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## Dissemination Strategies of the libraries at the Museo Nacional del Prado and the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid

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### Abstract:

*The library services at the Museo Nacional del Prado (MNP) and the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza (MNTB) are designed to supply information to their patrons and to support the learning, investigation and dissemination of their collections.*

*The Museo Nacional del Prado has a long tradition of almost two hundred years. It possesses one of the greatest collections of European painting from the 12th to the 19th century and an important collection of sculptures, drawings, prints and decorative arts. All its activity revolves around the art collection and a large part of the tasks are carried out in the Library, Archive and Documentation Department. 15,000 works of art, the Digital Library and 12,000 digitized historical archive documents are accessible through the museum website.*

*The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza is a 25 years institution originated from a private collection. It specializes in European art from the 13th to the mid-20th century and also has a magnificent collection of American paintings from the 19th and 20th centuries. Similarly to the Museo Nacional del Prado, the activities in the departments revolve around the permanent collection and the temporary exhibitions. The website displays 1,000 works from the collection as well as online publications. Its most immediate strategy is to incorporate the catalogue onto the museum website and to be present in specialized aggregators.*

*These two intuitions show that libraries should adapt to technological advances in order to present all available resources and to facilitate access to all types of information. This will optimize the visibility of their resources, now accessible through the web to virtual users with different profiles.*

**Keywords:** art libraries, Spanish museum libraries, library networks, libraries users, digital archives, artwork documentation system

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## **Dissemination Strategies of Museo Nacional del Prado (MNP) Library, Archive and Documentation Area.**

Museo Nacional del Prado is the main symbol of Spanish culture<sup>1</sup>. Created in 1819 with the masterpieces gathered by the Spanish monarchy, its evolution is closely linked to the development of the history of Spain. Throughout its almost 200 years of trajectory, the MNP has been enriched with artworks from the Museo de la Trinidad, Museo de Arte Moderno and various bequests and acquisitions. At present, the MNP has an excellent patrimonial collection with more than 8,000 European paintings dated between the 12th and 19th centuries. The schools of Flemish, Dutch, French, Italian and, of course, the Spanish painting are widely represented, highlighting the extraordinary and abundant paintings of Bosch, Rubens, Dürer, Raphael and Titian, El Greco and, indeed, Velázquez and Goya, the best Spanish painters of their time. Besides, it has compiled a remarkable collection of drawings, engravings, photographs, sculptures and decorative arts. The research, management and conservation of this art treasures are the main functions of the Museum, but it is also essential to disseminate it through catalogues, permanent and temporary exhibitions, educational activities and today, naturally, by the Museum's website and social networks.

### ***Library, Archive and Documentation Area of the MNP***

The Museum's information systems revolve around its art works, as well as all kinds of activities carried out in the Institution. The internal information generated by the Museum is managed through the Documentation and Archive Service, while the external information is controlled by the research Library. Thus, the information services of all the Museum's collections are assembled in a single department, which is called the Library, Archive and Documentation Area<sup>2</sup>. Since 2009, this department is integrated into the Centre of Studies for research and education activities and housed in the historic building of Casón del Buen Retiro, very close to the Museum's headquarters<sup>3</sup>. The holdings of the Library, the Archive and the Documentation Service are delivered into the Giordano Reading Room, under a spectacular vault painted at the end of the 17th century by the Italian decorative painter Luca Giordano. By means of the computers in the reading room, the library catalogue (100,000 records) can be searched, along with the databases of the art documentation management system (38,000 records) and the archive management system (42,000 records).

### ***Library***

The subject of the Library is art history in general and, like that of the Museum, it is also the European art between the Middle Ages and the nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>. It contains 91,000 monographs, 14,000 volumes of auction catalogues and about 1,400 periodical titles on painting, sculpture, drawing, engraving, photography and decorative arts. In addition, the Library has manuscripts, posters, brochures and audio visual material. In order to provide specialized information, the Library has subscribed to various electronic resources about art market prices (Art Price), full-text magazine articles (JSTOR, EBSCO), bibliography of Art

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of the MNP and its collections see *Enciclopedia* (2006).

<sup>2</sup> J. Docampo; A. Martín Bravo (2009).

