

## Exhibition Data, Public Art Institutions, and Data Governance

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Art institutions not only preserve and conserve objects and archival materials but also undertake the crucial task of digitizing and disseminating information online. However, this endeavour is intricately entwined with copyright issues, posing challenges when dealing with images and other cultural data. Despite these obstacles, art institutions generate valuable information internally, adding layers of complexity to the study of the cultural landscape. This includes updates on conservation procedures, discoveries in object provenance, and modifications to object labels reflecting shifts in mentality or new historical findings. While this information resides within the museum's internal database, its accessibility online remains limited.

Furthermore, art institutions produce knowledge through the creation of exhibitions, which serve as significant platforms for promoting and recontextualizing their permanent collections. Some exhibitions garner immense popularity, such as the Vermeer retrospective organized by the Rijksmuseum in 2023, drawing sold-out crowds months in advance. Beyond attracting public interest, exhibitions play a pivotal role in introducing new concepts, narratives, and new combinations and understanding of artistic objects from diverse styles and artists. This paper contributes to our evolving understanding of the field, which has been shaped by various projects focusing on exhibitions since 2015. Our data collection methods encompassed both manual and automated approaches, yet despite our efforts, the persistent lack of structure and consistency in publishing and sharing exhibition information online has remained a recurring challenge. Throughout our nine-year engagement in the exhibition domain, we've noted minimal evolution in online publishing practices [1], regardless of significant advancements in the development of ontological models for exhibitions geared towards graph databases. Additionally, there has been a clear call for the adoption of Linked Open Data (LOD) standards in disseminating cultural information. Despite the existence of successful projects that prioritize exhibition data (Exhibitium[2], BasArt[3], DoME[4]), there has been little discernible impact on the actual practices of data sharing within art institutions. Hence, this paper addresses two main points: firstly, it examines the sharing practices within public art institutions, and secondly, it explores how this information deficit impacts the study of exhibitions.

This research conducts a state-of-the-art analysis of how public institutions share and present exhibition information online, aiming to dismantle silos in the study of exhibitions. While exhibition catalogues serve as the primary accessible resource, further information often necessitates direct communication with organizing institutions to obtain supplementary materials like exhibition checklists. However, the completeness of online exhibition information provided by most art institutions' websites is often lacking. This paper scrutinizes the practices of public art institutions in sharing exhibition information and traces the evolution of this dissemination process to the present day. Although the majority of the analyzed exhibition corpus focuses on Spain, we have also included some international public institutions as part of the corpus analysed. We chose to analyze public institutions exclusively because their generated information should be easily accessible and shared to uphold transparency and strive for equitable access to information. Additionally, selecting public institutions was motivated by the fact that some entities within our analyzed sample have previously collaborated with private organizations like Google Arts and Culture. Despite the lack of accessibility to their data on their own websites, the information shared with platforms like Google Arts and Culture remains accessible through them.

In this study, we analyzed 100 public art institutions using consistent parameters to evaluate the types of metadata and methods of information dissemination. Our examination encompassed fundamental details such as exhibition titles, dates, locations, and brief descriptions, as well as more specific metadata concerning exhibited artists' names and objects. Furthermore, we investigated the inclusion of additional resources in the information, such as supplementary texts, images, educational materials, videos, and audio recordings.

Initial findings indicate a lack of logical consistency in the data-sharing practices of public art institutions. This inconsistency may be attributed to shifts in institutional management and changes in mission and vision under different directors. However, it is intriguing to observe varying patterns across different examples, with some periods characterized by extensive publication of exhibition information, while in the same institutions later in time, the information online about exhibitions is scarce. Of particular interest is the tendency to selectively highlight a few popular artists, thereby perpetuating their prominence over others featured in the same exhibition. Similarly, additional materials often consist of only a few images of exhibited objects, reinforcing the popularity of certain pieces and using them to attract visitors. This research underscores the importance of establishing transparent practices for the creation and seamless publication of data by public institutions. Such transparency serves as a vital component that should be integrated into institutional workflows.

## References

[1]Rodríguez-Ortega, N., & Cruces Rodríguez, A. (2019). Development of technological ecosystems for cultural analysis: The case of Expofinder system and art exhibitions. *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities*, 34(2), 423-448.

[2]<https://exhibitium.es/home/>

[3]<https://artlas.huma-num.fr/en/artlas-bases-de-donnees-en-acces-public/>

[4]<https://exhibitions.univie.ac.at/>