

CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW

GROVE ART ONLINE

May 2006

In May 2006, selected members of the Council of Chief Librarians, Electronic Access to Resources Committee (CCL-EAR) undertook a "hands-on" study of *Grove Art Online*.

Each reviewer independently, or in concert with other qualified professionals on their campus library staff, reviewed and evaluated *Grove Art Online*. Though other faculty and/or staff may have helped in the review process, completion of the form was by the CCL-EAR committee member only and not transferred to another. Ratings were based upon the potential value of the service to the California Community Colleges as a whole and not solely on the needs of any specific campus.

RANKINGS

#1 --- No Support

#2 --- No Support at this time. Future support conditional, based on enhancements noted below in Comments Section.

#3 --- Support and Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection. Would like to see enhancements in product noted below.

#4 --- Outstanding offer and opportunity. Recommend proposal be forwarded to California Community College campuses for their acceptance or rejection.

The following attributes were examined:

INFORMATION DATABASE

Consider functionality, appropriateness of format, database content, adequacy of coverage (retrospective, current), and value to the California Community Colleges as a whole.

SEARCH INTERFACE

Consider the functionality and ease of use of the interface. Is it intuitive or is an excessive amount of training required? Are any crucial features missing from the search interface?

USER SUPPORT SERVICES

What types of customer and technical support are available for end users and library administrators?

COST

If cost is available, does it seem reasonable in terms of comparable products?

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE

Is access/connection to product reliable and stable? Is response time adequate? Is product accessible to users with disabilities?

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

Based on the attributes listed above, is the product suitable for community college students?

Following are the results of the CCL-EAR Committee's review. Unless otherwise indicated, all comments are for *Grove Art Online* only.

OVERALL: 4, 4, 4

Review Committee Comments:

Grove Art Online is an excellent electronic version of a standard academic resource, providing flexibility in searching and access to scholarly articles, ready-reference definitions and thousands of art images. It features multiple search methods presented in a well-conceived, easily used interface. It is presented in easily readable form appropriate for the community college level, while providing signed, scholarly information and bibliographic references for further research.

INFORMATION DATABASE: 4, 4, 4

Review Committee Comments on the Information Database:

Grove Art Online (GAO) is a fully electronic research database that aims to offer comprehensive, reliable information on all aspects of world art. The content is a combination of scholarly articles, ready-reference definitions, and access to thousands of art images. Since the committee last reviewed this database in June 1999, significant changes have occurred in content, interface and ownership.

Primary content includes the full text of 41,000 articles from the 1996 34-volume print version of *Grove's Dictionary of Art*, edited by Jane Turner. The database also includes 4,000 newly written articles not found in the original print version. *Grove Art Online* also includes the full text of the *Oxford Companion to Western Art*, edited by Hugh Brigstocke (2001), and added after *Grove Art Online* became an Oxford product. Articles are signed, though this reviewer could not locate any information on the credentials of the authors within the database.

Images make up a significant portion of the content, and have increased dramatically in number since our last review. More than 2,500 of *GAO's* articles include illustrations that are now embedded in the content of the article. In addition, users have access to the *Bridgeman Art Library*, a collection of 100,000 images from prehistoric to contemporary art, and *Art Resource*, a collection of 90,000 images begun as a teaching collection by a Columbia University art professor. Lastly, there are more than 40,000 links to outside websites selected by the editors. These links are reviewed on a quarterly basis for broken or misdirected information.

The editors caution that some illustrations from the print resource are not available online due to copyright restrictions. However, many online illustrations are in color as opposed to strictly black and white in the print volumes.

GAO is a dynamic database. The vendor claims that the product is updated and expanded on a quarterly basis, though it is actually closer to three times a year. There is a "What's New" link on the home page that leads to specific articles that have been updated, collection highlights and additions, and recent updates organized by date or subject area. Articles that have been added or updated since their appearance in print are date-stamped in the upper right corner of the screen on the first page of the article.

While *GAO* offers accessibility and ease of use to every level of researcher, serious art scholars will appreciate the extensive bibliographic references at the ends of most of the entries in the encyclopedia. In short, while this resource is sophisticated enough for even the most discerning of scholars, most of the written material is in easily readable form, appropriate for the community college level.

