

Institution: KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
Unit of Assessment: 36 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management)
Title of case study: Changing economic thinking to enable the world's greatest museums to deliver digital images free of charge to everyone.
1. Summary of the impact Research by Simon Tanner has had a significant effect on open access policy in the museum sector. His research demonstrated that the cost of managing intellectual property and maintaining payment structures in cultural heritage collections almost always outweighs actual revenue. Museums, galleries and archives internationally have embraced unmediated, open access to digitised assets and Tanner's work is frequently acknowledged as a catalyst for this change in policy. Since 2008, the number of high quality digital images freely available from art museums has risen to more than 2 million. The key beneficiaries have been the general public, schools and life-long learners.
2. Underpinning research Simon Tanner was awarded a \$200,000 grant in 2003 to carry out research for the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation leading to a study entitled 'Reproduction charging models & rights policy for digital images in American art museums' [3.1] (published 2004; in turn building on research carried out by Tanner focussing on the UK and Europe, published in 2002). This was the largest single grant ever given by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for research into museum policy and since publication this research has become instrumental in influencing museum policy and thinking concerning opening access to images, rights management strategy, and charging models. Tanner's research provided a quantitative and qualitative evidence base which had not been achieved previously and has not been replicated since. One hundred US art museums were surveyed and in-depth interviews (sometimes over 2-3 days) were carried out with 20 museums. Over 4,000 data points were collected, correlated and compared to provide a unique insight into policy, practice and the economic realities of museum digital image provision. At the time, many museums thought that the provision of images of artworks was very profitable for a few select major museums. However, Tanner's research demonstrated that museums do not create images of their art (digital or otherwise) for commercial reasons. Instead, images are created for educational use, to serve the public, and to promote the museum and its collections. The research demonstrated for the first time that no museum was making a surplus from non-commercial (i.e. scholarly, educational and public) use of images and that the cost of managing intellectual property and maintaining payment structures in cultural heritage collections almost always outweighed actual revenue. The research has been influential as it still provides the key evidence base upon which national and international cultural heritage policy is considered. As Alan Newman, Chief of the Division of Imaging & Visual Services at the US National Gallery of Art has written: 'A key argument for unfettered access to online museum image collections is the study Tanner did for the Andrew W. Mellon foundation... The analysis demonstrated that the cost of maintaining and managing the business structures for image licensing far exceeds the fees collected' [5.1]. According to Michael Edson, Director of Web and New Media Strategy at the Smithsonian Institute, Tanner's research

‘was, and remains, a godsend—an unprecedented instance of careful, methodical, evidence-based research in a field dominated by voodoo economics and wishful thinking’ [5.2].

A 2013 study by Kristin Kelly published in 2013 [5.9] demonstrates that there has been a significant shift in museum policy since 2007-08 due to the following critical factors: declining revenue; increasing lack of comfort in where to draw the line between open and commercial uses; senior leadership agreement in favour of an open access approach alongside technological innovations which enable images to be made accessible with greater ease. These factors have increased the impact of Tanner’s research among the core beneficiaries: the general public and life-long learners who benefit from free access to images and content from museums and galleries.

Key Researchers

- Simon Tanner, Director of Digital Consulting, Deputy Head of Department of Digital Humanities (at King’s from August 2003 onwards)

3. References to the research

3.1 Tanner, S. (2004) Reproduction charging models & rights policy for digital images in American art museums: A Mellon Foundation study. Simon Tanner, King’s College London, 2004 Available at: <http://msc.mellon.org/research-reports> (peer reviewed)

(The grant, originally awarded to Tanner at University of Hertfordshire (2003), transferred to King’s College London with Tanner (2003) and was substantially (>75%) completed by Tanner at King’s.)

Cited as highly influential in: Sanderhoff (2012) and Pantalony (2013) [5.10].

4. Details of the impact

By the beginning of 2008, there were millions of low resolution images that were digitally available to the public. However, it is estimated that there were fewer than 50,000 images from museums which were both high resolution and freely available under open access provisions for non-commercial use. By 2013, the number of freely available high-quality images from museums had grown to more than 2 million [5.9].

Tanner’s research fed into and impacted this growth. As Neal Stimler, Associate Digital Asset Specialist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art writes: ‘Tanner’s report on digital rights strategies in American art museums was a critical testament that contributed to the increase of open access initiatives in museums in the United States. The report fundamentally challenged the ethics of rights and reproductions practices in museums, shifting museum efforts firmly in the principled direction of public service and mission through open access’ [5.3]. The Metropolitan alone has released more than 540,000 images (of which 398,000 are high resolution) for personal and educational use. Bill LeFurgy, Digital Preservation Manager at the Library of Congress, has emphasised how Tanner’s research allows heritage organisations to advance arguments for free access which are based on economics: ‘Governments and other funders respond to this category of justification because it is constructed in practical, tangible terms that clearly demonstrate value. In an era of reduced budgets and increased competition for resources, it is essential for institutions to marshal a strong and compelling value proposition’ [5.4].

