User study for the NACCA project database

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Version 1.2 (28 Jun 2016), after discussion of version 1.1 with Julia Noordegraaf (UvA, supervisor project 11) and Arjen P. de Vries (RU, supervisor project 11)

Previous versions: 1.0 (9 Mar 2016), 1.1 (1 Apr 2016)

1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to determine requirements for the structure and functionality of a database for documentation of contemporary art for the needs of the New Approaches to Conservation of Contemporary Art (NACCA) network.

The database is to be restricted to the NACCA participants to upload their research data for documentation and reference, and so make them accessible to their colleagues.

2 Related study

The research for the design of the NACCA project database is affiliated with an investigation of the "INCCA website", the online platform of the International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art. The INCCA network is the largest association of art conservators, which formed in 1999, today counting 780 member organisations in 70 countries[1]. From its offices at RCE (the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage) in Amersfoort, the network runs the INCCA website[2], an interactive digital platform to find and share news, events and resources on the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The member section of the website contains a database of documents contributed by participating individuals and organisations. Upon conclusion of the NACCA project in 2019, a selection of data from the NACCA database is expected to be incorporated into the INCCA database.

The INCCA platform coordinator, Karen te Brake-Baldock, has conducted a survey of its user base back in 2009, ten years after its foundation.[3] Based on the replies of 43 participants the INCCA user study found that the database is used primarily by conservators (by occupation, 70%), working in museums and art galleries (by affiliation, 45% of all respondents). Only 6 participants (14%) stated that they worked at university, probably because the database was aimed primarily at professionals, as PhD programs in conservation were still very rare then. The two main reasons listed for participation in the network were access to otherwise unpublished research and networking. The majority of participants (58%) stated they use it only several times a year. The main reason for a low activity on the side of sharing information was the fact that the documents one would share would require extra editing to make them comprehensible for colleagues.

3 Design

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1   "About INCCA", *incca.org.* Available at https://www.incca.org/about-incca. Accessed 26 June 2016.
2   http://www.incca.org.
3   I obtained the study by personal communication with Karen te Brake-Baldock.

In order to learn about requirements, the future users of the platform had to be interviewed. These include early-stage researchers and professionals participating in the network. The research was conducted using a questionnaire (see *Appendices 1-4*). The first three questions related to the participants' professional work in general, the other five more specifically to their participation in the NACCA project. For each question, participants were allowed to give multiple answers.

The first gathering of almost all participants in the network – during Winter School in Maastricht, 25-29 January 2016 – served as an opportunity to collect data. The printed questionnaires were filled out by 16 persons (their gender and age were not collected).

4   Results

44% of the participants identified themselves as conservators, while 50% described their occupation more generally as researchers, and 25% as art historians. Their expertise is distributed equally between installation art, artist interviews, theory and ethics, exhibitions (33% each), and collection management (30%). This shows that despite the general focus of NACCA network on the conservation of contemporary art, the future users of the database are not limited to art conservators and their research interests intersect widely with other areas of the study of art, museums, and curating.

Print and electronic media regularly used as sources of information about the field by members of the network also turned out to extend over a wide spectrum. Eleven participants named particular titles in their answers. There are four titles each followed/read by 4-5 respondents: the newsletter of the American section of INCCA (now called VoCA), ICOM-CC conference proceedings, IIC proceedings, and *Cool DistList*. Besides these, *AIC News* got 3 mentions, while dozens others were mentioned only once or twice. From among digital repositories, most people use Jstor (4), followed by INCCA (3).

The question about file sharing platforms was included in order to learn about the kind of interfaces participants are familiar with. Almost everyone identified themselves as users of Dropbox (14 of 15) and Google Drive (13), followed by Wetransfer (10). Otherwise popular Academia.edu got only 4 mentions, most probably due to the fact that most participants are relatively new to academic research – 11 identified themselves as ESR researchers in the next question.

From 29 document categories (borrowed from the typology in INCCA database), 15 were identified by 6 or more participants each as the type of data they expect to be contributing to the website in the future. This indicates that a carefully structured taxonomy to serve as metadata for uploaded documents might be also useful in the NACCA database – for search or other purposes.

