

NINCH & Museums: Better Serving the Community

Tuesday, July 23, 2002;
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Washington, DC

Meeting Report

Participants:

Rachel Allen, *Deputy Director, Smithsonian American Art Museum*
Roger Bruce, *Director of Interpretation, George Eastman House: International Museum of Photography & Film*
Susan Chun, *General Manager for Electronic Information Planning, The Metropolitan Museum of Art*
Steve Dietz, *Curator, New Media, Walker Art Center*
Ken Hamma, *Assistant Director for Collections Information, J. Paul Getty Museum; Special Advisor to the President for Information Technology, J. Paul Getty Trust*
Kim Igoe, *Vice President, Policies and Programs, American Association of Museums*
Dawn M. Leaf, *Director of System Architecture & Product Assurance, Office of the Chief Technology Officer, Smithsonian Institution*
Alan Newman, *Director of Imaging, Art Institute of Chicago*
Steven Peltzman, *Chief Information Officer, Museum of Modern Art*
Leonard Steinbach, *Chief Information Officer, Cleveland Museum of Art; President, Museum Computer Network*

All participants want it to be clear that their statements below are their own and are not necessarily representative of their institutions

A. INTRODUCTION

As part of a review of how NINCH was serving its different sector-based constituencies and how it could refine its role, it is organizing a series of small "think-tank" meetings. The first was designed for museums and was hosted by the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

Initial questions (with suggested glosses) that the group was asked to consider included:

1. **What are the most pressing issues and how can NINCH help?**
How does NINCH define its sphere of interest; how does it uniquely provide value?
2. **What emerging technologies have the potential to transform museums and the appreciation of museum holdings?**
Given overall museum reluctance to implement digital technology, what role does (or could) NINCH play with museum technology? Should we be more concerned with technology or museum issues?

3. **What kind of connections with other communities or expertise would help you move forward?**

How does/can NINCH discover and define the areas of common interest among museums, libraries, the arts, scholarly societies and others that I as a typical museum professional don't have the time to pay attention to?

4. **What are topics of interest that you often think about for which there is no forum for wider expression and sharing of ideas?**

What does/could NINCH deliver to me on key topics that I don't have time to follow myself? And if NINCH doesn't do it, could NINCH help bring something into existence that did?

5. **What new ground could we break at this meeting (and within NINCH)?**

As new ground is being broken daily within cultural heritage organizations, how does NINCH keep me in touch with what really matters - not with everything in an uncurated forum, but with what really matters?

B. SUMMARY

David Green stated that the goal for the day was to outline how NINCH could most appropriately serve museums' needs in the digital arena. In sketching NINCH's history, he emphasized its initial focus on "advocacy," the specifics of which were then unpacked and questioned once NINCH got down to business. Programs were developed around the themes of information sharing, toolkit production (such as the forthcoming NINCH Guide to Good Practice) and charting future environments.

Initial presentations by participants focused on several areas. One was the need for rethinking institutional infrastructure, especially for integrated digital production. Many spoke of the need to develop specialized digital tools for the production and management of digital assets, though again there was insufficient institutional recognition of the need for the design of the infrastructure that would make that development possible. New staffing models were required, along with reorganizing current departments and cross training staff. There was great interest in seeing other institutions' new job descriptions as indicators of departmental readjustment. Many expenses in, for example, digital imaging, technical infrastructure, or new means of interpretation need to be recognized as strategic investments that would yield later rewards and cost savings.

Alan Newman spoke not only of the internal revolution at the Art Institute of Chicago in image production and educational resources brought about through digital technology, but also the anticipated revolution in sharing data with other institutions, through, for example, inter-institutional color management in collaborative publications.

Several spoke on the potential of broadband: for combining audio, text and images on handhelds for museum visitors, and, via Internet2, in developing immersive virtual reality, tele-presence and advanced distance-learning opportunities. As one participant put it, "museums of the future will be irrelevant without the appropriate embrace of new digital infrastructure."