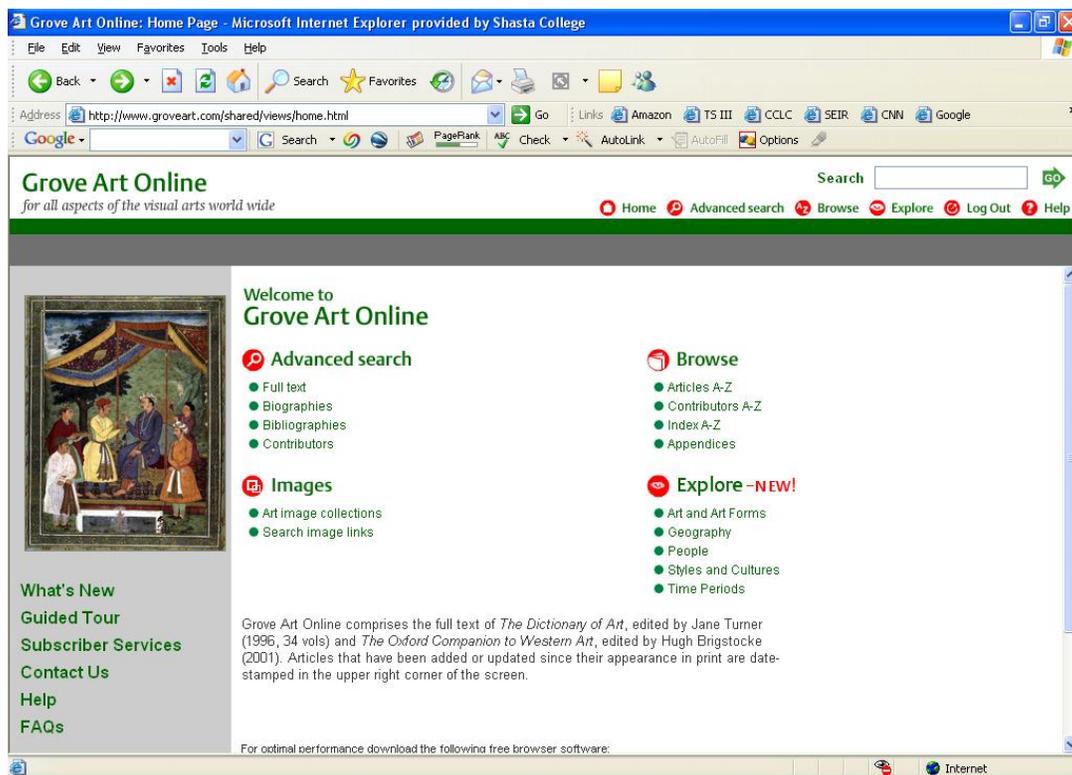
The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Title lists: how are titles counted, e.g. journals with title changes counted once or more than once? Are full-text titles counted only when content is current? How often are lists updated?
 - *Grove Art Online* contains over 45,000 articles. The articles are the digitized version of encyclopedia articles from *The Dictionary of Art* (1996). The online version is updated and expanded with new material on a quarterly basis. *Grove Art Online* also enables searching of *The Oxford Companion to Western Art* (2001) which is not updated or expanded online.
- Is there overlap in content between this and other products by the same vendor?
 - *The Oxford Companion to Western Art* (2001) is also available through Oxford Reference Online.
- How many, or what percentage of titles are in full-text?
 - 100%

SEARCH INTERFACE: 4, 4, 4

Review Committee Comments on the Search Interface:

Grove Art Online has a well-conceived search interface and a number of navigational and web-based features. The rather neat and tidy Home Page (<http://www.groveart.com>) serves as the logical jumping-off point for browsing and searching this massive database.



On the left-hand side is a persistent frame which provides useful information about *Grove Art Online*, including such links as: What's New, the Guided Tour, Subscriber Services, and a FAQ page. Each of these links opens a new page. For example, the What's New page describes recent changes to the database, including any new content that has been added or any new functionality features. There is also a running list of changes that have occurred over the last

several years. What's more, the page offers patrons the ability to be updated via email whenever such changes occur. Ultimately, with this emphasis on change, one gets the sense that GAO is a more dynamic resource than the static print version.