Moreover museums and galleries in Europe and the US have cited Tanner’s research as instrumental in initiating and supporting their own drive to open access. As Michael Edson of the

Smithsonian states: 'In my experience within the Smithsonian Institution, Tanner's study provided me with the data, insight, and rationale for defeating a proposed image use policy [that] would have required an enormous up-front investment to build an online image store, it would have kept images out of the hands of our most productive users and collaborators for decades: it almost certainly would have never made a profit. Tanner's study taught me how to think about the value proposition of the proposed policy, and it gave me the data, and the courage, to successfully change the course of the policy debate' [5.2]. Edson concludes that: 'Tanner's study is the most important piece of research in my field. I truly believe that any individual, anywhere in the world, who sees a free, high resolution, high quality reproduction of a museum object online has 'Reproduction charging models and rights strategy for digital images in American art museums' to thank' [5.2].

Other US art museums which have acknowledged the impact of Tanner's study include the Yale University Art Museums, the US National Gallery of Art and the Walters Art Museum. In 2011, Yale University Art Museums made over 250,000 high quality digital images of its cultural heritage collections openly and freely available. John French, Director of Visual Resources at Yale Art Gallery, has said that Tanner's work 'cemented their decision' to move to an Open Access model: 'In the months after Open Access was announced we saw a 40% increase in the number of requests we received through our Rights and Reproductions offices which we feel is a success and clear indicator we made a wise move' [5.5]. In March 2012, the US National Gallery of Art launched its new NGA Images site: 'NGA Images [is] a new online resource that revolutionizes the way the public may interact with its world-class collection,' writes Alan Newman at the US National Gallery of Art. 'Since inception more than 400,000 images have been downloaded... There is no doubt that Tanner's scholarship during the last 25 years has provided a leadership framework for cultural heritage institutions developing public policy relating to collection image access' [5.1]. The Walters Art Museum in Baltimore makes 19,000 images freely available. William Noel, formerly of the Walters Art Museum, writes: 'Tanner is one of the most influential figures in a fast changing digital environment for cultural heritage assets. In my view, he is a driving force for change. I regard my own recent award as a "White House Open Science Champion of Change" as in part belonging to Tanner... As I was recently quoted in a Mellon report by Kris Kelly, the Walters loss of control of its images was essential to its success. Simon Tanner and a few colleagues held my hand as I relinquished that control' [5.6]. Noel states that the Walters Art Museum has had 2.5 million views on Flickr over 3.5 years and has commented on how its illuminated manuscripts are now more available to the public than those of larger national collections.

Tanner's research has had impact outside of the US. The National Gallery of Denmark, for example, cites Tanner's work as instrumental. For example, Merete Sanderhoff of the Department of Collections and Research at the National Gallery of Denmark, comments: 'The recognition that [charging for access] is both expensive to run, and effectively prohibits the public from accessing and using images of artworks that rightly belong to them, has proven a highly efficient argument to make real change happen' [5.7].

Tanner, Vetch and others in the Department of Digital Humanities have drawn upon this research to support their knowledge transfer activities and the work of the King's Cultural Institute. Tanner has provided consultancy that has drawn upon and updated the conclusions of the research, and

he continues to influence policy planning and implementation in major cultural heritage institutions. Recent examples include work with National Museums Liverpool to develop revenue streams from digital images. He has also worked with the National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI) to develop a digitisation and digital preservation strategy for 2009-2011. As the Head of Collections Management at the NMNI states: 'Tanner's research provides key evidence in setting new objectives for cultural heritage digital content and engagement' [5.8]. Tanner's work remains influential for national discourses on the use and availability of digital images as seen in the 2012 report to the Heritage Agency of Denmark [5.10] and the World Intellectual Property Organization Guide on Managing Intellectual Property for Museums [5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Correspondence: Chief of the Division of Imaging & Visual Services at the US National Gallery of Art (statement uploaded)

5.2 Correspondence: Director of Web and New Media Strategy at the Smithsonian (statement uploaded)

5.3 Correspondence: Associate Digital Asset Specialist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (statement uploaded)

5.4 Correspondence: Digital Preservation Manager at the Library of Congress (statement uploaded)

5.5 Correspondence: Director of Visual Resources at Yale Art Gallery (statement uploaded)

5.6 Correspondence: Director of the Special Collections Center and the Schoenberg Institute at the University of Pennsylvania, formerly of the Walters Art Museum (available on request)

5.7 Correspondence: Collections and Research, National Gallery of Denmark (available on request)

5.8 Correspondence: Head of Collections Management, National Museums Northern Ireland (available on request)

5.9 Kelly, K. (2013) Images of Works of Art in Museum Collections: The Experience of Open Access – a study of 11 museums, CLIR pub 157, June 2013.

Available at: www.clir.org/pubs/reports/

5.10 Pantalony, R.E. (2013) WIPO Guide on Managing Intellectual Property for Museums, World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva, 2013. Available at:

http://www.wipo.int/copyright/en/museums_ip/

Sanderhoff, M. (2012) Image sharing and mobile strategies, Report to the Heritage Agency of Denmark, 2012. Available at:

http://www.kulturarv.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/kulturarv/museer/dokumenter/SMK_p5_2011_Smithsonian.pdf