

# Enhancing Cultural Accessibility through Provision of Tools for Extending Knowledge

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“In the Beginning there was the Word” but what does it mean in context?

Communication is mediated by the exchange of concepts. Concepts are commonly expressed through words. Proper understanding of concepts is especially crucial within the arts and sciences. Without recognition of the set of words which constitute the vocabulary of a particular discipline, along with its specific cultural context, it is very difficult to communicate in that area. Being deprived of the possibility of exchanging concepts, we are deprived of the scientific output of individual nations. The question is: how can we provide world wide access to every nation's individual experiences? The assumption that constructing dictionaries is a useful solution seems to be justified.

How then should we construct a modern, professional dictionary, and which discipline should be the starting point? A dictionary is a set of words related to certain concept e.g. science, thus a scientific discipline forms a core – a sort of attractor for words. Being related to the concept the words themselves are related to each other, forming a sort of net surrounding the central core. Each word may occur within many cores (disciplines). For this reason a word creates junctions between various cores. The more interdisciplinary the science, the more junctions occur. In this respect, art restoration seems to be an extremely powerful ‘attractor’ which attracts words of numerous disciplines (this reflects its interdisciplinary character): art and craft, humanities (e.g. art history), technique (e.g. applied physics), technology (e.g. materials), biology (e.g. microbiology) etc.

Having constructed a professional dictionary of art restoration in one language, we may translate it into another language and, by extension, make cross translations to all languages, providing access to individual national experiences and output, thus enriching world cultural heritage.

How should we construct the new model of scientific dictionary of art restoration? The usual linear arrangement (i.e. alphabetical order) of the words describing the complex issues concerned with art restoration seems to be inappropriate. Having accepted a pragmatic attitude towards the construction a new structural model of the dictionary, we must analyze the specific character of art restoration and it soon becomes clear that all our activities could be recorded using a simple two dimensional co-ordinate system. Within this system we may visualise the case of any single artefact subjected to restoration-conservation treatments using two axes: “x” – the axis of time and “y” – the axis of matter. Thus on “y” we have the basic parts constituting an artwork (say a panel painting: wood, ground, painting layer and varnish i.e. technological strata) whereas on the “x” axis we have the main stages of its life-cycle over time (creation, existence, restoration process i.e. each alteration caused by intentional or unintentional activity resulting in changes to an artifact's technological strata and recorded in its historical strata sequence). This co-ordinate system allows us to build a database for the Dictionary by inserting records related to each possible plane (e.g. wood specimen, biodeterioration, diagnostic methods, wood consolidation).

This system is capable of describing all issues concerned with a single artifact, but if we want to cope with all possible artifacts and all possible issues, we have to add a third axis and employ a three-dimensional co-ordinate system. The third axis - “z”, is related to geography and culture (it allows us to involve such issues as:

local tradition, environment based factors of deterioration, social expectation of restoration procedures, or technical possibilities). Now, on this basis, following all planes and categories, we may gather a set of terms (entries) constituting a monolingual ART RESTORATION DICTIONARY, and as a following step generate a multilingual dictionary of the discipline.

Here we face a very important notion – that concepts do not entirely overlap between languages. If we imagine concepts in various languages as a range of meanings and place them one over the other, it becomes clear that there is only a limited range of overlap constituting the zone of general agreement – stated for instance in legal acts, whereas the monolingual areas of disagreement on meaning are usually culturally and historically influenced. Thus only the central zone is that of the word-for-word translation.

Using modern, computer tools and methodologies, we are able to construct a system which will allow us to shift from a word document on an individual laptop, to a digital record with global context linguistically which is accessible anywhere in the world. We are able to structure this database by extending the art restoration related nests into the nests related to other disciplines, thus constructing what we call INTERDISCIPLINARY MULTILINGUAL DICTIONARY (IMD).

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