

From Archive to Interface: Participatory Methods for Digital Catalogue Raisonnés

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This presentation examines how participatory design methodologies can transform archival art documentation into accessible digital interfaces, drawing from my interdisciplinary doctoral research and the ongoing Ted Stamm Catalogue Raisonné (TSCR) project. Positioning digital catalogue raisonnés (CRs) at the intersection of art history, digital humanities (DH), design, textual studies, and this research discusses the connection between archival materials and Art Scholarly Databases (ASD).

Building on Bearman's ASD concept as "information sources containing art historical data and imagery" and incorporating Drucker's DH theories on democratisation and shared sustainable resources, this work advances participatory approaches to digital art documentation. Bearman discusses "Considerations in the Design of Art Scholarly Databases" (1988) established ASD as a repository for collectors, conservators, curators, historians, researchers, and GLAMs, yet their effectiveness depends on collective resources for successful CR projects.

Digital CRs function as authentication, documentation, and contextualisation tools for artists' oeuvres or specific series. Despite substantial growth (3,750 published CRs; 371 in development, IFAR), issues of public accessibility, technical obsolescence, and sustainable preservation persist when traditional top-down development approaches dominate ASD integration.

This research investigates:

- How can participatory design methods advance Bearman's ASD framework and connect the archive-to-interface transformation to catalogue raisonné and their resources?
- What collaborative frameworks emerge when diverse stakeholder communities actively inform shared scholarly database development?

Using the TSCR as a case study, the presentation demonstrates:

- Collaborative ASD methodology: Action research with user communities, contextual design, and stakeholder involving estates, archives, GLAMs, and technical partners
- Archive-to-interface translation: Transforming ephemera, correspondence, and documentation into coherent digital narratives through UI/UX/GUI design
- Sustainable participation: Building long-term collaborative workflows that honor archival integrity while embracing contemporary DH practices and ASD standards

By sharing implementation successes and challenges, this presentation offers replicable methodologies for CR developers, GLAM professionals, and DH practitioners creating collaborative cultural heritage infrastructure through participatory ASD development.