Global Consortium Forms to Standardize and Improve Sharing and Displaying of Image-based Scholarly Resources on the Web

(NEW HAVEN) - Leaders from eleven research libraries, national libraries, and nonprofit image repositories met at Oxford University to form the International Image Interoperability Framework Consortium. Access to image-based resources is fundamental to research, scholarship and the transmission of cultural knowledge. Until now, much of the Internet's image-based resources have been locked up in silos, with access restricted to custom-built applications. The International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) supports uniform display of images of books, maps, scrolls, manuscripts, musical scores and archival material from participating institutions for display, manipulation, measurement and annotation by scholars and students working individually or in groups around the world.

The IIIF initiative was conceived on the back of a napkin at a Cuban restaurant in Palo Alto, California at a dinner of technologists from the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, the British Library and Stanford University Libraries. Eleven institutions committed resources and officially formed the International Image Interoperability Framework Consortium (IIIF-C), which will oversee the ongoing development of the IIIF technology as well as the growth of the community.

Joining Oxford, the British Library and Stanford as part of the IIIF-C are Artstor, Die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (The Bavarian State Library), Cornell University, La Bibliothèque nationale de France (The National Library of France), Nasjonalbiblioteket (The National Library of Norway), Princeton University Library, Wellcome Trust and the Yale University (Yale Center for British Art, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library).

"We are honored to be included as a partner in this global initiative which will increase access to international resources for art historical research. The Center has long been dedicated to open access to our collections, a principle established by our founder Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929). We are delighted to continue to adhere to this mission into the twenty-first century, using the latest IIIF technology. Since research requires not only adapting to changing technologies but also new perspectives and efforts in collaboration, we resoundingly support the consortium's leading role in advancing scholarship in such a meaningful way," said Amy Meyers, Director of the Yale Center for British Art.

(Top image: IIIF Core Founding Members; Bottom image: (from left to right) Emmanuelle Delmas-Glass, Yale Center For British Art; Michael Appleby, Yale Central ITS, and E.C.Schroeder, Yale University Beinecke Library.)

The IIIF-C aims to reduce inefficiency and needless redundancy born from incompatibility in the current image delivery ecosystem. The framework includes two application program interfaces (APIs). The Image API provides access to the image content and technical descriptions. The Presentation API gives just enough structural and descriptive information about the image's context to appropriately render it in an arbitrary, web-based, viewing environment.

While IIIF's origins are in libraries, the community is rapidly expanding to include museums, archives and image services of all types, creating new opportunities for exchange and collaboration across sectors. In addition to the founding IIIF-C members, 20 other institutions are contributing to discussions on specifications for interoperability and providing both open source and commercial implementations of the APIs currently available.

By adopting the IIIF and becoming part of the community, institutions gain access to well supported and sustainable technologies, and enrich scholarly use of their materials.

IIIF

The IIIF is driven by a group of research libraries, national libraries, and nonprofit image repositories committed to opening access to cherished image resources. IIIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) has the following goals: to give scholars an unprecedented level of uniform and rich access to image-based resources hosted around the world; to define a set of common application programming interfaces that support interoperability between image repositories; to develop, cultivate and document shared technologies, such as image servers and web clients that provide a world-class user experience in viewing, comparing, manipulating and annotating images. For more information, visit http://iiif.io.

Yale Center for British Art

The Yale Center for British Art houses the largest collection of British art outside the United Kingdom. Presented to the university by Paul Mellon (Yale College, Class of 1929), the collection reflects the development of British art and culture from the Elizabethan period onward. Visit the Center online at britishart.yale.edu.

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