Communication with the wider community was a major interest. Kim Igoe reported on the Museum and Community Initiative of the American Association of Museums and cited several relevant questions, such as “how can technology put museums in the center of the communities of the future?” Steinbach spoke of Cleveland’s interactive distance-learning project with community institutions, using broadband multicast, which demonstrated how experimenting with the Internet can successfully extend museums’ assets in productive engagement with local communities. And for Ken Hamma, the key issues were not about technology but rather how to reach, connect with and retain the attention of (local) communities. Technology should be refigured as an important tool in serving the museum’s core mission in reaching the community. He was especially interested in the implications of letting museum-held materials “out of the box” and into digital space.

Chun said we needed to know more about how visitors were using digital images: what and how much did they want to know? Newman thought the ultimate goal of museums on the web was to draw more visitors into the museum through the use of technology. Steinbach reminded us that technology should never obstruct but always enhance the communion between visitor and art object: technology should assist in our “being profound.”

Steinbach reaffirmed Green’s sense that NINCH did need to work at a high level, adding that it should continue to be a catalyst, a resource and a coordinator. Others agreed, adding that NINCH was most useful at the higher level, looking out across the sectors and a broad array of issues, rather than in assisting in developing certain tools that museums might need. It should work as an advocate by publishing white papers and independent studies or mini-reports. Often within institutions there is a need for an external authority to say “this is the road you need to travel and here is the research to prove this.”

Susan Chun felt that NINCH was unique in its operation and thought the high-level perspective was essential; the community at large needed to understand how the pieces fit together (or could fit together). Roger Bruce asked whether any other organization expresses the relationship that libraries, archives, and museums need to have with one another. Chun emphasized that discussions such as this one should include more curators and educators and should reach beyond art museums.

Overall, information exchange was seen as the core activity of NINCH and participants encouraged the development of issue briefs, (packaged news and issue summaries) and policy recommendations. The value of the NINCH Copyright Town Meetings was generally and widely applauded, though further practical guidance was called for.

C. FULL REPORT

1. Introduction: NINCH’s Current Program

Welcoming participants and thanking the Smithsonian American Art Museum for hosting the meeting, David Green stated the meeting’s principle objective was to outline new NINCH program areas, or sharpen existing ones, in order to better and more appropriately serve museums’ needs in the digital arena, given the multi-sector approach that NINCH was bound to have.

After participants introduced themselves, Green reviewed the history of NINCH's development and the coverage of current programs. Rooted in the cultural community's response to the Clinton Administration's 1993 white paper on the creation of a National Information Infrastructure, there was early emphasis on advocacy as a keynote of NINCH's activity: advocacy within and outside the community for providing rich electronic access to our cultural heritage and identifying the issues and challenges in making this possible; and for demonstrating the potential of digital technology to transform both the public's experience of cultural heritage and research and teaching in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

After NINCH started operations in 1996, it was unclear within the community what the exact external advocacy message should be, especially to Government, and NINCH focused on discovering what the chief issues and needs were in educating the community. Information sharing was a key component of NINCH's initial program to which were added programs preparing tools for producing networked cultural heritage (principally the forthcoming Guide to Good Practice) and investigating conditions needed for future production (from an Intellectual Property Action Agenda to a broad Computer Science and the Humanities initiative working with the National Academies).

To a question about how programs were initiated and assessed, Green responded that there had been two membership surveys to identify issues. Individual copyright town meetings had evaluation forms; the Guide would be formally evaluated and would invite online feedback. The current meeting was designed as one of a series that would review NINCH's overall programming and how it was meeting the needs of its constituency. This in turn would be part of a broader environmental review that NINCH is planning to conduct, pending funding. That would review even more broadly the current needs of the arts and cultural community in networking cultural resources.