The most demanded features for the future database are search (8 of 10 answers), ability to view documents (7), bookmarking (7), download (7), and data protection (6). The search query should allow for the input of keywords, art movement, artist name, artwork title, materials, document type. Bookmarking should also include an option to annotate (annotations in turn may be accessed by other users). It should be possible to limit sharing documents to particular groups (i.e. according to NACCA project clusters).

5   Conclusion

The user study was designed as a qualitative survey informed by the functionality of the already existing INCCA database and the survey of the INCCA database conducted by Karen te Brake-Baldock before. It successfully identified user requirements for the functionality of the NACCA project database based on direct input from a representative selection of the researchers that will make use of the database.

The required features for the database are search (with advanced options), document viewer, bookmarking (with annotation), downloading, and data protection (incl. sharing documents with user subgroups). The database should operate with an expanded taxonomy (possibly to borrow from the INCCA database). Dropbox and Google Drive may serve as leads in designing its interface.

Appendix 1   NACCA User Study Questionnaire: Information Sheet

Introduction to your participation in the NACCA Research Project *Database for the Documentation of Contemporary Art*
(page 1 of 1)

We are presenting you this information sheet because we would like to invite you to take part in our research study. NACCA ESRs and supervisors have to comply with the ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for researchers prescribed by the European Union. This involves, amongst other things: 1. Transparency, where possible, of research methods and results; 2. a careful approach to human research participants; 3. prevention of misuse of data.

Ethical research conduct implies the application of fundamental ethical principles and legislation to scientific research in all possible domains of research, also social sciences and humanities. We realize that especially in the sensitive and underexplored field of conservation of contemporary art, an Informed Consent Form might conflict with general ideas on a trust relationship between researcher and participant. However, for us and you it is a means to mitigate and reduce the risk of any breach of research integrity and to assure you that the information you give will be treated correctly and confidentialy.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Therefore, before you decide whether to participate we would like to outline why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below and ask us any further questions you may have or if anything is unclear, before you decide to participate or not.

Name PhD research project

Database for the Documentation of Contemporary Art

Who is organizing and funding the research?

The research is conducted by Dušan Barok and supervised by Julia Noordegraaf and Arjen P. de Vries. The research is based at the Department of Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Amsterdam.

This research project is part of the Marie Sklodowska Curie Innovative Training Network *New Approaches in the Conservation of Contemporary Art* (NACCA) funded by the European Commission.

What is the purpose of this study?

The study is to determine requirements for the structure and functionality of a database for documentation of contemporary art, the online professional platform of the NACCA network.

Why am I asked to take part?

We aim to interview early-stage researchers and professionals participating in the network as they are the future users of the platform.

Use of quotations

Publications or reports which come out of the project may use quotations of your words from the research interview. The quotations will be anonymized.

Contact for further information

If you have any concerns about your rights in this study, like to receive more information about this study or want full details on the progress of the project, please contact Dušan Barok, D.Barok@uva.nl

Appendix 2   NACCA User Study Questionnaire: Informed Consent Form

Signature for consent to participate in the NACCA Research Project *Database for the Documentation of Contemporary Art*
(page 1 of 1)

I understand the information and procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

All digitalised data we gather will be stored on a password protected drive in a secure facility and only for the duration for which it is required. All non-digitalised data will be stored securely by the researcher and only for the duration for which it is required. It will only be directly accessible to researchers concerned with its analysis and will be anonymised prior to being shared with other people beyond the researchers involved. All data will be further verified for anonymisation prior to any publication of project results, unless you have given specific consent below for data to be published that could identify you:

Use of my quotations

☐   I agree that my quotations will be used in an anonymized form. I understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.

☐   I do not agree for my quotations to be used in this project.

Name of Participant   Name of Researcher:

_____   Dušan Barok

Signature of Participant   Signature of Researcher

_____   _____

Place and Date

Maastricht,   January 2016

Appendix 3 NACCA User Study Questionnaire: Questions

Interview for the NACCA Research Project *Database for the Documentation of Contemporary Art*
(page 1 of 3)

As part of my PhD I will be designing an online project platform restricted to the NACCA participants to upload their research data for documentation and reference, accessible to their colleagues. With this short interview I intend to learn more about your research in order to define requirements for the new website.

