Assessment of Metadata on the Canadian Architecture Collections

Eun Park, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
McGill University
Graduate School of Library and Information Studies
3459 McTavish Street MS76A
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3A 1Y1
Voice: 514)398-3364
Fax: 514)398-7193
eun.park@mcgill.ca

Abstract: This paper represents the finindgs of assessment of metadata sets at the Canadian Architecture Collections in McGill University Library. The tables and attributes of current databases were grouped into the major categories by the commpnly used elements and examine their feasibility and specificity.

Résumé : Cet article présente les résultats de l'évaluation des ensembles de métadonnées des collections d'architecture canadienne à la bibliothèque de l'Université McGill. Les tables et les attributs des bases de données courantes ont été groupés dans les catégories majeures par les éléments généralement utilisés et leur faisabilité et leur spécificité sont examinées.

Background

The Digital Collections Program (DCP) at McGill University was built in 1996 and houses digital collections on Canadian arts, architecture, history, culture, map, etc. The DCP aims to provide the preservation of and access to the library's special and rare collections. One of noticeable digital collections is the Canadian Architecture Collections (CAC). Currently, there are nine databases on architecture and

corresponding architects, who were alumni or faculty at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, McGill University, such as Bland, Maxwells, Nobbs, Pratte, Safdie, Schoenauer, Schreiber, Taylor, and Traquair. The collections contain their architecture works, drawings, pictures of buildings, projects, and their professional and personal writing and drafts that are created during their professional life. Databases are composed of tables that were normalized by a database designer when database was created. Each table consists of many fields that are defined by attributes, based on their characteristics. One database has one to many tables, up to 14 tables. The total number of tables over nine databases amounts to 55 tables. The total number of fields amounts to 453 over seven databases except Pratte and Traquair databases.

Table 1. Descriptions of Databases

Database Names	Records/Images	Table Names
Bland	2016 records	bland_slides, bland_slides_info, list
CAC	116 records	archives
DCPImages	88032 records	images
Maxwells	706 project records 1115 images	Captioncase, comments, holdings, imagecaptions, library, majorTypology, maxwells, projects, typlogies
Nobbs	527 project records 202 images	Images, library, projects
Pratte	5 boxes, 136 folders	Boxes, folders
Safdie	220 project records, 1072 project related images	Av, bibjournals, bibbnews, bibother, captions, drawings, metaimages, microfilms, models, officefiles, pictures,

		projectdetails, projectfiles, sketchbooks
Schoenauer	39 project records, 117 images	Bib, images, officefiles, projects
Schreiber	234 project records, 69 images	Images, library, projects
Taylor	1971 folder records	Categories, subcategories, taylor, types
Traquair	7923 records	Building, drawinglist, listjpg, photos, photochlist, pictures, projects, provenan, technical, traquair_photos, webtraquair

Problems

These databases have been developed since the early 1990s in different times and by several developers without one standard format, guidelines or classification on how to develop databases. The problems of these databases exist in the management, organization, and retrieval of these tables due to confusion and ambiguity of field names. The lack of uniform policy on how to develop database and how to assign table and field names brought database unmanageable to managers and inaccessible to users.

Our research team examined the most frequently used tables and fields over nine databases and grouped them into major categories to identify what needs most in organizing architecture collections. Tables are grouped into seven categories, including *data information, library, project, description, type, office files/boxes/folders*, and

miscellaneous others (See Table 2). Field categories are grouped into eleven categories, including *library, project, identification, file information, description and comments, location, type, title, drawings, collection size,* and *others* (See Table 3).

Table 2. Categories of Table

Table Category	Table Subcategory	Freq.	Table Name	Database Name
Data information	Images	6	Images, metaimages, listjpg	DCPImages, Nobbs, Safdie, Schoenauer, Schreiber, Traquair
	Slides	2	bland_slides, bland_slides_info	Bland
	Drawings	2	Drawings,drawinglist	Safdie,Traquair
	Photos	3	Photos, photochlist, traquair_photos	Traquair
	Pictures	2	Pictures	Safdie, Traquair
	microfilmes	1	microfilms	Safdie
	AV	1	Av	Safdie
	Name of Architect	2	Maxwells, taylor	Maxwells, Taylor
Library	Library	3	Library	Maxwell, Nobbs, Schreiber
	Bibligrahpies	4	Bibjournals, bibbnews, bibother, bib	Safdie, Schoenauer
	Origin	4	Provenan, models, sketchbooks, building	Traquair, Safdie, Traquair
	Holdings	1	holdings	Maxwell
Project		7	Projects, projectdetails, projectfiles	Maxwell, Nobbs, Safdie, Schoenauer, Schreiber, Traquair

Description	Description	2	Archives, comments	CAC, Maxwell
	Caption	3	Captioncase, imagecaptions, captions	Maxwell, Safdie
Type		5	Categories, subcategories, majorTypology, typologies, types (no data)	Taylor, Maxwell
Officefiles/ Boxes /Folders		4	Boxes, folders, officefiles	Platte, Safdie, Schoenauer
Misc.		3	list (directory list-discarded), technical, webtraquair	Bland, Traquair
		55		

Table 3. Categories of Field

Field Type	Number of fields	Portion (%)
Library	81	17.88%
Project	74	16.34%
Identification	65	14.35%
File Info	48	10.60%
Description and Comments	40	8.83%
Location	35	7.73%
Type	30	6.62%
Miscellaneous others	24	5.30%
Title	23	5.08%
Drawings	18	3.97%
Collection Size	15	3.31%
	453	100.00%

Among these, the table category t*ype* is used to indicate types or purposes of buildings, which function as controlled vocabularies. There are major typologies that are chosen one from government, educational, commercial, cultural, health, residential, religious,

transportation, etc. Table 4 displays the common s typologies and unique typologies over five databases. There are a variety of different and vocabularies. In case of Taylor, there is no one typology to overlap with the rest of databases.

Table 4. Comparison of Major Typologies

	Maxwell & Nobbs	Traquair	Safdie	Schoenauer	Taylor
Common Typology	Commercial Cultural Educational Government Health Industrial Other Projects Recreational Residential Religious	Commercial Cultural Educational Health Industrial Miscellaneous Leisure Residential Religious	Commercial Cultural Educational Governt & Public Health Industrial, Educational Other Projects Recreational Recreation & Entertainment Residential	 Cultural Educational Other Projects Recreational Residential Religious	

Unique Typology	Transportation Professional	Masterplan Military Public	Master plan Urban design Airports	Mixed-Use	Biographical Catalogue of work Correspondence Essays School of Architecture Personal effects Photographs Press Clippings, Articles, Exhibit, Literature Works

Under one major typology, there are various sub-typologies available for a more specific classification.

Implications for Further Research

This project is in progress and the current finings are still at the pilot stage, which will be analyzed for further research. The comparison of these findings to representative metadata sets in the field of architecture will be a meaningful job. For example, the Description of Architectural Drawings developed by the Getty Research Institute may be a good example for further comparison. In addition, the findings will be also investigated regarding the feasibility of current metadata and specificity of controlled vocabularies of CAC. This presentation fits the area of classification and representation with focus on metadata with a real life case study. The paper will be helpful to the

conference audience by sharing the CAC's experiences and suggestion for further development, which might be applicable to similar types of digital collection.