

CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW
ART MUSEUM IMAGE GALLERY (H.W. Wilson)
September 2007

In September of 2007, selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of the Art Museum Image Gallery (AMIG) database from H.W. Wilson.

The HW Wilson Art Museum Image Gallery is an archive of over 155,000 art images and related multimedia gathered from the collections of distinguished museums around the world including works from 3000 BC to the 20th century. All works are rights-cleared for educational use.

Each reviewer independently, or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staff, reviewed and evaluated AMIG. Though other faculty and/or staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member only and not transferred to another. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the service to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT 2.5, 3, 3

Is the product suitable for community college students?

With this scope and depth, it is suitable for the study of archaeology, classics, religion, literature, area and cultural studies, anthropology, history, fine & decorative arts such as furniture and textiles, set design, costume and hair styles, as well as the obvious: art.

The strong point of AMIG is its extensive library of works of art that are frequently assigned in college courses. Since it is not feasible for libraries to maintain image archives of their own, having the ability to access a resource like AMIG would be invaluable. Colleges supporting arts programs may be wise to select such a resource. On comparison to rival databases like ArtStor, the Wilson Art Museum Image Gallery is very intuitive and easy to use. Users are not "bombarded" with search options as in ArtStor

Without the opportunity to cross-search this database with one or more of the Wilson art journal products, I can only surmise that this product would work better under those circumstances. As a stand-alone product, there are several obstacles that novice users would have to overcome (details below). With other art image databases on the market (ARTstor, OCLC's CAMIO) and the ubiquitous Google Images (albeit not rights cleared), this product would not be my first choice.

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review. Unless otherwise indicated, all comments are for Art Museum Image Gallery only.

RANKINGS

#1 --- No Support

#2 --- No Support at this time. Future support conditional, based on enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 --- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below.

#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection.

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE 2.5, 3.5, 3

Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

The Art Museum Image Gallery is an online collection of high-quality, digital documentation of works of art from around the world. Works from major European, American, and Canadian artists in the collections of member museums are included. Cultures and time periods represented range from contemporary art, Native American and Inuit art, to ancient Greek, Roman, and Egyptian works, along with Japanese and Chinese works. The database includes a growing number of multimedia files. As of September, 2007, Art Museum Image Gallery includes over 155,000 works of art. Full bibliographic records accompany every image. All images are offered in three sizes including high resolution based on the traditional 1024 x 760 pixel sizing. All images are rights cleared for educational use. (For a list of museums contributing content, see: http://www.hwwilson.com/Databases/artmuseum_museums.htm). The Huntington and Getty are not represented, but others are: the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, Library of Congress, and Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

While the description of the database provided by H.W. Wilson indicates coverage from 3000 BC to the 20th century, the lack of a classified, browsable list of subjects or categories makes it difficult to assess the extent of coverage. One can type in a search term using the “Browse” or “Thesaurus” features but, as noted below, some of the terms are too broad or not intuitive. Oddly, a search of the “Physical Description” field using the term “sculpture” retrieved a record with the notation “No image provided” (!) but it includes the title of the work, the sculptor, and the dimensions.

SEARCH INTERFACE 2.5, 3.5, 3

The interface is intuitive, and provides easy access as well as the ability to print and email images of artworks. One feature that is particularly helpful is the “Sort by” option, which allows user to sort by relevance, date, and birth and death dates. The easiest and most efficient way to search is to utilize the Advanced Search option. (Example below)

WilsonWeb
Advanced Search
Exit Program

Close Database Selection Area
Database Descriptions Unmark Selected Databases

Art Museum Image Gallery Current Issues: Ref Shelf Plus Science Full Text Select
 Biography Reference Bank OmniFile Full Text Select

Advanced Search
Basic Search
Browse
Search History
Thesaurus
Print Email Save
Exporting/Giving
Create Alerts
Help
Journal Directory

FIND: Velazquez
and Las Meninas
and
Sort By: Relevance

as: Artist
Title
All - Smart Search
Start

Limit Dates to: Any Year
 Within last 12 months
 From Year: To Year:

Limit to: Full Text Articles
 Page Image (PDF)
Expand: Also search within the full text of the articles, for extra results

Document Type: All
Physical: All
Description:

Customize Display Clear Start

AMIG offers 30 searchable fields within 3 search boxes and 16 different browsable fields. Searches may be done on such fields as the owner of a work, materials used, technique employed, object type (such as photograph), as well as title, artist, country, and date range. AMIG has the look and feel of other WilsonWeb databases with a standard menu of options such as Basic Search, Advanced Search, Thesaurus, Print/Email/Save, Search History, and Create Alerts. However, in an apparent attempt to retain the format/interface that Wilson users are used to, options are included that are not supported by the AMIG database. For example, there is a “Journal Directory” button but this database contains no journals. The search page includes a check box with the option to “Also search within the full text of the articles for extra results” but there are no articles to search. These choices are, no doubt, included for searching across more than one database but they are confusing if only searching AMIG.

