Museums, New Media Art, Documentation and Collection

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1. EXTENDED ABSTRACT¹

CRUMB, the research centre CRUMB (<http://www.crumbweb.org>) at the University of Sunderland in the UK, has a deep interest in how the 'behaviours' of new media art, such as connectivity, computivity and interaction,² present opportunities and challenges for curators. One of the particular characteristics of new media is the connected network of issues concerning documentation, archiving, collecting and preserving works of new media art. Thinking of net art, for example, the same technologies might be involved in the production, distribution, interpretation, collection and preservation of the art, much to the confusion of tradition museum studies theories: as Howard Besser says, "*collection management systems start to look like exhibition systems*".³ The fact that these issues are connected is reflected in the kinds of events that CRUMB organizes: the symposium *Commissioning & Collecting Variable Media*,⁴ for example, acknowledged that the technical challenges of collecting new media had been largely addressed by useful case studies,⁵ leaving the conceptual challenges of policy concerning differentiating production, documentation and collection. As Lois Keidan pointed out at that event, the history of Live Art has much to offer concerning these issues.

One of the particular characteristics of new media is the connected network of issues concerning documentation, archiving, collecting and preserving works of new media art. This essay looks at the particular links between documentation leading onto archiving and collection, and interactive new media art in particular. The question of how much of the wider cultural context to document or archive is a key issue for new media art. Examples of crowd-sourced documentation from Caitlin Jones and Pad.ma are described, and crowd-sourced folksonomies compared to expert taxonomies in runme.org and Rhizome's Artbase. Moving from

documentation and archiving to collection, Steve Dietz describes the two-step process for collecting new-media art at the Walker Art Center, and Rudolph Frieling's experience of exhibiting from a collection at SFMOMA is examined. The importance of contextual documentation including audience response is stressed using the examples of the Variable Media project, a Robert Morris exhibition at Tate Modern, and Lizzie Muller's research on audience experiences of David Rokeby's work. A wide range of knowledge and documentation is therefore needed to complete the network of documentation, archiving and collection for new media art.

2. ENDNOTES

1. This presentation draws upon material from the book co-authored by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook: *Rethinking Curating: Art after New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Also from a presentation "Documentation, Archiving, and Interaction." *Media Libraries and Archives for the 21st Century* symposium. 28–29 May. Gijon: LABoral.
2. The discussion of new media art in terms of behaviours, including a chapter on participatory systems, is explored in Graham and Cook, *ibid.* and: Graham, Beryl (2010) What kind of participative system? Critical vocabularies from new media art. In: A. Dezeuze (ed.) *The 'Do-it-Yourself' Artwork: Participation from Fluxus to New Media*. Manchester University Press. 281–305.
3. In Dietz, Steve, and Scott Sayre, guest eds. (2000). *Spectra (USA)*, 27 (1). Special issue: *The Millennial Museum*, 17. Also available at <http://www.artsconnected.org/millennialmuseum>
4. At BALTIC, Gateshead, 2010. A collaboration between Contemporary Art Society and CRUMB. <http://www.crumbweb.org/getSeminarDetail.php?id=14>
5. See links and bibliographies concerning Documentation and Archiving and Collecting / Conservation. <http://www.crumbweb.org>