<sup>3</sup> S. Cánovas del Castillo; J. Docampo (2018).

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the Library, see L. Aisa, et al. (2010); M. Bausá, et al. (2012).

(ProQuest), biographical dictionaries of artists (Oxford Art Online) and images database (ARTSORT).



The Museo Nacional del Prado Library

The Library's heritage holdings are composed of almost 7,000 books prior to 1900<sup>5</sup>. Most of these valuable books have been entered the last fifteen years, following the purchase of several private libraries: Cervelló, Madrazo, Correa and Bordes. Within this patrimonial set, there are early editions of the best renowned treatises of architecture, painting and sculpture that claimed the intellectual character of the artistic creation. It has treatises of geometry, perspective, anatomy or physiognomy, useful to create artistic compositions, and drawing books that were indispensable for the learning of this discipline; there are also essential texts for artistic practice such as the lives of saints and iconography, emblem or mythology books. Besides, biographical dictionaries and monographs of artists, museum catalogues and portrait, travel, geography and history illustrated books are preserved in the Library.

The Library meets the researching and information needs of the curatorial, technical and conservation staff. Its specialized information resources are available to the general public too, mainly for students, scholars or art history enthusiasts. Internal users can make desiderata, request interlibrary loans and have open access to the storage room of modern monographs and journals. The loans are checked out by a self-service machine which uses radio frequency identification technology (RFID). External readers directly consult the reference collection into the Giordano Reading Room, but they have to fill out a form for requesting the books kept in the storeroom.

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<sup>5</sup> J. Docampo (2010).

Museum's staff can access the electronic resources, the documentation and the archive databases, and the library catalogue through the Intranet. On the contrary, external users can only access these databases from the computer stations installed in the lecture room.

There are also two auxiliary libraries at the Drawing and Print Cabinet and the Restoration Workshop for the use of their employees, although external users can consult their holdings in the Giordano Reading Room.

Extension activities are an ideal tool for the dissemination of content and services. Annually, the Prado's Library organises concerts to celebrate the Book Day, with Renaissance and Baroque music or the rhythm of Jazz to attract other audiences susceptible to become readers of the Library. These activities are communicated in the social networks of the MNP (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), an exceptional virtual area for capturing new users. Other ways of promotion are the visits to the Library and to the Archive, mainly groups of students of art history, or the participation in the network of museum libraries named BIMUS.

The bibliographical exhibitions are an extraordinary channel for the communication of the Library's heritage. Not only do they make the bibliographic items known to museum visitors, but they enhance the reputation and visibility of the Library within the Organization. The MNP has organized two exhibitions with books from its Library, *Bibliotheca Artis* and *The Greco's library*<sup>6</sup>. As regards other Museum's exhibits, catalogues and brochures were published and conferences and visits were organized within the educational programs.

On many occasions, a book, a manuscript or a journal of the Library is good to contextualize a masterpiece in temporary exhibitions produced by the MNP or other institutions. Thus, the books reach the consideration of objects with historical and artistic value, like the rest of the collections of the Museum, and leave the storage rooms to coexist with paintings or sculptures in the exhibition halls. Sometimes, a book has even been bought in order to be shown in a temporary exhibition of the Museum<sup>7</sup>.

But, at this time of paradigm change in which we are living, the best way to make well known the materials of the MNP Library is to have as much information accessible on the Internet. The Library's catalogue is consulted across the WEB since 2007. Furthermore, there is a Digital Library, which offers the knowledge generated by the MNP since its beginning (<https://www.museodelprado.es/aprende/biblioteca/biblioteca-digital/buscador>). So, it is possible to read and download all the catalogues, inventories, and exhibition catalogues published by the Museum from 1819 to 1995.

### ***Documentation***

The Documentation Service analyses the historical, graphical, technical and administrative information related to each work of art of the MNP and includes it in the System of Access to the Collections (SAC)<sup>8</sup>. This documentation management system is composed of different databases that generate and update information related to the artworks. Each record has

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<sup>6</sup> J. Docampo, ed. (2010); J. Docampo, ed. (2014).