The first three questions relate to your professional work in general, the other five more specifically to your participation in the NACCA project. The interview takes about 10 minutes.

The results of the survey will be incorporated in a report outlining the user requirements for the NACCA platform. In case you are interested in obtaining this report directly, please leave your e-mail address.

1 What is your occupation and expertise?

Occupation	**Expertise**
❏ Conservator	❏ Painting
❏ Conservation scientist	❏ Installation art
❏ Curator	❏ Sculpture
❏ Registrar	❏ Outdoor sculpture
❏ Archivist	❏ Photography
❏ Collections manager	❏ Works on paper
❏ Art historian	❏ Textiles
❏ Artist	❏ Books
❏ Technician	❏ Plastic
❏ Student (conservation)	❏ Modern paint
❏ Student (conservation science)	❏ Time-based media
❏ Student (art history)	❏ Artist interviews
❏ Student (collections management)	❏ Documentation
❏ Student (art school)	❏ Theory and ethics
❏ Student (heritage studies)	❏ Databases
❏ Teacher (conservation)	❏ Collection management
❏ Teacher (conservation science)	❏ Exhibitions
❏ Teacher (art history)	❏ Archives
❏ Teacher (collections management)	❏ Legal issues
❏ Teacher (art school)	❏ Other: ….
❏ Teacher (heritage studies)	
❏ Researcher	
❏ Other: ……………...	

2 Which platforms and media in your field do you follow or participate in? Whether to keep updated on developments in the field or to engage in.

❏ journals, magazines (online, printed): …

❏ bulletins, newsletters (online, printed): ...

❏ conference proceedings, conference videos: …

❏ news media (e.g. E-flux, Hyperallergic, Artnet): …

❏ digital repositories (e.g. OAPEN, OLH): …

❏ databases: …

❏ mailing lists: ...

Social media
❏ Twitter, particular accounts? …..
❏ Facebook, particular groups? ….
❏ Linkedin, particular groups? ….
❏ other, please specify ….

3 What ways, i.e. which websites do you normally use to share with your colleagues (inside/outside of your institution) papers, documents and data related to your work, besides professional publications?

❏ website of home institution
❏ INCCA.org
❏ personal blog
❏ Academia.edu
❏ Figshare

❏ Dropbox
❏ Google Drive
❏ Wetransfer
❏ other, please specify

4 What is your role in the NACCA project?

❏ early stage researcher (ESR)
❏ senior scholar, supervisor
❏ professional partner (i.e. curator, restorer)

5 What types of documents do you expect your research as part of the NACCA project is going to produce? Please indicate also expected file format if possible.

❏ Archive
❏ Art historical report
❏ Artist interview
❏ Artist's letter
❏ Artist's material
❏ Artist's questionnaire
❏ Artist's statement
❏ Artwork (registration)
❏ Artwork (score)
❏ Bibliography
❏ Condition (report)
❏ Conservation (report)
❏ Correspondence
❏ Database
❏ Documentary
❏ Documentation

❏ Exhibition history
❏ Fabrication / production (report)
❏ Installation guideline
❏ Material collection
❏ Packing / transport (report)
❏ Preservation (report)
❏ Publicationy
❏ Research / treatment (report)
❏ Research file
❏ Scientific investigation (report)
❏ Student's paper
❏ Thesis / dissertation
❏ Transport
❏ Other, please specify...

6 What documentation do you expect to find in the NACCA project database?

Type: published articles, condition reports, (audio)visual documentation of artworks, etc.;

Content: on which themes, from which specific NACCA project(s)

7 What facilities do you expect regarding:

- uploading data

- navigating the database (browsing, parameters for searching, etc.)

- use of data (viewing, bookmarking, downloading etc.)

- data protection (access restrictions, version management, etc.)

8 Do you know of existing online information platforms that you find easy to use? If so, which ones?

Thank you.

Please return to Dušan Barok (D.Barok@uva.nl).

Appendix 4   NACCA User Study Questionnaire: Results

See *NACCA_project_database_questionnaire_results.ods*. Available online at
https://www.dropbox.com/s/r8v4m03v93bi2fa/NACCA_database_questionnaire_results.ods?dl=0.