Developing Resources for Canadian Visual History
What I will talk about......

• Historical Context
  • Women artist and Art History

• Resources
  • Artists bio-bibliographic database
  • Vertical file collection
  • Exhibition reviews database
Women Artists & Art History

• 1971 Linda Nochlin wrote in ArtNews magazine:
  – “Why have there been no great women artists?”

• 1976 exhibition: Women Artists, 1550-1950

• From mid-70s courses on women artists have been included in the curriculum of many Art History departments

• Rewriting women into art history
  – Increased number of publications
  – 1980 - Woman’s Art Journal and others

• 1986 National Museum of Women Artists established in Washington
  – Numerous women artists centres and galleries had been set up
Most Canadian Art History courses until the 90s used two texts for survey courses – they both included approximately 50 women artists:


1992 Maria Tippett wrote: *By a Lady: Celebrating Three Centuries of Art by Canadian Women.*


Women’s art spaces, centres and galleries created
- 1973 La Centrale Powerhouse in Montreal
- 1984 WARC Women’s Art Resource Centre created.
  - 1990-1998 *Matriart* – journal published by WARC.

Since late 1970s growing number of books, exhibition catalogues, and theses.
CWAHI: Canadian Women Artists History Initiative

• 2001-6 Developed Women Artists in Canada bio-bibliographic web database
  • Janice Anderson, Visual Resources Curator and I inventory artists and begin researching
  • With Library Research grant hire Peter Page to design a web database
  • Ongoing research for bio-bibliographies
  • presented bio-bibliographic project at ARLIS/NA Annual Conference poster session

• 2007 CWAHI created
  • Discussions with Kristina Huneault, Research Chair in Art History, to consider forming a research group
  • reviewed other national projects (US, UK, Australia)
  • cwahi web site was set up

• 2008 Inaugural CWAHI conference, database officially launched, and new project exhibition reviews
Resource: Artists Bio-bibliographic Database

- Create a reference resource to facilitate research on women artists who worked in Canada
  - Bring together information that is spread through numerous publications
  - Integrate other art media (crafts, photography, textiles,...) as well as First Nations women artists generally not covered in most other sources
  - Include primary sources

- Provide a representation of the range work of historical women artists (born before 1925).
Drawing on Existing Reference Sources

• Canadian art reference sources used:
  – *Artists in Canada Database* (CHIN)
  – *Art and Architecture in Canada ....* (Lerner & Williamson)
  – *Biographical Index of Artists in Canada* (McMann)
  – *Dictionary of Canadian Artists* (McDonald)

  (Gaps - few primary sources, few publications after 1980s, and coverage of art media.)

• International resources on women artists checked:
  – *Biographical Dictionary of Women Artists in Europe and America since 1850* (1990)
  – Clara’s Database of Women Artists NMWA (begun 2004 and ongoing)

  (Gaps - little Canadian coverage)
Resource: Artist Bio-bibliography Database

- Identifying artists
  - Initially women born between 1850-1950; later changed to before 1925.
  - Over 1000 artists were identified.
  - 210 artists actually in database now; approximately 40 being researched.

- Researching & building bio-bibliographies
  - initially Janice & myself.
  - Student researchers & volunteers.

- Designing & Building the database
  - Peter Page

- Currently Discussions about redesigning the search interface and also editing.

- Informal talks of links from the Artists in Canada database (CHIN)

- [Canadian Women Artists History Initiative : Artist Database](http://www.chin.ca/artistdatabase)
Resource: Vertical File Collection

- Over 900 files covering artists and architects

- Donated by following researchers:
  - Annmarie Adams, McGill University
  - Charles C. Hill, National Gallery of Canada
  - Kristina Huneault, Concordia University
  - Laurier Lacroix, UQAM
  - Peta Tancred, McGill University
  - Esther Trépanier, Musée des Beaux Arts du Québec

- Available for students & researchers to consult in Documentation Centre (EV Building, Department of Art History)
Resource: Exhibition Reviews Database

• Provide reviews published in newspaper articles (1880-1940):
  – Art Association of Montreal Spring Exhibitions
  – Royal Canadian Artists Annual exhibitions

• Collaborative project with:
  – National Gallery of Canada
  – Montreal Museum of Fine Arts
  – They provide newspaper clippings & we provide a digitized copy

• Covers women and men artists

• Link to bibliographies in Artists Bio-bibliography Database
Exhibition Reviews Database

Inventorying the Content

• National Gallery of Canada: Reviewed vertical files
  – Files organized by year and exhibition title
  – Includes all major Canadian exhibitions
  – Created spreadsheet of newspapers, dates. Example:
    • 1880: AAM 10 articles    RCA 29 articles
    • Approximately 850 articles

• MMFA Scrapbooks (articles covering all events related to the MMFA)
  – Scrapbooks at MMFA were digitized by company

• Files are incomplete: necessary to verify dates and page numbers
Scanning Articles

- Initially planned to scan NGC articles directly from photocopies in files; majority were illegible

- After testing, decided to scan from microfilm

- Question
  - Outsource or hire a student to scan
Verifying Copyright

• 38 newspaper titles – many name changes; some no longer published. Examples:
  – Major dailies including: Montreal Star, The Gazette, Globe and Mail, Toronto Star and others ....
    • Montreal Herald (Herald, Montreal Daily Herald,) (1811-1957)
    • La Patrie (1879-1978)

• Where articles are not in the public domain requested rights to copy and distribute
Designing Database

• Peter Page, who developed Artist Bio-bibliography database,

• Major decision
  • full-text searching or index searching

• Allow for searching by:
  • Artist
  • Specific exhibition of association
  • Dates
  • Location

• Testing of database backend recently completed
Exhibition Reviews Database: Things to do

• Design user search interface & display

• Populate Database
  • Upload digitized articles
  • Input data

• Add other exhibition groups:
  • OSA Ontario Society of Artists
  • International Exhibitions