<sup>7</sup> J.A. Crowe; G. B. Cavalcaselle. *The early Flemish Painters*. London: John Murray, (1857) has been acquired to be displayed at the exhibition *La Fuente de la Gracia* (23/10/2018-27/01/2019), about an oil painting by Jan Van Eyck's Workshop.

<sup>8</sup> A. Gutiérrez (2009); A. Martín; J. Pantoja (2013).

explanatory texts, extracted from the labels of exhibition rooms or printed catalogues, restoration reports, past movements and present location, exhibitions, historical and current photographs digitized, data on the history and provenance and selected bibliography. In the field of provenance, sometimes digitized documents are linked to the archive database. Bibliographical references are linked to the library's catalogue too. The Museum's staff can consult SAC by means of the Intranet. External users can also access it by the Giordano Reading Room's computer terminals.

Users are diversified and increased exponentially when SAC is displayed on the web. In 2007, the *Online Gallery* was opened with 1,000 pieces. When the Museum's semantic web was presented in 2015, there were already 10,000 works. Currently, more than 15,000 works of art in Spanish and almost 5,000 in English are accessible through the *Collection* channel of the website <https://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion>. Except the location in warehouses or the restoration reports, the website provides all the available information of each artwork: biography of the artist, comment, technical data, bibliography, iconography, provenance, as well as a high resolution image that can be downloaded without cost. The technology of the semantic web establishes relationships between different creations by the same author, but also links the work of art with educational activities or with videos on the YouTube channel of the Museum. All this flow of information is extraordinarily useful for art historians, students, professors and other professionals. Beyond, it supports the information needs of art amateurs and tourists who wish to prepare their visit to the Museum and enables learning all lifelong of users, preferably located in an age range of between 18 and 34 years. The returning visitors reach 80% and they come mostly from Spain (60%), as well as other Latin American countries, USA and neighbour countries like France and Italy. The most searched terms in the *Collection* channel are "Sorolla", "Goya" and "Las Meninas".

### ***Archive***

The Archive, that contains 4,700 boxes, is the third pillar of the Department. It gathers, organizes, preserves and disseminates the organizational documentation generated by the MNP. It also collects personal papers of artists, art collectors, merchants and historians, along with ephemera material. The Archive contains the memory of the Museum and its documentation allows the investigation of the history of the institution, its buildings, masterpieces, museography or exhibition and educational activities from its origins.

As a continuation of the free diffusion policy of the Museum's collections started in 2007 with the *Online Gallery* of masterpieces, last year the Digital Archive was launched (<https://archivo.museodelprado.es/prado/>), converting the MNP into one of the few art institutions that offer their digitalized archive on Internet. Users anywhere in the world can explore 12,000 digitized historical records by a free-text browser or by an expert search following the classification scheme, which can be refined by year, place or name of person. The documents requested are shown summarized and faceted by documentary typology, people, institutions or subjects. As a complement, groups of digitized records have been created (*Correspondence of directors, Museology, Spanish Civil War, Personal archives*) for those interested in the history of the MNP and in the general culture. At the end of the microsite main page some documents are featured such as the appointment of the painter Pablo Picasso as director of the MNP during the Spanish Civil War. Since its launch on November 27, 2017 until the end of May 2018, the Museum's Digital Archive has received almost 35,000 visits and 140,000 pages have been seen. The most consulted terms are

“Velázquez” and “Goya”, the majority of visitors come from Spain (66,49%), America and Europe and mostly have an age range between 35 and 64.

### ***Other dissemination strategies of the MNP Library***

- Preparation of the *Ephemeral Prado* on the occasion of the bicentennial of the Museum to be commemorated next year. This microsite will compile all the ephemera material related to the graphic image of the Institution and its collections -postcards, leaflets, invitation cards, Christmas cards, didactic material, posters, stamps, tickets, lottery tickets and metro tickets-, preserved in the Department of Drawings and Prints, in the Archive and in the Library. The metadata and digital images of each piece of ephemera will be extracted from the three document management systems: artworks, archive and library.
- An exhibition with the outstanding collection of drawing books from the Library will be displayed in the temporary galleries of the Museum, also within the Bicentenary's Programme.
- The replacement of the Digital Library software to improve the search tool and increase and enhance its contents, especially with rare books published between the 15th and 19th centuries.
- The growth of the number of digitized records accessible through the Digital Archive and of artworks available in the website channel *Collection*, in both Spanish and English.

