

Annotated Reference Guide - Art and Art History

This annotated subject guide serves to orientate art and art history researchers towards reference resources, both in print and online, that may best fulfill their information-seeking needs. The population that this guide serves are adults conducting research for professional, academic, and independent objectives. Sample populations may include the library users at The Art Institute of Chicago and The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. The following selections are informed by resource needs defined by Art Libraries Society of North America's Core Competencies.¹

General Reference Works

In addition to subject-specific resources, art-information research also requires interdisciplinary-reference resources of a more general nature that serve as a foundation for historical and social context.

1. Dictionaries:

In addition to English language dictionaries, researchers in art and art history will typically require dual-language dictionaries (due to the discipline's academic origins), especially in German and another Romance language such as French.

- OED Online. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com>.
[subscription required for full access]

OED is a comprehensive dictionary that is regularly updated. It features definitions, etymology, and examples of use.

¹ See Core Competencies 1 & 2, "ARLIS/NA Core Competencies for Art Information Professionals." Art Libraries Society of North America, 2017.
<https://www.arlisna.org/images/researchreports/arlisnacorecomps.pdf>

- Langenscheidt. <https://en.langenscheidt.com/>
Langenscheidt is one of the most widely used authorities in German-language dictionaries. It is available in print, with additional features such as pronunciation audio and examples of use available freely online.
- WordReference. <https://www.wordreference.com/>
WordReference is a strong resource for English, Spanish, Italian, and French dual-language dictionary needs. It features definitions, verb conjugation charts, pronunciation audio, examples of use, and a user-participatory Q&A section.

2. Credo Reference. Boston: Credo Reference. <http://credoreference.com>.

[subscription required]

In order to write thoughtfully about any specific research topic, it is imperative to be aware of its broader cultural context. This online aggregated database includes over 3,400 reference titles, and is an authoritative resource for a wide-variety of subject matters including history and philosophy. Various dictionaries and encyclopedias are included as well.

3. The Chicago Manual of Style. 17th ed. University of Chicago, 2017. OCLC:

1003322871 [subscription required for full online access:

<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>]

The Chicago Manual of Style is the style guide used by most academic art historians. The online version has a free-access Quick Guide that is an excellent resource for frequently answered questions; The printed bible is essential for more nuanced details and explanations.

4. Barnet, Sylvan. *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*. 11th edition. Pearson, 2015.

OCLC: 906109726 [eBook version available as well, OCLC: 1097642050]

Sylvan Barnet's guidebook is an excellent reference resource for beginning and advanced writers that will provide clear tools and techniques for art writing. Sections include guidance for description and analysis of artworks and art materials, recommendations for how to navigate research, and advice

for writing for different formats spanning from exhibition labels to book manuscripts.

5. "Copyright Law of the United States, and Related Laws combined in Title 17 of the United States Code." *Copyright.gov*. <https://www.copyright.gov/title17/>

An important aspect of image-related professions is the understanding of copyright law that controls the publication and reproduction of protected images, as well as the special exceptions allowed for non-commercial, academic, and transformative uses. Although numerous interpretations and guidelines are available, the most up-to-date and authoritative text on the subject is the law itself, which is freely available online.

Art History Reference Resources

6. *Art History survey texts:*

Just like an excellent dictionary, or excellent dictionaries, a strong reference collection of information resources that specialize in Art History are crucial tools.

Perhaps the most crucial resources for art and art history scholars are art history survey texts which serve as frequently used resources throughout one's career. These are five of the standard survey texts used by academic institutions. Though each provides a survey of Western art history (spanning from prehistoric to contemporary), with special emphasis on painting and sculpture, each has a different strengths and weaknesses due to various perspectives.

- Stockstad, Marilyn. *Art History*. 6th edition. Pearson, 2018. OCLC: 1090283433
- Janson, H.W. *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*. 8th edition. Pearson, 2016. OCLC (Vol 1): 930795876 (Vol 2): 887186711
- Gardner, Helen. *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: a Global History*. 16th edition. Cengage Learning, 2020. OCLC: 1081190650

- Foster, Hal, et al. *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*. 3rd edition. Thames and Hudson, 2016. OCLC: 972092195
- Gombrich, E.H. *The Story of Art*. 19th edition. Phaidon, 2016. OCLC: 993360795

7. Oxford Art Online. Oxford University Press.

<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/public/>. [subscription required]

Oxford Art Online features in-depth coverage of art reference resources, including dictionaries and encyclopedias. Its features include international art and artists, bibliographies, citations, images, dictionaries of art terminology, and more. Oxford Art Online includes Grove Art Online and Benezit Dictionary of Artists. A-Z listing of artists, biographical sketches, timelines, and subject guides.

8. ARTstor. Ithaka. <http://www.artstor.org> [subscription required]

ARTstor is an image database that includes over 2 million digital images pertaining to the visual arts, humanities, and sciences. Digital collections are sourced from museums, libraries, archives, and private collections.