2. Presentations

Roger Bruce: the MESL Experience

Roger Bruce spoke of his experience in the Getty-sponsored Museum Educational Site Licensing project (MESL). Working with university partners, much of this experience felt as if it were a remedial exercise for museums, which seemed far below universities on the digital learning curve. He felt that NINCH had been a "listening evangelist" in the subsequent years. Now, NINCH could assist with building understanding and good working relationships between museums and universities in the creation and use of digital collections.

Many meeting participants are partners in AMICO, one of the two offshoots of MESL. While AMICO never promised financial returns, the business model of the Museum Digital Licensing Collective (MDLC) did. However, dependent on investment and grants, MDLC never got off the ground. There was discussion about the value of the annual contribution/subscription to consortial groups such as AMICO and NINCH and whether or not one could prioritize them.

Susan Chun: Funding Infrastructure and Tools

Susan spoke about Electronic Publishing for Institutional Content (EPIC), a Metropolitan Museum project she thought was a case study for a wider problem: how to publish on the web what was already published in other formats. In the Met's case, there are some 10,000 objects from book projects, exhibitions, etc., ready-to-go in Quark format. This material represents years of knowledge that should be widely available, but it's hard to sell to administration because it's not fundable. It would take \$150,000 to convert it, including the development of a tool that could synchronize it with already digitized material. Other institutions could also use the same system. Despite discussions with other major institutions, it has proved impossible to find the money for this. How does one move large production projects like this out of the "project" realm and into the realm of regular production?

So this is also an infrastructure problem: essential infrastructure is needed but it's only supplied piece-by-piece through projects: essentially it's taxing projects to support infrastructure development. There's no institutional recognition of a need for an integrated digital production infrastructure.

It's also a problem of finding funding for tool development, which couldn't get into operational budgets. Chun wanted the museum community to develop the tool; what she worried about was that a software company would see the opportunity and develop a proprietary product with all the restrictions that would go along with it.

But institutions mostly don't have a staffing model that recognizes what is needed to carry it through: even if you get the money there's no-one to run it. Alan Newman spoke of the critical need to tear down the walls and to cross-train staff within departments (and generally to make everyone twice as useful). Many recognized the current dysfunctional "model" for digital production, of adding new responsibilities: more work for existing staff with no new staff positions created. For example, adding robust web site capabilities and managing this internally with existing resources increases staff overhead to Publications, Education, Graphics and Imaging Departments without the needed support.

As recognized in the NINCH/CLIR conference on "New Models" there is a real interest and need in seeing other institutions' new job descriptions both as indicators of departmental readjustment and as actual models of new staff positions

Roger Bruce responded to Susan Chun's analysis with his own. Eastman House has an ongoing project to link all the texts and photographs in the collection, essentially re-purposing material in order to create ways to browse through images and linked documents. The texts often carry the linking information for the images: it's an "affiliated text" project – but it's also seen as a project rather than as a necessary and critical way of reorganizing the collection.

Leonard Steinbach commented on budget issues: on how many museums don't know the difference between investment and expense and of the importance of establishing capital budgeting. Rather than go the project-by-project route he had tried the "initiative" route in which projects were linked via, say, digital imaging. But there are new budgeting models that should be shared.

Steinbach also commented that museums often fail to differentiate between investment and expense. For example, they rarely realize that long term benefits can accrue from investment in digital imaging, technical infrastructure, or new means of interpretation. These benefits can include greater effectiveness in achieving mission and keeping staff at the top of the game, as well as long-term cost saving. Research and Development is still not as appreciated as it could be. He thought museums should recognize the importance of an overall portfolio approach to budgeting, in which not every project needs to have great return as long as the overall portfolio return is acceptable. Museums, tending to be risk averse, also rarely have great, profound successes.