### **Dissemination Strategies of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza (MNTB) Library**

#### ***The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and its Library***

The Museum opened in Madrid in 1992 as a result of the temporary loan agreement that the Barons Hans Heinrich and Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza had reached with the Spanish government in 1989. The permanent collection of the MNTB currently comprises 775 masterpieces of the Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection originally located in Lugano (Switzerland). This outstanding collection has been considered the most important private one in the world before it was acquired by the Spanish state in June 1993 for 350 million dollars. The Museum is housed in the Villahermosa Palace, one of the most representative noble constructions in Madrid's repertoire of palatial architecture. The palace was built at the beginning of the 19th century and located between the Carrera de San Jerónimo and the Paseo del Prado, in a privileged position opposite the large Buen Retiro Palace. The holdings offer a display of all the major periods and pictorial schools of European painting dating from the 13th century to the late 20th century. We have works from Van Eyck, Dürer, Caravaggio, Rembrandt and Goya. But also we have pieces from movements not found in Spanish state collections such as Impressionism, Fauvism, German Expressionism and experimental vanguards of the beginning of the 20th century: Van Gogh, Gauguin, Klee... In addition, it boasts an exceptional collection from late 18th to early 20<sup>th</sup> century American paintings not found either in any other European museum. In 2004, the Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection (CTB) was brought to the Museum, adding over 200 works that round out the

representation of styles and genres already present in the permanent collection. Both collections comprise almost one thousand works of art, mainly paintings, with which the museum offers an overview of the history of European painting<sup>9</sup>. The Museum is focused on satisfying the demand of the national and foreign public through the dissemination of its collections, the organization of attractive temporary exhibitions and creative activities that are a reference of quality in the Spanish cultural panorama.

From the opening of the MNTB a reference library was created for the curatorial departments, museum educators and other staff members. The aim focused mainly on providing specialized art resources for the documentation of the Museum's collection, the preparation of temporary exhibitions and activities related to its disclosure. This last aspect is especially important, since the Library is in fact the department where the first ideas for holding temporary exhibitions take shape and their viability are evaluated after having studied the artworks of museums and private collectors. It has also served to provide valuable material to temporary exhibitions produced by the Museum, integrating them into the exhibition discourse<sup>10</sup>.

We acquired mainly monographs of artists, catalogues raisonné, catalogues of temporary exhibitions, works of reference on the field of art; art history and museum's permanent in public and private national and international collections. In late 1999 a holding of about 8,500 titles was added to the Library on a long-term loan basis from the art library of the Thyssen-Bornemisza family, at the express wish of Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza. These books came from the family residence at Villa Favorita in Lugano. The Library also has a selection of publications from Baroness Thyssen-Bornemisza, again on long-term loan. From its outset, the books were located on the third floor of the Palacio de Villahermosa in a long, narrow space under the eaves. The physical ordering and classification of the holdings has been adapted in response to the needs of the curators, and the books are organized by subject matter according to the Universal Decimal Classification. The total surface of the Library is 377 m<sup>2</sup> and comprises of 770 linear meters of shelving. The Library has over 31,400 copies in circulation. The holding also includes over 140 ongoing periodical publications and a small collection of items of audiovisual material. In 2017 the Library was incorporated on to the museum's website.

The access continues to be restricted to MNTB staff members and external researchers who are working on topics related to the Museum's permanent collection and the CTB Collection. We also provide a service to museum guides, exhibition curators, post-graduates and other specialist researchers. Appointments are to be made in advance via email. An online information service is also provided.

The restricted use of the Library has been mainly the reason of its recent visibility on the Thyssen website. The information provided today about this department is limited to a presentation highlighting the singularity and value of its collection, the services and a historical review. Since the introduction of the information about the Library on the MNTB website in August 2017 until May 15 2018, it has received 8,700 visits (0.10% of the total visits to the museum's website), of which 550 are direct visits to its website. The highest

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<sup>9</sup> For the history of the MNTB and the CTB collections see M. Borobia and P. Alarcó (2009), and J. Arnaldo (2004) respectively.

