Linked Art 1.0 Released

19th of February, 2025

The Linked Art community is excited to announce the official release of the Linked Art 1.0 specifications, a major milestone that provides the cultural heritage sector with a standard method to share and connect information about their collections and the items' historical contexts. Already adopted by major organizations across the museum sector, Linked Art offers a robust and proven data framework, built on top of existing international standards, for representing complex relationships between artworks, archives, reference material, artists, places, organizations, concepts and events such as exhibitions or provenance information.

By adopting Linked Art, cultural institutions will enhance the discoverability and accessibility of their collections by enabling richer interfaces and making it easier for search engines to discover and crawl the collections, by following the relationships expressed in the records. These relationships enable significantly more precise descriptions to be expressed that knowledge systems can understand and process, enabling next-generation semantic searching and facilitating deep research using the collections. Using Linked Art, Yale University was, for the first time, able to connect the collections of its museums, libraries and archives in a single discovery environment, moving from thousands to hundreds of thousands of page views every month by enabling major search engines to crawl the knowledge.

Dr Robert Sanderson, Senior Director for Digital Cultural Heritage at Yale University and co-chair of the Linked Art Editorial Board, describes the release of 1.0 as "a pivotal moment for the cultural heritage standards world. Where the International Image Interoperability Framework (IIIF) has revolutionized the way in which we engage with image-based digital content, Linked Art is poised to fundamentally shift how we work with the knowledge we manage about the objects depicted in those images. Our success at Yale in building LUX, a cross-collection discovery environment for our libraries, archives and museums, would not have been possible without the hard work of the Linked Art community over the past seven years."

[Image from Yale Collections]

Linked Art 1.0 reflects the experience of dozens of organizations experimenting with describing their own collections, then building and deploying systems, such as Yale's LUX and Getty's Research Collections Viewer, which provide developer-friendly, interoperable and cross-domain solutions. "Our software engineers were quickly able to understand the requirements given the consistent and clearly described standard, even though they did not have a heritage background." says Sanderson, of the development experience.

"Getty has adopted Linked Art as its standard data model and API across its archival and museum collections, empowering both the public and our technical and collections staff by providing a consistent way to understand how cultural objects move through space and time. We are also excited that Linked Art uses the Getty's Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) vocabulary as a core component to enable interoperability across organizations, helping to fulfil

our mission and demonstrating the value of our investment in standards for more than twenty years." says David Newbury, Senior Director for Public Technologies at the J. Paul Getty Trust.

[Image from Getty Collections]

Per Newbury, Linked Art provides both a standard model for describing cultural heritage knowledge, ensuring consistency of meaning, as well as a standard web application programming interface (API) which allows digital systems to interact with that knowledge in an intuitive way. This first stable release marks a significant step forward for the heritage sector in facilitating interoperability and knowledge sharing across institutions and around the world. Linked Art is ready to be widely adopted, using existing free and open source software or with the assistance of vendors ready to help. And Getty isn't the only museum that has implemented it, the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam are both deeply engaged.

"Linked Art represents a transformative step forward for the National Gallery's digital strategy, enabling us to bring our world-class collection to audiences in ways that were previously unimaginable. By leveraging the Linked Art open standard, we're not just enhancing the discoverability of our collection—we're fundamentally rethinking how we connect artworks, artists, and exhibitions across time and place. This collaboration directly supports the National Gallery's mission to serve the nation by fostering a deeper understanding of art and its history, making our shared cultural heritage more accessible to all. It's an exciting moment, and we're proud to be at the forefront of this innovation." – Nick Sharp, Chief Digital Officer, National Gallery of Art

"Linked Art is one of the core technologies backing the Rijksmuseum's new Collectie Online platform, an innovative interface for exploring Dutch art and history. Linked Art enables us to share our knowledge about a million museum objects as a richly-interconnected semantic data network, powering new interactions with our information and data. With a data model built around community requirements, and an API optimized for web developers, Linked Art brings both stability and sustainability to cultural heritage data publishing." – Saskia Scheltjens, Head of Research Services and Chief Librarian, Rijksmuseum

The work also has support in industry, with several companies providing services and products that implement the specifications and support the work. "In our experience, institutions and researchers taking the decision to use and create semantic data want to build on a solid foundation of well established practice. Using Linked Art as a standard, we are able to support our clients in implementing community created and maintained semantic data patterns to handle many of the most common data modelling situations in cultural heritage. Linked Art saves us and our clients hundreds of hours of unnecessary foundational work that is already accomplished, so that we can push the boundaries of semantic data expression forward, and bring the goals of creating a linked web of knowledge onward." writes George Bruseker, CEO of Takin.Solutions

And Bruseker should know, as he is also co-chair of the Conceptual Reference Model group at ICOM, the International Council of Museums, which Linked Art is derived from.

For universities and museums alike Linked Art also activates collections for research, furthering the recent trend of "collections as data". Linked Art removes the current barriers to cross-collection and cross-institution research by specifying standard patterns of description, standard means of interaction, and then allowing additional domain- or collection-specific knowledge to be included. This makes pooling relevant information from around the world an easy first step, rather than laboriously reimplementing complex solutions for every new research project.

"Linked Art is an essential foundation for expanding digital scholarship in the humanities, opening up the potential for cross-collection research using cutting-edge digital methods we look forward to expanding in our future research. Version 1.0 represents a significant milestone, with collections data now available from a growing number of art institutions around the world. We're pleased the University of Oxford e-Research Centre has been able to contribute to this community effort over the past six years, thanks to crucial support from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council." says Dr Kevin Page, Senior Researcher and Associate Faculty at the University of Oxford e-Research Centre.

LINKED ART:
Linked Art is an ongoing collaborative effort dedicated to developing, promoting and supporting a standard data model and API built on the principles and technologies of Linked Open Usable Data, and used to describe cultural and natural history, plus its historical and institutional context. The vibrant community consists of cultural heritage professionals, technologists, and researchers.

To learn more about Linked Art and join the community, visit https://linked.art/
There will be an introductory webinar and Q&A session on March 5th at 8am Los Angeles, 11am New York, 4pm London, 5pm Paris. Connection details are at https://linked.art/community/

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