At the heart of the Home Page are the myriad search and navigational options available to the patron. The most fundamental searching may be done via the article search box which appears at the top of every page. This quick search uses six cascading levels of relevancy. If no results are found in a Level 1 search, it tries Level 2 and so on. The search levels are:

- Level 1 Exact match found in heading
- Level 2 All words found in heading
- Level 3 All words found in full text
- Level 4 Any word found in heading
- Level 5 Any word in full text
- Level 6 Pattern expansion on search terms

Searches can be refined by using special characters. Double quotes will search an exact phrase more effectively than without the quotes. For example, searching for "Whistler's Mother" in quotes resulted in a direct link to the spot in the article on Whistler where an image of the painting is displayed, even though the painting is labeled *Arrangement in Gray and Black No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, an example of a "fuzzy logic" search at its best. Without double quotes, the result list had 30 items in level 2, arranged alphabetically by article title with no option to sort for relevance. Whistler was near the end, of course.

Users can search with traditional wild cards: ? for a single character, * for any number of characters, and [] to match a single character within the brackets (e.g. 199[0-9] will match dates from 1990 to 1999). One can also conduct a "sound like" search, whereby searching for "-mikelanjelo" will retrieve Michelangelo.

Be aware that this is a British production: spellings, translations of non-English authors' names and locations are in British English format. This is where versatile search features can come in handy. For example, adding an exclamation point and single quotes to a search term gets you around the British spellings: 'theater!' retrieves both theater and theatre.

For most patrons, the art research experience wouldn't be complete without access to images. One of the drawbacks of the original print-version *Dictionary of Art* is that the images are almost entirely in black and white. This is not the case with *Grove Art Online*. Through the combination of digital photography, color monitors, and hyperlinks to other image collections, the artwork in this database comes alive. Users are able to see the art in a format closer to what was originally intended. Using the section on the Home Page entitled Images, patrons have direct access to various art image collections including Art Resource (90,000 images), the Bridgeman Art Library (100,000 images), and the Art Image Link that connects to hundreds of international museums and gallery websites.

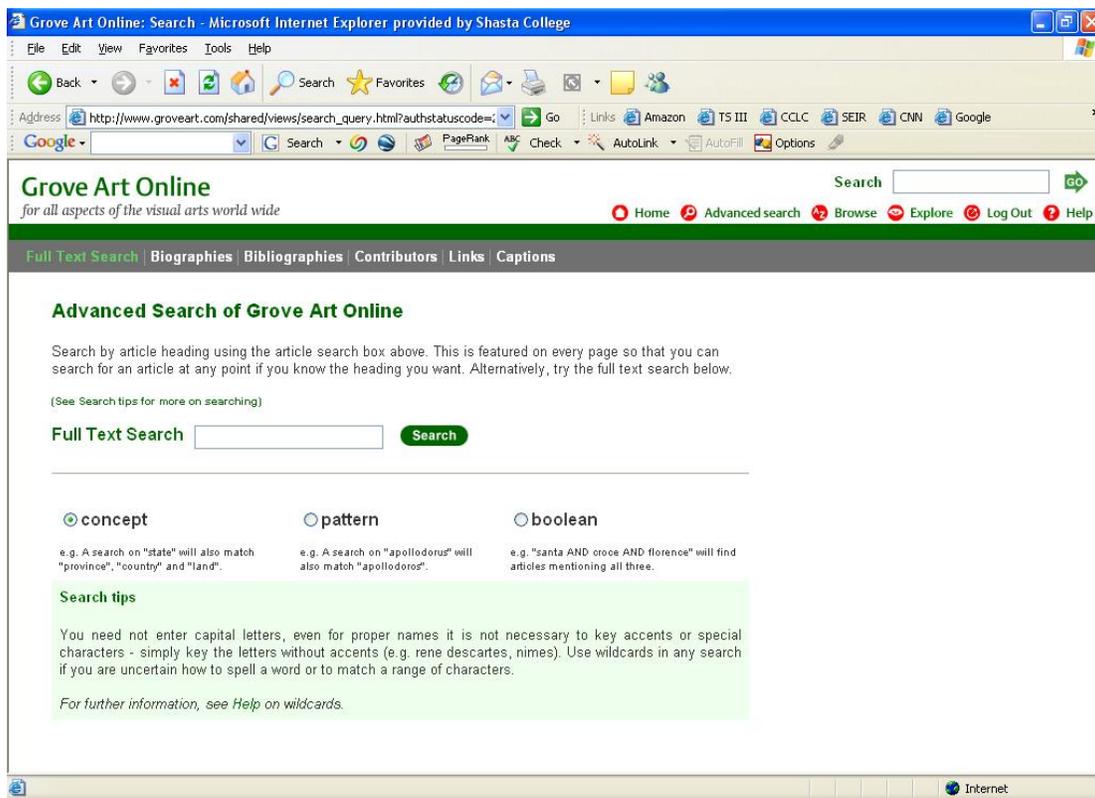
Many of the images are now embedded within the article. Many more are available as links to third party resources. The link usually goes directly to the desired image, but in some cases it was necessary to perform another search on the linked site.