Each entry includes a bibliographic record with fields covering object type, dimensions, nationality of author, materials and technique, location, etc. Some also include an extended description of the work including context. Result lists give three format options as limiters, i.e. Full Text, PDF, and Image but since all records in the database are in the same format, these options are worthless and may cause students to waste time looking for full text articles when there are none.

This reviewer experienced a glitch in executing an advanced search using the “Physical Description” limiter. The first search retrieved no results but each subsequent search came back with the result from the original search. A similar problem was encountered using the browse subject feature. A search of one term retrieved a result; a new browse reverted back to the previous result.

The default display list includes a thumbnail view of the image, the name of the work, and the name of the artist. The default sort order is relevance but several other sort options are available including artist, location of work, and object type. The full-sized image can be viewed by clicking on the thumbnail image but in most cases one must scroll to see the whole thing. Other display options include “medium size images” and “open in popup”, the latter used to view and compare multiple images on one screen. Image quality is excellent. Oddly, the bibliographic information is not available from this screen. One must return to the initial results list and click on the hot-linked title. Furthermore, clicking on the title of a work not only brings up the full bibliographic record for that work, but also for every work in the result list. This may, in part, explain the slow response time. Subject headings and in some cases, key terms are included but the artist name is the only field that is hot-linked. Some of the terms seem overly broad and of limited use such as “places” or “series” while others are quirky (e.g. loo, cavorting, other chateaux). Note also in the example below that the “Date work created” for this 15th century chateau is listed as “19th Century, presumably because it was renovated at that time.

100% 17 of 990



Object Type: Architecture

Title of Work: Chateau, 15th century

Subject(s): Places; France; 15th Century; Gothic; *Other Chateaux*, Architecture; Other Secular Buildings; 19th Century

Key Terms: architecture; architectural; French; French; Normandy; exterior; house; building; driveway; peacock; lawn

Date Work Created: 19th Century

Description of Work: Chateau, 15th century, renovated 19th century, Cleres, Seine Maritime

Copyright Info Link: <http://www.picture-desk.com>

Accession Number: PCD_AA418615

Persistent URL: [Click to copy the citation link](#)

At this time there is no presentation or “slide tray” function available within the database. Images can, however, be saved and downloaded for manipulation and presentation within other programs such as PowerPoint or Windows Picture Viewer.

USER SUPPORT SERVICES 3, 2.5, 3

Wilson offers a variety of training and support options including online WebEx sessions, 24/7 phone support, an extensive feedback form, and an interactive listserv. Phone calls and emails for help were answered promptly. They should be commended for the clarity of their home page where documentation, product information, and technical support information is clearly marked. (<http://www.hwwilson.com/>)

On the AMIG search screen, the “Help” button leads to a generic, WilsonWeb series of screens on searching, displaying, etc. The help text itself seems overly complicated and not geared to the novice user, even for basic mode. There is also a link to a tutorial specifically for their image databases but, once again, options and examples are given that do not correspond to anything in this database.
(http://www.hwwilson.com/Documentation/WilsonWeb/tutorial/tutorial_image.pdf)

HW Wilson provides a number of different help assistance options. One can view the options by clicking on **Help** from any page. Although there are plenty of options available, I did not find them to be terribly helpful. The pages lack screenshots, and are too text-heavy. Users do have the option of viewing a tutorial, which does not help if a student is having a problem navigating the database. It would be far more efficient to provide simple, text-light FAQ pages with screen shots.

COST 2.5, 3

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

ARTstor includes over 500,000 images compared to the 155,000 in AMIG. AMIG is a purely subscription-based product while ARTstor has a one-time buy-in fee and a reduced annual subscription model. For a basic, art image product, AMIG is reasonably priced for community colleges.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE 2, 2.5, 3

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is product accessible to users with disabilities?

As is the case with other graphics-intensive databases, loading of images can be slow. One possible reason may be that, when you click on an image title to see the full record, you get a full listing for every record retrieved, not just the one selected.

When viewing the images in the thumbnail format, the only alt tag (text description for those using screen reader software) is “image comparison”. A visually impaired user could glean some descriptive information from the title of the work or the subject headings but nearly 7000 images in the database are assigned the subject heading “unknown”.

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS PRODUCT

NOTE: The following link includes reviews of this product posted on the H.W. Wilson site itself: http://www.hwwilson.com/reviews/amig_review.htm

Additional reviews:

Art Museum Image Gallery. Booklist, 6/1/2007, Vol. 103 Issue 19/20, p117

ART MUSEUM IMAGE GALLERY IS AN EYEFUL. By: Brisco, Shonda.
School Library Journal, Jun2007, Vol. 53 Issue 6, p77-78