

Event-based object identification

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In March 2015 PACKED vzw started the ‘Event-based object identification’ project, exploring how information in collection management systems about the lifecycle of artworks can be transformed into rich machine-readable data suitable for digital humanities research. This project is part of a series projects funded by the Departement Culture, Youth, Sports and Media of the Flemish Government on the practical implementation of concepts such as *persistent identification*, *Open Data* and *Semantic Web* in the cultural heritage sector.

Museums record information about the lifecycle of an artwork, which is relevant for collection management purposes, i.c. acquisitions, loans, restorations etc. Information about production, ownership, restoration and exposition is easily accessible for museum staff through the collection management system, but hardly for any external users. This information however provides a rich context around an artwork that may provoke new ideas and possibilities for digital humanities research. Museums should ask themselves how they could unlock this potential.

Initiatives such as CIDOC-CRM and LIDO introduced the concept of the ‘*event*’ in museum documentation practice as an instrument to identify and cluster factual information about the life of an artwork. *Events* are generic containers that reveal what happened at a particular time and place to a work of art.

In practice, information on an event in a life of an artwork lies deeply embedded in collection management oriented data structures, often spread over different software systems. The current project will look into the possibilities for extracting this information from these data structures and systems and find a sustainable way to make it available for research.

Creating large sets of events, related to one or a group of artworks, may introduce new research perspectives that benefit from the rich spatial and temporal dimensions of events as well as the networks of people that are linked to these events.

The project will work with rich contextual data of 35.000 artworks throughout the collections of seven Flemish art museums and aims at finding concrete solutions how these museums can use this data to nurture the research community.

During DHBenelux 2016 the first results of this project will be presented:

- What is the influence of using persistent URI's to identify data about artworks?
(presentation of the results of the previous 'Persistent identification' (2013- 2104) project as a starting point of this project)
- Where do museums store data about events and how can it be extracted and reused?
- How should events and data about events be identified online? Which external authorities should be used to identify when?where?who? data about events?
- What visualisations and research opportunities will be possible after the normalisation of data about events?