It is sometimes difficult to locate a specific image within the Image links because they are arranged alphabetically by home city of the collection, not by title of the work. The quality of the images is outstanding. The Art Resource database provides an enlargement capability, though the Bridgeman Art Library does not.

Rounding out the Home Page are two other navigational features: the Browse section and the newly-added Explore section. Browsing options include an A to Z (alphabetical) search by article, by contributor, or by an index for the entire database. Researchers of all levels will find the abbreviation list search features helpful to decipher the various museums, galleries and scholarly journals cited in the database. For those that browse the contributors section, the editors have provided e-mail addresses, postal addresses, and telephone numbers whenever possible.

The Explore option is somewhat different. Here the user creates his own customized browse list, starting with one or more of the five major subject categories chosen by the editors: Art and Art Forms, Geography, People, Styles and Cultures, and Time Periods. Each of these in turn, may be parsed further into sub-headings. Ultimately, once the browse list is crafted, a result list of articles related to the selections is displayed. According to the Help page, the selected headings and sub-headings are based on "a powerful subject classification system" developed by the editorial staff. We found it telling that the Help page referred to the Explore process as "drilling down" to additional sub-levels. The fact is, in experimenting with this feature, we found it to be a lot like digging for diamonds in a rather large quarry.

For those who desire a more complex mode of searching, there is an advanced search feature.



Here patrons may opt for a concept search (includes synonymous or related meanings), a pattern search (includes alternative spellings), or the time-honored Boolean search (utilizes the operators AND, ADJ, OR, and NOT). Wildcards and fuzzy searching are also available.

Overall, both the concept and the pattern search features work quite well and the relevancy was good. The Boolean feature, however, returned much less consistent lists. For example, when we searched the terms Fragonard AND Paris, it brought back 112 articles, and while at least one term appears in all of them, the articles actually about Fragonard and his time in Paris do not

appear until one scrolls to page two, article number 36. When we changed the search to include his first name, i.e. Jean-Honore Fragonard AND Paris, his biographical entry topped the list. This may make sense to indexers, but the fact is many well-known artists (Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt to recall a few) are remembered by a single name, and their full names are often less familiar to the average patron.

Search results differ depending on the search mode. When using the concept and pattern searches, the results are ranked by percentage. Each result shows the percentage ranking, the article heading, and the first few lines of text. In the Boolean search the results are returned in alphabetical order by article title. In addition, all search results offer "hit highlighting" that highlight all words in an article that satisfy the search criteria. The most exact matches are highlighted in red, with less precise matches shown in cooler colors. Entries derived from Brigstocke's Oxford Companion of Western Art are identified with the notation [from OCWA].

Navigation is straightforward. From within an article, links in the grey bar at the top lead to Image Links, Illustrations, and Related Articles. The user can use the "Article Search" feature to search for specific text within that article only, although this does not search images or the bibliography.