Alan Newman: Cost-Effective Image Publication

Alan Newman spoke about the highlights of the Art Institute of Chicago's (AIC) resource production and distribution. First he spoke about the shift in image production from "Print by Speculation" to Print on Demand, using centralized color management and a small network of \$2,000 laser printers. The Imaging Department now prints for users very high quality color laser prints from digital files, costing 50¢-\$1.00, replacing \$6 monochrome prints from negatives and wet darkrooms. In the fall the AIC will implement an enterprise image collection manager that will allow users to print through the network to a central Canon Laser copier and retrieve their own prints at even lower prices.

He also spoke of the Institute's intention to reorganize its web educational resources: from static web pages produced for specific projects, collections, exhibitions, etc., to one organized as a media asset manager (collection information, still images, video) and updated dynamically. Resources will also be able to respond to different kinds of requests: simple or advanced queries, visual queries, teacher training aids, etc.). All data objects describing the permanent collection will be controlled by the AIC's new image-based collection database, CITI III.

He also spoke of the need to be able to communicate and share data with other institutions. The Institute is sharing pre-press digital files for exhibitions or catalogs produced by others. As museums are increasingly doing their own digital color management and color separations, they could now also do inter-institutional color management to ensure color authenticity and consistency.

The AIC wishes to develop wireless audio guides for visitors to its permanent collection. Study is needed to see if this will evolve into image/text devices as well. The Institute is also a partner in a broadband initiative called the Illinois Century Network, (ICN), a telecommunications backbone providing high speed access to data, video, and audio communication in schools and libraries, at colleges and universities, to public libraries and museums, and for local government and state agencies. Mr. Newman sits on the Advanced Engineering Taskforce of the ICN, representing the museums.

The AIC is exploring a possible partnership with the Field Museum, the Adler Planetarium, and the International Center for Advanced Internet Research at Northwestern University to form Chicago MuseumNet, an infrastructure of broadband capabilities including Internet2 distribution, new research and application technologies, digital content, and technology training.

Steve Dietz: the Virtual Arts Network

The Virtual Arts Network is a project developed by the Walker Art Museum with the Asia Society, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Academy of Arts, the New England Foundation for the Arts and others, to conduct a needs assessment study on the production of digital arts at 23 arts institutions. The results showed that all had similar needs and that building a shared infrastructure appeared feasible. However, no clear economic model emerged and a global solution seemed very problematic. A portal was suggested but a portal is difficult to demonstrate – you can't show a prototype, you need the real thing.

On copyright, he said that he'd tried to avoid this issue for a while but increasingly realized that it was key – although he was more interested in working to strengthen the public domain than worrying over rights matters. He had become involved in the issue of port scanning through one media arts project and whether it was or was not legal (how close is it to hacking?). Clearly museums in general are behind libraries in understanding and acting on intellectual property issues.

On Best Practices: as someone responsible for many decisions about how to get the infrastructure right for a new building at the Walker, Dietz appreciates the value of external guidance; but he felt he got the information he needed from personal contacts.

Dawn Leaf: Infrastructure & the Digital Promise

Dawn Leaf commented that the Smithsonian institutions share their requirements for media management, web infrastructure, long time archives and storage and the Smithsonian as a whole is working to achieve one overall solution. She commented that this was comparatively straightforward to solve as the institutions had similar architectural situations. However the better-funded museums will implement the new design first.

Leaf also thought that NINCH could keep members closely aware of the progress of the Digital Promise project. For those who weren't clear about it, Green summarized the project as an attempt to use the estimated 17 billion dollars from the sale of the digital spectrum for the development of an educational trust fund, dubbed the Digital Opportunity Investment Trust. This would fund online education projects and research for the public good, following the model of the 19th-Century land grant universities. To Kim Igoe's question as to whether there were plans for spending the money, Green replied that there was nothing definite but that plans were being developed and that Tom Kalil had recently written a report in which he proposed that grants would be competitively awarded to individuals and institutions devoted to "public purposes." The Trust would seek to encourage partnerships and alliances between businesses and organizations such as schools, libraries, museums, public broadcasters, community and civic organizations, and research institutes.