<sup>10</sup> *Henri Matisse: dessins: thèmes et variations*, précédés de "Matisse-en France". Paris: Martin Fabiani, 1943. Copy purchased to be shown at the exhibition *Matisse: 1917-1941* (9 / 6-20 / 9/2009).

number of sessions per age corresponds to those in the age range between 25 and 34 years, with a number of sessions of 74, of which 35% are new sessions. Female public that have visited the Library reach 67%, while male public is only 33%. Most users come from Spain (86%), followed by Mexico, Argentina and Italy.

In order to provide specialized information, the Museum is subscribed to different electronic resources that can be consulted both in the Library and at the work place of the Museum's staff: digital library of articles, books and primary sources (JSTOR), websites of digital images and media data (ARTSTOR), and international research and trading platform for the art market (ARTNET).



The Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza Library. Photo by H el ene Desplechin, MNTB

### ***Incorporation of the library catalogue on the Museo Thyssen website***

At present, the Museum website has a section called *Open Windows*, an online periodical regarding research of the works of the Collection (<https://www.museothyssen.org/en/collection/open-windows>). Its aim is to open a window onto a different world through each work of art.

One essential aspect of the institution's content strategy is the opening of hidden repositories, and as part of this action plan, it is considered essential to give visibility to the library catalogue on the Museum's website. Our first goal is to incorporate the catalogue in 2018, allowing access to more than 31,400 bibliographic records by the integration of information resources of different types in a single access. Our aim is to enrich the bibliographic records with reproduction of book covers and summaries. We plan to increase the descriptions of the



museum's artworks by incorporating specialized bibliography on the presentation of the Collection. It is also planned to include specific bibliography on the technical studies and research carried out by the Restoration Department. This implies the Library's integration in the digital transformation process. Our department will contribute in creating a robust digital repository exploited by a semantic model by giving visibility to the publications on our web, and also by increasing the richness of the descriptions of the museum's artworks improving the management of its data.

In this context, the Museum's Library is facing new challenges such as participating in the organization of analogue audiovisual holdings and digital-born content to allow and ensure its use in accordance with Directive 2013/37 of the European Union on reuse of public sector information (Open Data) and the transposition and normative changes of the Law 18 / 2015, 9 July. In this way, the Library will be present in the planning process of Digital Asset Management (DAM) to correctly control the life cycle of documents, images and multimedia files. Its proper managements mean an investment saving in IT by centralizing the repository of objects, facilitating their access and achieving operational efficiency.

***Project to incorporate the library catalogue into the Red de Bibliotecas de Museos (BIMUS) (Network of Museum Libraries)***

The bibliographic collections of the museums constitute a reference for the study of art, history and cultural heritage. The Spanish Ministry of Education, aware of its great heritage value and the need for its dissemination, established in 2009 this project. It allows one to simultaneously access the bibliographic heritage of all the state museums through a collective catalogue, thus fostering cooperation and the development of shared library policies and services. The aim of this network is to optimize the material and personal resources of the libraries starting from a common management system and an extensive collective online art catalogue. Initially was formed by 17 museums; in 2011 the Museo Nacional del Prado and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia were incorporated. Today BIMUS gives access to more than 710,000 bibliographic records ranging from the 15th century to the present. It also has a digital library that gives access to digitalized collections of the various institutions integrated on the network comprised of almost 2,000 digitized texts<sup>11</sup>.

The medium-term goals of BIMUS are: the expansion of the collective catalogue to other Spanish museums; the cooperative development of new documentary products; the increase of the digitization of historical bibliographic collections and the cooperative acquisition of electronic resources. Regarding its projection, BIMUS aims in the future its integration to international projects. They will allow the visibility of the documentary heritage belonging to the participating libraries thus facilitating public access to an extensive and insufficiently known cultural heritage.