The use of cross-references and the presence of the notable "bread-crumbs trail" allow users to navigate quickly between entries. The hyperlinks are in all capital letters and light green font. One reviewer felt they did not stand out adequately on the screen. In addition, it was unclear how these hyperlinks were determined, since many potential cross references were not linked. For example, the article about Post-Impressionism contained links to artistic styles, but not to individual artists.

Searching for abbreviations using the "Find Abbrevs" box on the Search Result screen can be useful, but also confusing. The editors acknowledge that the search mechanism for abbreviations is still being refined and covers only the location abbreviations, not bibliographic abbreviations. In addition, the list results for an abbreviation search, which appear in the left frame, are in a reverse alphabetical sort by the first word in multiple sections.

At the bottom of each article page there is a link to "How to Cite *Grove Art Online*." GAO uses a unique style that is not specifically APA, Chicago or MLA. Examples are given for both article and image citations.

Printing and emailing is available from each page. The use of frames can be confusing and problematic to the student (or an opportunity for instruction). The user should first click in the frame desired and then proceed to print. The email option will only email the text, and will not include any embedded illustrations.

One unique feature is an option to install a Unicode coding system to support texts and characters of diverse classical and historical languages.

At first glance, the amount of ways to search *Grove Art Online* seems endless and even excessive. Yet given the sheer vastness of this database and the fact that the material spans centuries of cultures and characters, these options allow for a more creative and customized search strategy. Such features are welcome additions, and make using this scholarly, web-based resource much easier than it otherwise might be. In the end, *Grove Art Online* successfully combines the depth and breadth of its print predecessor, with the navigational and search capabilities of online technology.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Does the database allow:
 - Downloading? No
 - Emailing? Yes

- Printing? Yes
- Does printing work from both the browser and the vendor interface?
 - Yes
- Does product require special computer configuration or equipment? (E.g. headphones, specific monitor resolution, etc.)
 - No
- Are links to local holdings available? (E.g. Serials Solutions, SFX, Open URL, etc.)
 - Not yet
- Does the database have persistent links to articles?
 - Yes
- Does product work well on both Windows and Macintosh and with all browsers?
 - Yes
- Is the full-text of the articles searchable? (e.g. PDF)
 - Yes

USER SUPPORT SERVICES: 4, 4, 4

Review Committee Comments on User Support Services:

There are numerous options for accessing help by the user. Simple but useful instructions and search tips appear on most screens. There is a Help link at the top of the search page that provides information on search topics. It is context-sensitive, but will also lead the user to an alphabetical list by topic. The list seems functional, with good See references. The topics are linked to one or more sections in the online version of the manual. This is a good place to find a quick answer while online.

The left frame includes three other options: A Help link to information on technical issues, connection problems, etc.; FAQ's; and a Guided Tour which is a demonstration using screen shots. The Help link at the bottom of the page leads us to a downloadable manual in Adobe .PDF format. The 21 pages are nicely indexed and reasonably well written, although the layout is not always elegant. It is worth reading through to create a tip sheet for your users, to make full use of the elaborate classification and search features.

The contact page leads to several sources of potential help, rather than the single email address offered on many websites. This means queries can be directed to the most likely source for an answer. Most contact information listed on this page is email. The only phone number is for ordering a subscription. However, phone help is available during very limited hours at 1-800-334-4249 x6484, Monday through Friday 9am to 5pm EST.

Response was excellent. A query sent to the content editor was answered within the hour, and three other questions and queries were answered quickly.

Users and library staff can sign up for emailed newsletters to be kept informed of updates and interface changes.

Subscribers can access an administrative module to change and update account details. Usage statistics are recorded from October 2003 and provide information on number of sessions, total session time, average session time, average pages per session, number of entries viewed, number of pages accessed, number of hits, number of searches, number of entries reached from browse, number of turnaways. The user has the choice of either displaying reports in his browser, or having them delivered in a number of other ways, either to download or email.

The license agreement, rights and restrictions are posted on the CCL website. CCL libraries are allowed to use portions of the works in printed course packs and electronic reserve collections for use by authorized users in a course of instruction, with specific identifying information and certain restrictions.

