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Quick and Easy or Extensive and Professional

Summary
An increasing number of Austria's small and regional museums is starting the databased inventorisation. One of the main problems is the lack of professional staff in these museums. A special State's department that deals with the archiving of cultural assets offers consulting as well as human resource allocation. Based on the experience of the last 5 years two different database programs are presented and discussed: a very simple one, which allows laypersons to work with and a professional version for substantial use. With the former a survey of a certain region, a State or the whole country might be ready for internal and external users within a few years while the latter requires much more time and high personnel costs but offers better options for scientific documentation and an international network.

In March 2005 I attended a meeting on archiving of cultural heritage in Vienna. This event showed once more that the wide field of digital preservation as well as the different systems/software/programmes of digital inventory are a new challenge for museums experts. Besides dealing with digital or virtual art and digital publications we have started with data based inventories of cultural property and museums inventories in Austria.

I have worked for 10 years on these two categories as a freelancer for the Cultural Department of the State of Tirol. Besides I run my own office and have recently started with another kind of data based inventory. So I am working on 3 (2) types of programmes. There are still some more German language data programmes available, but I prefer to talk only about these three, first because few examples allow a better understanding and second because I do not have much experience with other databases (e.g. M-Box).

Why 3 different programmes to archive more or less the same or at least similar objects?
Because

1. The objects need a different way of digital archiving. While museums objects need only a description, it is necessary to describe and to show the position of the cultural property in situ.
2. Some software companies offer different programmes. Concerning the task of each institution the need is different. E.g. the state of Tirol is only interested in cultural heritage situated in the country of Tirol, while other institutions might concentrate on international coverage.
3. The database-programme has to be adapted to the staff working with it. While in small and regional museums generally layman work on the data based inventory, bigger museums as well as the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register (the register of cultural heritage of the State of Tirol) has professional staff.

Advantages and disadvantages
What is necessary for the user of the database?
1. Museums database
The surface mask contains only minimum information. That means the data which is necessary to identify the object, more or less what is demanded by Interpol in case the object is stolen.
Furthermore there are fields for some additional data like literature. Here you may write a bibliography concerning the object, but there are no links between the bibliographies of the single objects.
Via search terms it is possible to find all objects of a certain topic.
The field "artist" opens a sub-database containing the names of the artists, years of birth and death and some additional information.

The small Tirolian software company *EDV Studio Valentini* has created this database as one of the first in Austria. It was developed from a book-keeping programme. In cooperation with the staff of the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register they fixed the mask. The staff of the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register worked on the search-terms and the sub-database of the artists.
As the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register collects and archives all museums' analogue and data based inventories the institution is interested in a uniform system to avoid data transfer. Therefore they recommend this database to all museums in the state. The consequences are:

▪ Easy communication between the museums and between museum and the State institution Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register, Department of Museums
▪ Good service for museums offered by the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register, Department of Museums
▪ The museums have no problems and costs for preservation. All the copies of the museums' inventories are stored at the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register, Department of Museums.
▪ The State is interested in collecting the data and supports such efforts of the museums. The Cultural Department of the State of Tirol offers consulting as well as human resource allocation, operated by the staff (employees and freelancers) of the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register, Department of Museums.

- E.g.: A museum starts to raise an inventory and requires help. Then they either get 1 € support per object or a freelancer works in the museum for a certain time.
- Anyway the museum gets the necessary consulting and the editing is done by the staff of the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register, Department of Museums. Both free of charge.
- So this is much more convenient for a museum than to create its own way.
- On the other hand this arrangement causes a monopoly position of the *EDV Studio Valentini*. That means commercial disadvantage for other companies and less service by *Valentini*, whose company is too small to satisfy the need of service in connotation with the sales.
- However, the main advantage of this database is its simplicity. After the freelancer has finished his work at the museum the unprofessional museum's staff is able to continue.

To database the cultural heritage in the country like churches, castles (at the moment only fixtures, but mobile stock is proposed for the future) the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register uses a related but more complicated version of the museum database. It is connected to the TIRIS (Tiroler Raumordnungs-Informationssystem = Tirolian Regional Planning and Information System). The TIRIS provides the coordinates of the cadastral plan of the land register. Connecting the coordinates of the localities of the data based churches, ancient farmhouses, castles etc. with a digital map the programme creates a map of Tirol with symbols for the cultural property or provides object-lists.

http://www.tirol.gv.at/themen/kultur/kunstkataster/arbeitsweise.shtml

The online service is free for everybody and offers two criteria of search for cultural assets:
1) Geographic/political areas like municipalities or cantons
2) Categories: artists; epochs; object category (e.g. ecclesiastical architecture, public architecture, private architecture, castles, ancient farmhouses)

Among the disadvantages we have to note that remote objects like chapels in the mountains cannot be located by cadastral plans.

Tirol was divided into Austria's Tirol and South Tirol, which became part of Italy after the First World War. Despite the different nationality the two parts of Tirol have a common history and art history has never depended on boarders. There are still a lot of events, exhibitions, etc. together with South Tirol.

Free access for everybody seems to be quite okay regarding the fact that institutions like the Tiroler Kunstkataster/Tirolian Art Register are public and financed by everyone's tax. On the other hand the widespread knowledge of classified cultural property makes it easier for thieves.

And last but not least the database cannot be used to search for topics, e.g. Cossacks (cavaliers in the Russian army during the First World War). Many exhibitions deal with a special topic, therefore some data based support might be convenient.

When I had to curate a museum dedicated to Tirol's most popular saint Notburga, I was confronted with the problem of limited databases. The places of worship are not only in Tirol, where the adoration started in the small village of Eben. Traces of the Notburga cult can also be found in the whole of Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. So I was looking for a better solution. The *BioOffice* seemed to provide a great variety of options for users.

1) It is connected with a world-wide cartographic system. You can easily find the coordinates of any location by a GPS, insert the numbers into the designed field and the programme develops the distribution e.g. of the locations of the Notburga cult in the map. But you may also search only for altars dedicated to Notburga or murals showing the saint, etc.

2) You can click at any point representing the location of a cultural object in the map and get the data plus photo of the object.

3) All the search categories of the previously presented databases are possible.

4) Moreover there are three sub-databases for the artists, the literature and the scientists, who have published on this subject.

5) It is more or less possible to save any kind of information in connotation with the inventoried object.

6) Furthermore it is possible to load pictures in almost each size. Finally it is only a question of capacity of the computer how much time you need to load tiff-files. This enables to provide quickly printable pictures.

7) It is possible to adapt the database individually by editing the fieldnames.

8) Two main collections (museums and the in-situ collection) with slightly different masks provide quick search and a complete overview. The pull down-menu in the museums collection cuts into the different museums, cultural institutions and private collections. Private property which is not part of a collection is among the in-situ objects.

The database produced in cooperation of the Austrian company *BIOGIS* and the internationally accepted entomologist Dr. Gerhard Tarmann, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum was originally developed for natural scientists. When I bought it, the first thing to do was to adapt it for cultural science. I am indebted to Gerhard Tarmann, who spent a big amount of knowledge as well as time to create the cultural version of *BioOffice*. While working together I learned a lot about systematics. The lack of a hierarchic order and the missing of a standard terminology in cultural science caused most of the problems that came out by developing this database.

As I am the only one working with this recently created database we never have made any efforts to find a name for it. But as soon as it will be available on the market it cannot longer be called *BioOffice*.