the broadest group of users. More users make the system more sustainable as a library service. Nonetheless, this is tricky. There's the problem of what to call "core." And of course, a lecturer often wants a very specific view of something, not just any image. So how do we create useful collections without squelching innovation? Possibly by opening up the system so people could put their own images in (one faculty member has 41,290 digital images). This is part of the idea of the peer-to-peer environment. [Further description of the peer-to-peer plans.]

*Question:* Can you export to Angel? [Penn State's course management software]

*Answer:* Well I don't know of any direct way to do that right now – other than downloading of using a URL to move someone directly to an image, etc. We have been working on the compatibility with Angel in a more indirect way – Angel supports a new standard for metadata (expressed in XML). CONTENT dm can export data in XML expressions. Also the peer-to-peer system is being designed to use that same new standard. So easy routines should be feasible someday.

*Question:* You can build a very useful collection here and some other institutions are building some useful collections. Is there some way to link all of these? Something like Google?

*Answer:* There is some potential to link to the contents of different databases. One important effort is a standard [the Open Archives Initiative] way of exposing the contents of databases to harvesting, which could make these database items visible to search engines. Once this gets going there is no reason it couldn't work for almost anything that gets put in a database. Of course, there are lots of images here that we don't have the rights to broadcast that widely.

Ann Copeland and Henry Pisciotta