Leaf stated that in the era of security-consciousness it only made sense to her to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage by pushing forward with a major program of digitization. Of the 142 million objects at the Smithsonian, just two million had been digitized to date.

Leonard Steinbach: Free-Choice Learning Network

Steinbach spoke about an ongoing interactive distance-learning project that the Cleveland Museum of Art is conducting with nursing homes, community colleges, mental health facilities and other institutions using broadband multicast. The goal of the project was to have a beneficial impact on the clients served, not stopping short at delivering “art education content,” but increasing social interaction and intellectual stimulation, resulting in an overall increase in quality of life. Steinbach described this as a way of “being profound.”

This experimental program has been remarkably successful, cementing a strong bond between the museum and the institutions (one community of seniors threw a surprise party for the museum in appreciation of the program). It is an example not only of how cultural institutions are facing the demands of their communities and finding ways of connecting to them, but also of how experimenting with the Internet and other forms of digital communication can successfully extend museums’ assets, enabling sometimes profound interpretation of museum content and resulting in productive engagement with local communities. It was founded on a partnership with other cultural institutions that provided content, and for smaller institutions, this provided a leveling of the playing field in terms of outreach they could never achieve.

Steinbach further elaborated on his commitment to demonstrate the value of museums’ use of high bandwidth (especially through working with Internet2). At Cleveland he was committed to proving the value of producing immersive virtual reality, tele-presence and advanced distance-learning opportunities in the service of interpretation. “User-controlled immersive environments will someday be to art museums what IMAX is to science centers today... only a lot more effective,” Steinbach said. This could be done through consortial content development and ways of sharing centrally stored software applications running at high enough bandwidth to allow real-time image generation to be feasible and cost effective. He declared that, overall, museums of the future will be irrelevant without the appropriate embrace of new digital infrastructure. However, he also emphasized that technological augmentation of the visitor experience should never get in the way of one’s ability to have personal, undisturbed, communion with a work of art.

Steinbach thought NINCH should continue to be a catalyst, a resource and a coordinator – far more than a toolmaker. He praised the Copyright Town Meetings as a unique and very important resource and activity.

He felt NINCH should work as an advocate by publishing white papers and independent studies or mini-reports. Often within institutions there is a need for an external authority to say “this is the road you need to travel and here is the research to prove this.” This was endorsed by several others.

Kim Igoe: Museums in the Community

Kim Igoe reported on AAM’s recent publication, *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums* that reports on its ongoing Museum and Community Initiative. Some key questions examined in the report that are relevant to this meeting include: what can museums do in the future for small communities; and how can technology put museums in the center of the communities of the future? She emphasized that it was up

to museums to go to local communities (as witnessed in the Cleveland experiment that Steinbach cited) rather than to wait for local communities to approach museums.

Ken Hamma: Technology & Community

Hamma was most struck by how different our situation is today than in 1996 when NINCH started. Then, at best, museums were in a research and development mode; today they are generally very much in a production mode confronting a superfluity of production and asset management tools, ready to be adopted, adapted and used. There are many loose ends that need to be gathered up into an effective production infrastructure.

However, the key issues for NINCH and museums are not those about the technology (applications and possibilities) but about how to reach, connect with and retain the attention of (local) communities. In this respect museums are figuring out how to be in the museum business with technology as an important tool in serving the museum's core mission in reaching the community.

For Hamma, perhaps the biggest issue was in figuring out the community implications of letting museum-held materials out of the box into digital space. What happens to them there; how can museums best prepare them for this new activity?

NINCH may be useful in relating museums to libraries and archives, but many museums have a library and an archive. He was interested in how museum libraries now cite, acquire and catalog online publications. How do you catalog something that is only on the Internet? How does an online catalogue find as easy distribution and use as a printed catalogue does through traditional publishing and library channels? Increasingly, museums are becoming publishers and distributors. How does that change relationships within the community? Overall, networked cultural heritage is a valuable goal but how do we get there?

