**RKD Monographs: a new form of art historical publication**Paper at the IFLA Art Libraries Section meeting ‘Art Libraries meet the challenges of E-publishing’, Paris 12-14 August 2014  
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Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk on the new digital publication series of the RKD.

Let me first introduce to you my institution:  
The RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History - is a scientific documentation and research institute for Netherlandish art. The foundation was laid in 1932, when the art historian Cornelis Hofstede de Groot (1863-1930) [SLIDE Portrait Medal] made a donation to the State of the Netherlands consisting of his working apparatus of reproductions of Dutch paintings and his library. On the condition that it should be made freely available to scholars for art historical research in the future.

The RKD collection thereafter continued to increase through donations, particularly through the generosity of the collector Frits Lugt (1884-1970). [SLIDE Portrait and biography Lugt]  
Lugt was the most important Maecenas for a number of decades. He donated primarily images and thousands of art historical publications. During the Second World War he resided in the United States where he collected as much documentation as possible, which he later sent to the RKD in crates after the war ended. Many of these publications were unavailable in Europe in the days after the war. His most important donation is without a doubt the collection of auction catalogues, which he had gathered in order to put together his famous inventory of auction catalogues *Répertoire des catalogues des ventes publiques intéressant l'art ou la curiosité.*

[SLIDES Study room --> Reproductions --> Archives --> Ephemera --> Library --> Auction catalogues]  
Nowadays the RKD is an institute with 7 million images of art works (of which 3 million are of non-Dutch art), 1.5 km of archives, 2 million pieces of ephemera and press documentation, a library of 450,000 volumes, of which 150,000 are auction catalogues, and there are 60 curators and staff members and around 40 project staff, volunteer workers and interns.  
  
The mission reads as following: ‘The RKD makes knowledge and data about Netherlandish art in an international context accessible to scholars, museum and art-trade professionals and members of the public worldwide.’ The scope of the organisation therefore covers Dutch visual and applied arts in the international context, from the Middle Ages till present.

The knowledge and data is traditionally made public by allowing access to the material on location in The Hague. At present more and more information is accessible via the databases which the RKD set up in the nineteen nineties. [SLIDE PC Study room Explore]  
A new interface for the 7 collection databases was created and launched a few months ago, which we named *RKD Explore*.  
  
[SLIDE screenshot homepage]  
Via *RKD Explore* it is possible to search all databases in a Google-like manner, not only on controlled terms but also by way of words in the annotation field, etc.  
I show you an example: a simple search on Rembrandt gives the following results in the databases  
[SLIDE Rembrandt and SLIDE screenshot results from all databases]  
For more results or the details you click on the desired items.

Another way of making information accessible is to encourage research with the documentation and then publish the results. The RKD collaborates with many museums and other art institutes. Archival material is lent for exhibitions, RKD staff cooperate for exhibitions and projects and also initiate research. Examples of own research are the so called ‘Bronnenpublicaties’, or Source Publications, in which correspondences and ego-documents by artists are published.  
[SLIDE showing some examples]

These studies were until now only published in hard copy. The second edition of the Jan Mankes correspondence book will be published soon as a (commercial) e-book. However the RKD has been working on a new way of digital publication for some years now, which is also very suitable for source publications: *RKD Monographs*, the subject of my talk this afternoon. At present 8 Monographs have been published.  
[SLIDE homepage RKD Monographs]  
I have to make a remark on the language: it looks like these Monographs are in English, but most of them are in Dutch only. In the future we will publish more studies in English.

At first glance these digital monographs are ‘ordinary’ publications on the oeuvre of the artist or on a specific art historical subject, in digital form. Further examination however shows that all Monographs are built on the foundations of the RKD databases and are in continuous dialogue with these databases.

[SLIDE interrelation scheme]

The *RKD Monographs* make use of the data in the databases and their image material is derived from these. It is in fact a different form of presentation for material from the databases. References are made to records in the databases at all desired points. The Monographs form a synthesis from and a link between data in the various RKD databases, with additional texts and articles which give more details and a proper art-historical context.

Let me give you an example:

We have documented the oeuvre of the Dutch 20th-Century painter Jan Sluijters quite extensively. The database RKD*images* contains at the moment 1957 records of art works by and attributed to Jan Sluijters. [SLIDE]  
Of these 1379 are paintings. Smaller selections can be made from these records by filtering on the period of origin, technique etc. (see the menu on the left)[2 SLIDES], and the records can be sorted alphabetically or chronologically [SLIDE desc by period]. Through filtering and sorting there are several possibilities to study the material, but obviously there are limitations. Furthermore there is no context given and it is difficult to make connections between the art works. In other words: the search result in the database is not a catalogue raisonné.  
The Monograph on the other hand has been set up as a (chronological) oeuvre catalogue.  
[SLIDE start page, show menu on the left]  
It gives an introduction, a biography, an essay about his paintings, additional material such as an extensive list of exhibitions and a bibliography and it offers the possibility to make connections and to explain these.  
[SLIDE of a page with works from 1924, met *Zelfportret*]

Here you see a page from the catalogue, with works made in 1924.  
As you can see [SLIDE arrow] the entries in the catalogue contain only limited data and a small image, though it offers the possibility to enlarge the image on the screen [2 SLIDES], to share it through social media [SLIDE], and to link it to the record in the database RKD*images* [SLIDE of record in images], where extensive data on the painting are stored. [what you see is an assembled collage of the record, which would otherwise not fit in the screen]. This method offers a concentrated overview of the oeuvre in the Monograph combined with and linked to extensive data on each work of art in the database.

