VRA Core Categories Version 2.0

The Core Categories for Visual Resources, Version 2.0 was released as a web document on the VRA website in October 1997. A print publication, which will include a report of the Visual Resources Records Online project, is forthcoming in 1998. Following is a summary of the major differences between version 1.0 and version 2.0.

NEW STRUCTURE

Version 1.0 borrowed heavily from the CDWA for category definitions and terminology recommendations. Although Version 1.0 included architecture among its examples of object types, the concept of the object was nevertheless somewhat dominated by CDWA's definitions. Version 2.0 expands the concept to include ephemera and non-art objects and replaces the word object with the word work. A work is defined as any physical entity or event that exists or has existed at some time in the past that may be captured in physical form as a visual document. In addition to art and traditional museum artifacts, this definition includes events, architecture, and any objects or structures from material, popular and folk culture.

The concept of the surrogate implied a visual "stand in" for an original object. In keeping with the expanded concept of the work, this concept has been expanded as well to include any type of image documentation, and the term surrogate has been replaced with visual document. Version 2.0 places a greater emphasis on the visual document with a noticeably expanded set of categories and a separate numbering system.

GUIDELINES

Completely new in Version 2.0 is the addition of guidelines for each category. While the guidelines do not attempt to prescribe specific rules for data content, they do address some of the practical issues of application. For example, the guidelines for the category "Measurements" lists types of measurements and the way they might be expressed. Likewise, the guidelines for the "Date" category discusses a number of ways time can be indicated and recommends the use of published guidelines such as those found in the Guide to Indexing and Cataloging with the Art and Architecture Thesaurus.

CATEGORIES - Refined, restructured, & qualified.

The "Site" category in Version 1.0 was used for both the original site and the current site. Version 2.0 divides the site concept into two separate categories, one for the ³Current Site² and one for the "Original Site".

The "Image Type" category in Version 1.0 was used to describe both the image type and the image format. Version 2.0 contains two separate categories, "Visual Document Type" and "Visual Document Format".

Two separate categories in Version 1.0 -- "Nationality" and "Culture" -- have now been merged into a single category and redefined to apply only to the work. Version 2.0 recommends that nationality and culture information relating specifically to named creators be recorded in an auxiliary artist authority file.

The "Larger Entity" category in Version 1.0 has been subsumed by a new "Related Works" category in Version 2.0.

Other new categories added to Version 2.0 include: "Styles/Periods/Groups/Movements" , "Visual Document Measurements", "Visual Document Date", and "Visual Document Subject".

Issues that were particularly knotty were those that bordered on questions of record structure and data content rules -- areas that the committee decided were outside of the scope of the Core. Among the recommendations from the Version 1.0 evaluation was one to add subcategories or qualifiers, but doing so seemed to come precariously close to recommending a fielded structure. Instead the committee opted to include two categories that function as qualifiers for other categories - "Relationship Type" that can be used to qualify "Related Work", and "Role" that can be used to distinguish the contribution made by the "Creator" to the work.