As for NINCH, he thought its current funding model militated against the success of its proposed agenda.

Steinbach commented on how connections with broadcasters could be important; they have traditionally helped in the distribution of cultural material and in education about them. They are key in the telecommunications infrastructure.

Green commented that NINCH had had discussions with CPB and PBS and he would continue to pursue them.

In response to Hamma's remarks, Susan Chun commented that this discussion reflected the make-up of many other discussion groups and that more had to be done to include curators and educators and to talk about digital issues in ways they understand. So this was one challenge – to expand the museum constituency in such conversations.

Steinbach commented that the Museum Computer Network (MCN) did something of that, exposing many parts of the museum community to different ways of thinking. Alan Newman granted that educators were present at MCN but rarely curators.

Steven Peltzman: IT Infrastructure

Steve Peltzman spoke about some of the IT issues at MoMA and his plan to push through an integrating system that could work to unite much of the fragmentation of many separate units that didn't communicate effectively with one another. For example, there were, as far as he could tell, seven different sets of digital assets and two separate web sites.

Much of his plan revolves around the adoption of IBM's WebSphere, a web application server that could be widely adapted to other uses. Departments would come aboard, he believed, partly because future projects could be done effectively via WebSphere for much less money than they otherwise cost, certainly cheaper than outsourcing them. He was working according to the 80% rule and it was working.

To the question of how the database work got done, Peltzman replied that it was somewhat centralized, using a TMS database and he was planning on enforcing a single database across the institution, although the TMS set-up may be phased out. As far as rights issues went, the system would enable the tagging of works for which MoMA had appropriate clearances and rights.

Dawn Leaf commented that this model solution (of using the TMS system with WebSphere and WebLogic) was a common one.

3. Interim Summary

David Green gave his own interim summary of what he was hearing from the participants about directions that NINCH should and should not go in. Overall, he thought it a matter of calibrating how close to the daily business of members NINCH should get, from toolmaking and internal museum decisions to high-level cross sector policy matters. Not surprisingly, he got the message that NINCH was most useful at the higher level, looking out across the sectors and a broad array of issues, rather than in assisting in developing certain tools that museums might need.

He developed the following hierarchical model of functions:

- * Toolbuilding/Guide(s) to Good Practice/Copyright information and guidance
- * Institutional Issues: funding and technical and staffing infrastructure models
- * Training Issues
- * Advocacy 1: Policy News, Development and Advice: internal (institutional) and external (the larger community; national and international)
- * Advocacy 2: Community Relevance: ("What all this means; why it's important; how it's changing things, etc.)
- * Future Environments: Computer Science & Humanities; Research Agendas; New alliances and funding sources

Steinbach reaffirmed Green's sense that NINCH did need to work at a high level. He added that he thought that NINCH's work in copyright was "alone, worth the price of admission." He advocated the portfolio approach to NINCH's work: of a variety of approaches and foci. He thought NINCH was a resource, a catalyst and an advocate and should continue to be all three.

Chun warned against the problem of only delivering what we can easily get funding for and losing touch with the urgent needs of the constituency. Also, we should be aware of one's niche and of what other organizations can do faster or better.

To the question of whether NINCH would convene other stakeholders, Green replied yes, there were plans to hold similar meetings. To the question of how we would implement recommended changes, Green said it would depend somewhat on broader review and possible reorganization of NINCH.

Hamma said we should remember that although NINCH has only a slim voice or authority based in its relatively small membership to tell directors how to run their museums, there is still a public/museums policy role to fill – or at least policy issues to be addressed.

There was some discussion about how museums can effectively share resources and knowledge. Dietz commented that although the Getty can afford a large database system, could the Walker take the same thing and use it over five Minnesota institutions? Peltzman asked if NINCH could play a role in match making with other institutions to help make everything standard.

