Project Update: Project CHIO: Cultural Heritage Information Online

CIMI: Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information

The CIMI Consortium recently received a TIIAP grant of $158,150 to support Cultural Heritage Information Online (CHIO). The project will create a database of multimedia folk art and standards and formats for representing information such as text, images, and publications.

Project Description

Developments in the networking of information make it possible to envision a day when researchers in the humanities will have easy-to-use electronic access to text, images, and sound-available not just from libraries but also from museums, archives, and private collections throughout the world. Many challenges remain to be tackled before such comprehensive access will be possible. Foremost among them is the need for community standards, both for structuring the information and for making it accessible. The Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information (CIMI) has endorsed broad general standards for both of these needs in the CIMI Standards Framework published by the Museum Computer Network (MCN). The CIMI Consortium will now demonstrate how these standards can be applied to museum information through Project CHIO, Cultural Heritage Information Online.

CHIO will demonstrate solutions to the difficulties in achieving online access to information held in textual databases and imagebases independent of the hardware and software used to store the data or search for it. The project will use a resource of approximately 10,000 records on the theme of folk art. Created in the CHIO Structure phase, the folk art information consists of databases of museum object records, full texts, and bibliographic records, along with imagebases and online tools such as the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) and ULAN (Union List of Artist Names) contributed by CIMI members. By implementing the Z39.50 standard, CHIO Access will demonstrate the ability to use many local user systems to search and retrieve information from each of these databases singly and concurrently from two or more. The strength of Project CHIO is in standards. If standards are not developed and put into practice soon, institutions run the risk of wasting money and considerable effort on developing important resources that can never be shared in a networked environment.

About The CIMI Consortium

The CIMI Consortium is a group of 14 museums, corporations and museum organizations who have agreed to work cooperatively to solve problems relating to the interchange of museum information.

The members of the CIMI Consortium are:

Museum Computer Network(MCN)   Canadian Heritage
Information Network (CHIN)   Research Libraries Group
(RLG)   Getty Art History Information Program (AHIP)
The Smithsonian Institution/National Museum of American Art
National Gallery of Art, Washington   University of
California Berkeley, Museum Informatics Project   The
University of California Division of Library Automation,
RAMA Consortium (consisting of the Ashmolean, the Museon,
the Musee d'Orsay, the Prado, the Pergamon, the Goulandris
Foundation of Cycladic Art, the Museo Archeologico
Nacional,   and the Uffizi)   Eastman Kodak
Company   Coalition for Networked Information (CNI)
Canadian Museum of Civilization   Continuum Productions
Corporation   The Museum Documentation Association
The Victoria and Albert Museum

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