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Is online help available? Is it context sensitive?
 - Yes and yes
- What types of user training are available? Fee or free?
 - Onsite training is not usually available but can be made by special arrangement if required
- What types of technical support are available? (E.g. telephone, email, hours available)
 - By phone and email 9 am to 5 pm EST
- How does the vendor alert subscribers to changes in the database?
 - By email and posting to the site
- Where can the license agreement be accessed?
 - By request

COST: 3.5, 4, 4

Review Committee Comments on Cost:

The subscription model for GAO is a flat fee independent of FTES. No discount is given for multiple subscriptions to other Grove or Oxford UP products.

The cost is very reasonable if an institution needs to support art and humanities programs, and especially its distance education students. While many sources of online art images are available for free on the Internet, this database also provides up-to-date, scholarly articles to support student research.

In addition, many of our California community colleges are in areas traditionally seen as “art colonies.” The production of art works is part of the local economy. For colleges in this type of community, money spent on a good image source and art information service is well spent.

ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3, 3

Review Committee Comments on Accessibility of Service:

Grove Art Online was always accessible and responsive during the trials performed by these reviewers. We experienced no problems with access or speed from library or home computers.

Grove Art Online is accessible using either a PC or a MAC. Minimum browser requirements are Netscape 4.0 or Internet Explorer 4.0 or higher, with a screen resolution set at 800 x 600 pixels. Oxford online products support IP addresses, referring URLs, proxy servers, and user name and passwords.

GAO is only partially disability compliant. According to the FAQ on this subject,

OUP and *Grove Art Online's* development team have always sought to address accessibility issues and common compliance standards, and the site conforms to these standards in many important respects (e.g., font resizing, alt tags for all significant images, and readability for text-only browsers and text readers). We are however currently re-evaluating the site in view of the age of its present architecture, an architecture that predates many of the technical concerns of our

market. The most obvious area for us to focus on is removing frames from the site while retaining the sort of navigation required for this type of product (e.g., navigating between articles, browsing search results). We welcome any feedback from users on other parts of the site which they may feel do not conform to accessibility and more general web-based standards.

Furthermore, *Grove Art Online* is not Z39.50 compliant, but it does support standard HTTP requests.

It should be noted that the vendor states in the question & answers below that walk in users are not allowed “unless authenticated.” However, contract language as posted on the CCL-EAR website clearly states that authorized users are defined as either “(i) affiliated with the Subscriber as current students, faculty, library patrons, employees, or in some other capacity whereby they are permitted to access such services in the Subscriber’s ordinary course of business, or (ii) are physically present on the Subscriber’s premises.”

The following questions were answered by the vendor:

- Is the database ADA/Section 508 compliant? If not, what is the timeframe for compliance? Is there a “text-only” version?
 - The sites conform to common compliance standards in many important respects. They are being evaluated to reflect current technological searching and browsing standards.
- Is remote access available and, if so, what forms of authentication are supported? (E.g. IP, referring URL, username and password, etc.)
 - Yes to all 3 examples
- Does the vendor’s definition of “Authorized Users” include full and part-time faculty, students and staff affiliated with the subscribing library as well as walk-in users?
 - No to walk in users unless authenticated.
- If the database is cancelled, is access available to earlier content to which the library subscribed?
 - No

OTHER REVIEWS OF THIS DATABASE:

Bradncak, Marianne. “Grove Art Online and Grove Music Online.” *School Librarian* 52.1 (2004): 29.

Golderman, Gail, and Bruce Connolly. “The Artful Searcher.” *NetConnect* Spring 2003: 34+.
[Supplement to *Library Journal* 15 April 2003]

Heuer, Megan. “Virtual Makeover.” *ARTnews* June 2005: 40.

Knott, Donna. “Grove Art Online.” *Library Media Connection* Aug./Sept. 2005: 101.

Whittington, Christine. “Grove Art Online.” *Booklist* 1 Nov. 2004: 516.

Young, Terrence E., Jr. “Grove Art Online (GAO).” *School Library Journal* Feb. 2005: 90.