However, Susan Chun commented that although members of the museum community need to be on the same page and use the same systems, it didn't want NINCH to build tools or document the work that they are doing.

Steinbach suggested NINCH develop thought pieces, white papers or issue briefs on particular topics that were cohesive and that could convey what the best direction is for the whole cultural community. It was suggested that perhaps the Copyright Town Meetings format might be extended to other subject areas. Although one suggestion was that NINCH might offer something like a Gartner Report, others replied that the Town Meeting reports offered something quite different: they express the interests of different parties as well as common goals.

Speaking of intellectual property, Ken Hamma wanted to know if anyone had considered the equation between the amount of money spent on intellectual property management versus the amount of money recouped. One possibility might be to not worry about protecting works online: just let them go and save the money spent on protecting and administering rights.

Chun said we needed to know more about the rate of use of digital images (how many images users get through), what people want to know and how much they want to know.

4. Last Words

Len Steinbach suggested that NINCH target Museum Studies Programs as an important constituency. By seeding the participants (students and faculty) with the concepts, knowledge, perspective (things NINCH knows how to articulate and stimulate discussion of) we will be pursuing the quality of the future at the same time we are working to do what we can with the present.

Susan Chun felt that NINCH was indeed unique and operated in a way no other organization did. She thought the high-level perspective was essential and that there is a value to have the community at large understand how the pieces fit together (or could fit together).

Alan Newman thought there was great value in trying to reach the faithless: those who didn't understand or who didn't want to understand the digital challenges. He mentioned Douglas Greenberg's paper, which referred to museum leadership as technophobic or papyrophiliac, i.e. an obsessive-compulsive and ultimately failed need to prove the paper representation as a more exalted representation of the original object. This neglects the value of digitizing collections. If we believe, said Newman, that "authentic representation" is not an oxymoron, then objects can be shown at least as "authentically" in the digital model (e.g., sculpture in the round, digital page turning of a rare manuscript, dynamic details of large paintings, etc.). Finally, a vastly larger audience can be reached on the web than in print (and data changes can be maintained quickly). Museums, he said, are slower to adopt the potential of digital technologies than universities or business because they are inherently conservative.

Dietz felt that neither AMICO nor NINCH gave very good value; he felt many issues were not being very well addressed and that ninch-announce did not strategically help his museum; he wasn't sure what the core values were. He felt that in the copyright arena, NINCH needed to pull the community along more.

Roger Bruce asked whether any other organization expresses the relationship that libraries, archives, and museums need to have with one another. To the comment that only art museums were represented at the meeting, he commented that they were as much social history museums as art museums in the ongoing redefinition of many institutional holdings. He felt that NINCH could play a crucial role in building bridges between universities and museums (something that started in MESL but didn't go anywhere).

Hamma thought this was a golden opportunity to see all sorts of models: how do we organize ourselves most effectively to pursue the agenda of a networked cultural heritage?

5. Conclusion

Green gave his overall sense of the meeting and the comments on NINCH's future.

It was generally agreed that NINCH should operate on a high overall level, relating developments in libraries, archives, museums, scholarly societies, universities etc., in the overall push to create an integrated and cohesive networked cultural heritage. Information exchange was seen as the core mission of NINCH. However, the development of issue briefs, (packaged news and issue summaries) and policy recommendations were encouraged.

The value of the NINCH Copyright Town Meetings was generally and widely applauded. However moving towards more solid recommendations and guidance would be appreciated. NINCH does need to develop a stronger advocacy voice.

Speaking to the whole community and pushing towards the public, were also directions that should be encouraged.

Although the NINCH Guide to Good Practice had not yet been released, so its impact on the field could not be judged, there was generally the feeling that NINCH should not be too detailed or too involved in tool-making or standards setting. It could offer some coordination through its convening function, but should not come too close to the daily operations of each sector.

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