Updating occurs ‘automatically’: when new information is available, for example in a new publication, the records in the database are updated by staff. As the information is linked to the Monograph this also is kept up to date.

The RKD Monographs are very diverse [SLIDE homepage RKD Monographs]: besides the Sluijters oeuvre catalogue there is one on the graphic artist Charles Donker (a cooperation with the Rijksmuseum, and with links to the online collection database of the Print Room), and monographs on specific art historical subjects such as artists who worked in Artis Zoo, Belgian artists as fugitives in the years 1914-1918, and the painter Breitner as a photographer [SLIDE], of which we have a Dutch and English version. Or a source publication such as Gerson Digital.  
[SLIDE homepage with pop up of Gerson Digital]

*Gerson Digital* is a good example of a source publication [SLIDE title page]:  
Under this name, the RKD started last year an expansive, scientific documentation research project on the distribution of paintings and drawings from the Northern and Southern Netherlands from the Golden Age. The basis for this research is the influential yet dated overview work by Horst Gerson (1907-1978) *Ausbreitung und Nachwirkung der Holländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* from 1942. In this work he made an inventory of Dutch paintings housed abroad, based on a variety of sources, and he went in search of non-Dutch artists who were inspired by the Dutch 17th century painters. The aim of the project is to put together a completely updated, scientific annotated and illustrated digital publication in English. The research is one of the core elements of the RKD research program. We are collaborating with researchers and institutes in the countries which are being researched. After Poland, Scandinavia and Russia will be published later this year, and we are currently working on Italy, England and Germany. It is obviously a long-term project.

The Gerson monographs contain an English translation of the original text by Horst Gerson, with the original notes and new notes which supplement and correct Gerson’s findings. Furthermore images have been sought out and included of the art works which Gerson mentions (with a link to the RKD*images* database of course). Several texts have been included from the results of new research which put Gerson’s book into a new perspective and give it in a new context.  
These SLIDES show you the way notes are being included and some more linking possibilities, in this case to the database RKD*artists* [Hondius].

A number of new publications are being prepared, including other source publications (letters by Piet Mondrian-Harry Holtzman, a contemporary biography of Kees van Dongen), new oeuvre catalogues (Peter Vos, Pyke Koch) and studies, such as the one on the famous avant-garde gallery Art & Project and the paintings in the Orange Hall (Oranjezaal) in the Royal Residence Huis ten Bosch. Also the proceedings of a conference organised by the RKD on the international contacts of Dutch artists in the 19th century is about to be published.

In the meantime a whole new connected system of digital publications is being developed. The following publication forms are being categorized and further developed under the collective name ‘RKD Publications’:

*RKD Monographs*: monographic publications on artists, specific subjects, collectors etc.  
*RKD Focus*: focus is given to one art work, a collection, a reconstruction or an exhibition, etc. We expect to cooperate with museums or foundations. Example: catalogue of the Kasteel Duivenvoorde portraits (Duivenvoorde Castle).  
*RKD Papers*: publication form of smaller publications and for research by young researchers, such as interns or trainees.  
*RKD Sources*: source publications (correspondences, diaries, etc), until now mostly published as hard copy only.  
*RKD Studies*: scientific journal of individual articles which touch on the collection and field of expertise of the RKD.

The *RKD Bulletin*, currently only circulated in printed form, will probably also be included in the new structure. The present *Bulletin* [SLIDE] publishes, in Dutch and English, short articles (non- or quasi-scientific, though more detailed than news messages) on RKD collections and projects.

[SLIDE homepage RKD Monographs again]  
All these new publications will be developed on the basis of the same technical infrastructure and with links to records in the various RKD databases, meaning that not only images will be included, but also scanned archival documents, articles etc. It is of course possible to make links to sources outside the realm of the RKD. The development of the new infrastructure will occur simultaneously with the development of the new RKD website and will commence towards the end of the year.

The publications are aimed at both the general public and those with a more scientific background. While the majority of the Monographs are currently only available in Dutch, the aim is to offer a larger number of publications in English.

In the present time and society it will unfortunately not be possible to offer all publications free of charge. As a heritage institute with a public responsibility and funding we aim to offer this where possible. We are discussing several business models. For example: to keep reading on the website free of charge, but ask for a fee for printing on demand, in a nice layout.

In summary: the RKD stands behind the possibilities of digital publications in the field of art history. The added value lies not only in the larger span for circulating information, though also in making use of specific possibilities of digital publication. In the *RKD Monographs* this is primarily done by linking the data in the various RKD databases to make a new structure and with additional text which offers more detailed information and context.

In general we have been working on making the transition from analogue to digital for some years now: images, archives, press documentation, etc. Of course we do not have to carry this out alone: the number of initiatives for offering accessible digital art historical material has increased enormously and that process will continue and intensify over the coming years, we expect. This event has only served to prove this.

Thank you for your attention