of Scotland, and for their discussions on matters of principle to Lenore Sarasan and Jane Sunderland of Willoughby Associates.

Notes and References

1. The National Museums of Scotland were created in 1985 by the amalgamation of the Royal Scottish Museum and the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. The archaeological collections discussed in this article were in the NMAS.
2. NMS register X.DQ.1 to 44.
3. National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, *Catalogue*, new ed. (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1892).
4. For a description of the vicissitudes of the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland—and of the Society itself—see R. B.
5. K. Stevenson, 'The Museum, Its Beginnings and Its Development. Part I: To 1858' in A. S. Bell (ed.), *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition: Essays to Mark the Bicentenary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and Its Museum, 1780–1980*, pp. 142–211, (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1981).
6. Stuart Piggot, 'The National Museum of Antiquities and Research', in Anne O'Connor and D. V. Clarke (eds), *From the Stone Age to the 'Forty-Five*, pp. 4–8, (Edinburgh, John Donald, 1983).
7. D. Andrew Roberts, *Planning the Documentation of Museum Collections*, pp. 8–15, (Duxford, Museum Documentation Association, 1985).
8. NMS register A.1882.31.8–9.

JOHN BURNETT AND DAVID CLARKE

Computers III: The United Kingdom Museum Databases Project

The UK Museum Databases Project, a joint initiative of the Museum Documentation Association (MDA) and Chadwyck-Healey Ltd, was first conceived in September 1988 when it was agreed that the MDA would act as the link with museums and would carry out the normalization and merging of data from museums, and that Chadwyck-Healey would be responsible for the financing, production and marketing of the database.

The idea of compiling a centralized union catalogue of museum holdings is not new, having originally been proposed in 1888 at the time of the founding of the Museums Association. But it is the growth of computerization in individual museums throughout the United Kingdom over the last ten years, much of it under the benign influence of the MDA, that has made it possible to return to this ambitious concept.

The last ten years have been an exceptionally difficult period for museums, in spite of the enormous growth of interest in them, so it came as a pleasant surprise to find out how many museums had begun to computerize the records relating to their collections in this period and how many had made substantial progress towards completion.

However, for such a project to be successful it has to have the full support of the museums themselves. In February 1989 the MDA wrote to over 400 museums, and within a few weeks had received 230 replies, a good cross-section of national, local, university and private museums. What was striking was not only this evidence of the extent of computerization in United Kingdom museums but the fact that 87 percent expressed positive interest in being involved in the project. Respondents referred to 380 different databases, of which 250 were expected to be at least 75 percent complete within three to four years—this is a significantly higher level of computerization than had been anticipated.

Museums were asked what kind of database they were most interested in—the choice being:

Individual Museum Inventory
County/Regional Inventory
National Inventory
Subject-Based
Collection/Collector-Based
Biographic Product
Bibliographic Product
Terminology Lists

The greatest interest was in Subject-Based

databases followed by Terminology Lists, which will be the first to be pursued. A number of questions were raised by museums and Area Museum Councils about the project and its impact on museums, particularly regarding extra work that participation might entail, and this gave us an opportunity to stress the advantages of the project and its timeliness.

An enormous resource of time, effort and money has gone into the creating of museum databases, but their full value can be realized only when the data are fully accessible to users, researchers and other museums not only in the United Kingdom but throughout the world. Furthermore, selling the data will result in a useful revenue for museums over many years as new data are added to the Project. It is in the area of distribution and sale of specialized research material on a world-wide basis that Chadwyck-Healey has particular expertise. Fifteen years ago we started to republish art exhibition catalogues on microfiche. By 1980 we had microfilmed catalogues from over 1000 museums and galleries throughout the world. We have continued to publish other museum collections in microform, but are now increasingly using CD-ROM (compact discs holding text rather than music) as a publishing medium to be used with IBM-compatible personal computers.

CD-ROM is the ideal medium for the UK Museum Databases Project because with a storage capacity of 550 megabytes one disc can hold data from many museums. At present many potential users, especially museums, do not have CD-ROM drives or even PCs, so in the first year the project will also be published on Computer Output Microfiche (COM), giving users a choice of media.

