

## **Beyond Borders: The Humanities in the Digital Age**

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Coincident with the rise in availability, if not in use, of a wide range of digital tools for researching and writing the histories of the world's artistic legacy is a reframing of art historical inquiry itself. Once concerned chiefly with "national schools" -- what distinguished Italian art from, say, German art -- art history is increasingly dedicated to "transnational" art histories that account for the quality and development of art independent of the narrow preoccupations and prejudices of modern nation states. It is a time of fresh starts for art historians. New digital tools allow us to mine data and map relationships between historical actors -- artists, patrons, dealers, collectors, scholars, critics, government officials -- that are deeper and more complex than ever before. The promise is a new era of scholarship beyond borders, one revives the promise of the Enlightenment Republic of Letters, a community of intellectuals that stretched across national boundaries.

This paper will explore the wealth of digital tools that enable art historians, to pursue a widening web of connections between artistic cultures and historical actors. For those of us who work in art museums, research centers, and libraries, the question of whether to embrace digital technology has long been answered, with a resounding yes. The Getty and our sister institutions around the world are digitizing collections, making content open, publishing online, using linked open data, engaging digitally with audiences, and using technology to help advance conservation and conservation studies, among many other initiatives. As a single example, last March 7,000 volumes in the Research Library at the Getty Research Institute had been digitized. Today it's 13,159 and increasing every week. The challenge we face now is to recognize the new possibilities ushered in by this critical mass of digitization, and to effectively meet them as institutions and individuals.