Frequently used to create personal image portfolios for study or presentation.

9. Art & Architecture Source. EBSCO. [subscription required]

Art & Architecture Source is an online database resource that includes fine arts, decorative arts, commercial art, architecture, and design subjects. It includes full-texts of a selection of journals, magazines, books, and image collections of international scope, with comprehensive indexing and abstracts that enhance accessibility and accurate search results. Art & Architecture Source is one of the most popular database subscriptions used by art institutions.

10. *Media-specific surveys:*

Since most art-history survey texts have a predominating focus on painting and sculpture, alternative media-specific survey texts are needed as general reference texts of canonical works for research in other media that have emerged since the 19th century. These four texts are a sample of core

reference texts for disciplinary research in photography, printmaking, video, and new media art.

- Warner, Marien, Mary. *Photography: a Cultural History*. Pearson, 2015. OCLC: 935095500
- Hults, Linda C. *The Print in the Western World*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1996. OCLC: 247772187
- Fifer, Sally Jo. *Illuminating Video: an Essential Guide to Video Art*. Aperture, 1991. OCLC: 263537597
- Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2002. OCLC: 44509405

Primary Texts and Articles

11. Harrison, Charles, ed. *Art in Theory, 1900-2000: an Anthology of Changing Ideas* Blackwell Publishing, 1997. OCLC: 924827837

This text features canonical primary texts that have defined the development of 20th-century art history—including nearly 400 excerpts of seminal texts written by artists, critics, and historians. This resource is frequently used as a companion text to Hal Foster’s *Art Since 1900* survey text.

12. JSTOR. Ithaka. <http://jstor.org> [subscription required]

For articles in art and art history, JSTOR is an authoritative eJournal-collection database that includes access to over 12 million academic resources from multiple publishers. Its comprehensive coverage (reaching back to the 19th century), full-text resources, and comprehensive indexing has helped JSTOR build a reputation as one of the most valuable electronic resources for art and art history research.

13. *Art Full Text & Art Index Retrospective* (EBSCO) [subscription required]

Art Full Text is a database that features indexing, abstracts, and full-texts of international periodicals from the late 20th century to the present. *Art Index Retrospective* features indexes, abstracts, and image citations for art

periodicals and publications from the early to late 20th century. EBSCO frequently pairs these two databases together for research institutions.

Appraisal Resources

14. Yeide, Nancy H., et al. *The AAM Guide to Provenance Research*. American Association of Museums. American Association of Museums, 2003. OCLC: 1101328708

This guidebook is a standard in provenance research. It provides comprehensive and authoritative resource for tracking the ownership history of artworks. Provenance research clarifies questions of ownership, legality, authorship, and effects the monetary value of a work of art.

15. Artnet. <http://artnet.com>. [subscription required]

The Artnet Price Database is a comprehensive archive of international fine-art auctions. Its coverage is updated daily and includes images, listings, and results for over 500 international auction houses that span back to 1985.

Art News

16. The Art Newspaper. <http://theartnewspaper.com> [subscription required for full access]

The Arts Newspaper is available both in print and online. Based in New York City and London, it is a leading journal for international news and event coverage in the arts field. Each publication includes feature articles that cover news and market updates, book and exhibition reviews, and event listings. The print version is published monthly; The online edition is updated daily.

17. College Art Association Conference. <http://www.collegeart.org> [membership subscription required for full access]

The College Art Association is the leading membership organization for art and art history professionals. Their website features news, updates, book and exhibition listings and reviews, professional standards publications, and a forum to share open calls and job postings. The website also features access

to two monthly journals published by the organization: The Art Bulletin (for art historical coverage) and Arts Journal (which has a contemporary focus). The annual week-long conference features panel discussions, lectures, and workshops by international participants; a job interview fair; and a book and trade market.

18. Contemporary Art Daily. <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com/>

Contemporary Art Daily is an open-access online journal that specializes in compiling international art-gallery and museum-exhibition listings featuring image slideshows, press-release texts, and contact information. The website is updated daily and has weekly newsletter subscription options. A post archive and keyword-search features enhance the entry points to content.

Archives

19. ArchiveGrid. OCLC. <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>

ArchiveGrid provides free access to a database of over 5 million descriptions to archival materials sources from archives, libraries, museums, and organizations throughout (mostly) the United States. This resource enhances access to previously hard-to-find primary-resource material in special collections throughout the country by indexing finding aids (that were previously in incompatible formats) and adding them to the OCLC database (which also channels into the Worldcat database).

20. Europeana Collections. <https://www.europeana.eu>

Europeana Collections is a free internet resource that provides digital access to over 50 million cultural-heritage items from museums, galleries, archives, and library collections across Europe. Collections feature images, texts, videos, sound, and 3D representations. As a leader in semantic-web resources, Europeana's open content and innovative metadata schema enhances access points. Additionally, Europeana also presents digital exhibitions and blogs.