

Bridging Knowledge Collections: Integrating the museum and library systems at the Royal Museums of Art and History (RMAH), Brussels.

Ellen Van Keer
RMAH – KULeuven
evankeer@vub.ac.be

The Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels (www.kmkg-mrah.be) are one of the 10 Federal Scientific Institutions (FSI) and among the largest museums of art and archaeology in Belgium. Thousands of art treasures and historical objects from around the globe and dating to all periods of human history are on display or kept in the storerooms. Besides its public and educational involvement, the museum engages in scientific research. A range of museum publications and a specialized research library support these activities.

In the last decade, the Belgian Science policy (www.belspo.be) has initiated a major digitization campaign in order to improve the management and the public and scientific exploitation of the Federal collections in a digital way (Mettens 2011). As an important result, the RMAH is using dedicated management software today. The objects in its ownership are catalogued in a collection management system (MuseumPlus by Zetcom), published on the museum's online collections website (www.carmentis.be) and harvested through an international domain aggregator for museums (www.europeana.eu). Library materials, on their part, are catalogued in an integrated library system (Alma by Ex-Libris/Libis), made accessible online through the library's OPAC (www.limo.be), and exported to a union catalog (www.unicat.be). Hence the RMAH is producing qualitative and interoperable museum and library metadata.

Nevertheless, as traditionally, the museum and library systems have been operating completely independently so far. They make use of a separate set of domain-specific metadata standards that create "silos" of information (Ellings & Waibel 2007). However, there is a fundamental semantic overlap between the materials and content contained in them. Moreover, this overlap is not limited to the general thematic level (e.g. books and objects in relation with ancient Egyptian culture) but goes all the way down to the individual item-level (e.g. object X is discussed on page Y in book Z). This

is especially so in the case of museum libraries which have the specific task of collecting the (scientific) documentation on the museum objects.

In line with the growing movement towards convergence in the heritage sector (Zorich e.a. 2008), achieved particularly in a digital way (Erway & Prescott 2010), the project "Bridging Knowledge Collections" was designed to build comprehensive integrations between the existing management systems with related content at the RMAH. More specifically, the project has investigated and implemented a two-way scenario linking objects in the museum system and documents in the library system (Figs. 1-2). Two new tools were introduced, one for the input of scholarly object bibliography in the museum system that links to corresponding records in the library system, and one for harvesting, indexing and enriching document records with linked object records in the library system. The pilot focused on the Federal glyptic collections, which allowed further enrichment with newly created materials in other projects, especially full-text objects (Orfeo) and 3D images (Glypcol). Hence, management systems can evolve into research tools.

Carmentis

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Result

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Collection	Collection Near East
Research projects	Glypcol
Inventory number	O.00181
Object name	Tablet
Title	Cuneiform tablet with cylinder seal impression
Culture	Mesopotamia
Geography	Place of production: Near and Middle East (Asia) Place of discovery: Drehem (Puzrish-Dagan) (Asia > Near and Middle East > Iraq > Al-Qadisiya (governorate))
Date	-2094 / -2047
Period	Neo-Sumerian-Ur III (Near East and Iran > Bronze Age (Near East and Iran) > Early Bronze Age)
Material	Terra cotta (Earth > Clay > Ceramics > Earthenware)
Dimensions	Height: 8,6 cm, Width: 4,7 cm, Depth: 2,1 cm
Owner	Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire / Koninklijke Musea voor Kunst en Geschiedenis
Permalink	<input type="text" value="http://carmentis.kmkg-mrah.be/eMuseumPlus?service"/>

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Description
References
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[Speleers 1917, Catalogue des intailles et empreintes orientales du Cinquanteaire, p. 85, 138-139, pl. 181](#)
[Speleers 1925, Recueil des inscriptions de l'Asie Antérieure des MRAH, no. 132](#)
[Speleers 1937, Sumer et Assour au pays des Hittites, p. 79-80, fig. 5](#)
[Limet 1976, Textes sumeriens de la IIIe Dynastie d'Ur, p. 49](#)

Figure 1: Record of a cuneiform tablet in the online museum catalog Carmentis, enriched with related bibliography



Article

- Sumer et Assour au pays des Hittites**
Speleers, Louis
In: Bulletin des Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire, 9(1937)4 ; p. 74-80
Bruxelles Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire 1937
● **Online access. The library also has physical copies.**

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Cuneiform tablet with
cylinder seal
impression



Cuneiform tablet with
sealed envelope

Figure 2: Record of a publication in the online library catalog LIMO, enriched with related museum objects

References

- Ellings, M. and Waibel, G. (2007) "Metadata for All: Descriptive Standards and Metadata Sharing across Libraries, Archives and Museums", *First Monday* 12/3 http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue12_3/ellings/index.html
- Prescott, L. and Erway, R. (2010) "Single Search: the quest for the holy grail", OCLC Research Report <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2011/2011-17.pdf>
- Mettens, Ph. (2011) "Het digitaliseringsplan voor de Federale Wetenschappelijke Instellingen en het Koninklijk Belgisch Filmarchief", *ABB* 82, p. 15-30.
- Zorich, D., Waibel, G. and Erway, R. (2008) "Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration Among Libraries, Archives and Museums", OCLC Research report www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2008/2008-05.pdf