

# The American Arts and Letters Network

## Project Description

The American Arts and Letters Network (AALN) is conceived as a sophisticated online directory that both elucidates and allows access to digital information in the arts and humanities considered integral to all levels teaching, scholarship, and learning. It will give any campus information network a ready-made, broad gauge, multi-disciplinary resource in these fields. The AALN will be constructed as a Homepage on the World Wide Web, using MOSAIC and html linkages to produce an easily understood and navigatable array of resources and information.

The AALN project is undertaken by Vassar College with the collaboration of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Coalition for Networked Information, and will be housed on a computer server operated and maintained at the College. The categories of information that will be linked by AALN include full text databases in the U.S. (examples include ARTFL, The Dante Project, The Einstein Papers, and databases dedicated to Wittgenstein, Schiller, Chaucer, Goethe, and C.S. Peirce); information pertaining to the physical centers for humanities and arts resources, including a directory of key personnel, a description of the mission and goals of each center, as well as a listing of its resources; lists and descriptions of image databases (e.g. museums, schools, and libraries); software used for teaching that can be legally shared without costs (e.g., the Software Exchange Initiative (SEI)); projects ongoing that utilize information technology in humanities and arts; electronic journals; locations of full text out of print books; multimedia and hypertext programs that support humanities and arts; extensive lists of electronic discussion groups and listserves; alliances, coalitions, scholarly societies, and organizations that support technology in the arts and humanities; and selected online conference proceedings.

## Purpose of the AALN Project

The AALN is predicated on the understanding that there is currently no reliable means by which to know of, utilize, or evaluate the tremendous variety of electronic tools and resources in the humanities and arts. The absence of a widely accessible locator for these resources inhibits planning, limits discussion about technology and its implications for the arts and humanities, and encourages redundancy. A considerable, multifaceted network of information logically arranged and easily accessible on the WWW would help to instill nationally: a new realization of what actually exists in the realm of digital support for the humanities and arts; a more informed understanding of the potential of

these resources for teaching and learning; improvement in communication among scholars, teachers, and students in the humanities, history, art history, and other related fields of inquiry; capitalization of the initiatives of those who early on adopted technology in their teaching and research, while making available established paradigms for new projects to build upon.

More generally, the AALN can be extrapolated as an arena for convergence. Those planning to construct digital libraries can formulate their projects on the success of existing ones. Standards, by virtue of a very large collection of existing datasets on this network, will most likely evolve through widespread communication among the producers of information.

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