A 'Pilot' database was produced for the MDA Conference in York in September 1989. The Pilot contains samples of data from museums in the subject areas of Fine Arts and Decorative Arts, which will be the subject areas covered by the first edition of the project. The structure of the database is as follows: the data from each museum are held as a separate entity. No attempt is made to merge entries because of the variations in the records from different museums. The data from each museum are linked through common indexes which on COM are physically separate sets of microfiche, but which on CD-ROM are hidden, in that the PC user is not aware of their existence when making searches. The indexes in the Pilot include:

Titles Index
Simple Name Index
Content Index
Production Place Index
Production Date Index
Acquisition Index

The first edition of the project will be published in the spring of 1990. The contributors to the first edition will be those museums who have data to contribute to the project and who have entered into a publishing agreement with Chadwyck-Healey. At present it is envisaged that there will be a new edition each year incorporating new data and new museums. At this early stage there will be very substantial growth from year to year, and the true extent of the project will become clearer in the second and third years.

Other subjects will also be covered—natural sciences, archaeology and industrial history—while the terminology database will also be developed. Another service that Chadwyck-Healey can offer to museums is to take individual databases and output them on a laser printer or Xerox 9500 high-speed copier to produce limited editions of catalogues for a museum's own needs, financed by the museum but which can be marketed by Chadwyck-Healey if there is likely to be a national or international market for them.

The UK Museum Databases Project, Fine Arts and Decorative Arts Section, will be bought by museums, arts libraries in universities and polytechnics and larger public libraries. There may also be a limited sale to auction houses and art dealers. The price is expected to be in the region of £500, and sales will be principally in the United Kingdom, Europe, North America, Australasia and Japan.

The project breaks new ground in that until now museum data have been seen primarily as an internal management and curatorial tool. However, there is no doubt that there will be enormous interest in a

source that enables users to simultaneously search the holdings of large and small museums scattered throughout the United Kingdom. Dissemination of such data will result in a greater appreciation of the hidden treasures in Britain's museums and a further acceleration in the computerization of museum catalogues and inventories.

CHARLES CHADWYCK-HEALEY

Documentation: Compiling a Photographic Thesaurus

History

The primary purpose of the photographic thesaurus is to ease the complex task of describing photographic processes, formats, genres and other characteristic traits. As the word thesaurus implies, the work provides a standardized vocabulary and suggests preferred terms among synonyms. The thesaurus is also a useful tool for identification of processes, and through extensive cross-references it may help researchers better understand the relationships between terms.

The thesaurus began with Ms Vogt O'Connor's work as Audio-visual Archivist for the Smithsonian Institution Archives, where she is preparing a finder's guide to photographs in the fourteen museums of the Institution. The thesaurus grew out of her need for a list of authority terms to describe the many different photographic processes she found. With the addition of descriptive characteristics, the list evolved into a field guide to help identify different types of photographs. In early 1987, after some three years and 6.4 million photographs, a draft of the thesaurus was distributed among professionals for comment and review. The draft ran to 117 typed, single-spaced pages with approximately 1100 entries, including preferred and lead-in terms. Richard Pearce-Moses, Curator of Photographs for the Hayden Library at Arizona State University, joined the project in February 1988. He has helped organize and edit existing information and has continued to build the base of terms, especially in the area of tradenames and early experimental processes.

Choice and Form of Terms

Developing a thesaurus of photographic terms is particularly difficult because early experimenters tried to perfect the medium by trying – seemingly at random – every conceivable chemical variation and production technique. The problem of establishing relationships between similar terms which describe an enormous number of variant traits is complicated by the fact that, like all language, photographic terminology was created ad hoc, often with little thought of synonyms, homonyms, or previous use of a forgotten term. Hence different processes have the same name, and different names refer to the same process.

The primary source of terminology has been a survey of descriptions used in American museums and libraries. Hence, the thesaurus has a distinct American bias. That bias has been mitigated by the fact that many European terms (such as Autochrome or carte-de-visite) have been included because representative photographs commonly appear in American collections. The authors' experience of cataloguing the holdings of the Smithsonian and the Gernsheim collection at the University of Texas has also been a rich source of rare terms.

A wide variety of 19th- and 20th-century glossaries, handbooks and histories have also served as sources of terms. Idiosyncratic vocabulary generally has been eliminated by including terms used in more than one source or in a single authoritative source. Hence, Hunt's energiatype process is referenced as it is cited in Eder's *Geschichte*, while the neologism 'frottogram' Joan Fontcuberto uses to describe his photographs is not likely to be included as it is applied to his work alone.

Chemicals referred to in photographic literature are not included unless their use