Collaborating across Organizational Lines

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In the spring of 2015 the University of Iowa Museum of Art and the University of Iowa Libraries collaborated on a project to conserve and digitize four large-format folios of Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s 18th century Le Antichità Romane from the UIMA collection.

**Project Catalysts**

**UI Museum of Art**
- No permanent museum location due to 2008 flood.
- No suitable space to engage in a long-term conservation project at the temporary location.
- Folios to be featured in an upcoming exhibit.

**UI Libraries**
- Has a conservation lab, but limited staff time to perform treatments on other collections.
- Acquired digitization equipment capable of photographing large-format folios.

**Interdepartmental Collaboration**

**Object Conservation**
- Photo documentation showing before and after effects of conservation treatment.
- Light cleaning in the margins and gutters of each page with brushes.
- Mends to tears in the print pages are addressed with conservation papers and wheat paste.
- Sonic humidifier is used to lessen the effect of incorrect folds.

**Digital Image Capture**
- Create a ~300 ppi, uncompressed TIF image of each page spread.
- Use UIMA accession number as basis for file naming protocol to facilitate integration into UIMA database.
- Build supports to accommodate multipage foldouts; largest foldout measured 63 inches.
- Take multiple images of largest page spread to create a merged photo of the entire spread.

Conservation of the Piranesi folios is the greatest collaboration of staff, skills, and space sharing that has occurred to date. UIMA’s Sarah Luko spent ~50 hours treating the folios in the UI Libraries’ conservation lab. The success of this project has made way for new possibilities.

**Takeaways**
- Leverage in-house skills.
- Share resources: staff time, space, & equipment.
- Strengthen relationships; maximize knowledge.
- Quicker turnaround and access to objects during conservation treatment.
- Create and implement common metadata standards.
- Preserve physical and digital resources.

**Current/Future Projects**
- Conservation/rebinding Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Los Desastres de la Guerra (The Disasters of War), 1863, Etching and aquatint.
- Loan of UI Libraries Special Collection pamphlet to UIMA exhibition.