***Project to incorporate the library catalogue into the Art Discovery Group Catalogue (ADGC)***

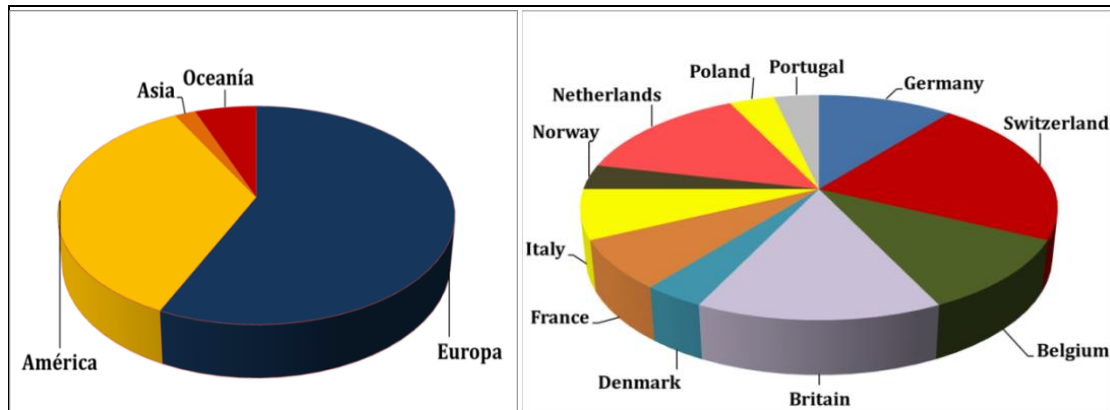
Created in 2014, this flexible research tool gathers the bibliographic data from artlibraries.net and transfers it to WorldCat then unifies all the existing data, thus providing greater visibility

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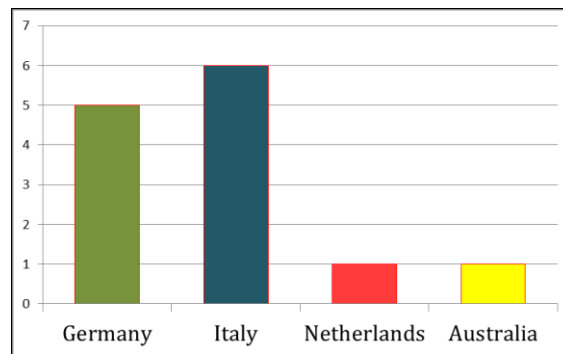
<sup>11</sup> For the history of BIMUS see mainly R. Alonso Séaz (2012); R. Chumillas (2008), and E. Chumillas, E. Insúa, M. Prego (2009, 2010, 2011).

to leading art libraries worldwide. The project was developed as part of the ‘Future of Art Bibliography’ (FAB) initiative, with the support of the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and the Getty Research Institute. At the present, more than 100 art libraries are members of the ADGC from 16 countries<sup>12</sup>.

The common aims of the ADGC member libraries are: to construct a bibliographic tool for global art collaboration; to ensure that the coverage range is as wide as possible thanks to the incorporation of art libraries; to make the art library collections more accessible to historians and researchers; and to investigate through a unique tool based on art.



**Figures 2 and 3: Individual members of the ADGC by continents and by European countries (2018)**



**Figure 4: Networks and Union Catalogues by countries (2018)**

As we can see in the graphs, at the present no Spanish art library or Spanish library network specializing in this field are members of the ADGC. Being Spain one of the European countries of greatest cultural richness and historical-artistic diversity, we believe that is very important that our bibliographic records have visibility in specialized portals of art libraries, and promoting at the same time the knowledge of our artistic collection. The integration to ADGC will allow collaboration with the most important art libraries in the world, sharing their resources to make them available to researchers.

<sup>12</sup> For the creation and evolution of ADGC see mainly G.J. Koot (2014,2015, 2016) and J. Simane (2013, 2014, 2015).

The aims of the publication of the library catalogue on the MNTB, BIMUS and the ADGC are:

- To offer researchers access to the catalogue of more than 31.300 bibliographic records
- To be present in specialized aggregators used daily by professionals
- To increase the content of the Museum on the Internet
- To become the first Spanish library to join the ADGC
- To measure the success of the library catalogue in order to assess the possible development of new digital services

#### ***Other dissemination strategies of the MNTB Library***

- Digital transformation and information management also affects our internal users. Therefore the Museum offers customized training in this area fostered by the Library and ICT Department.
  - March 2018: course on *How to manage art sources. Museum Special* organised by the Sociedad Española de Documentación e Información Científica (SEDIC).
  - *Introductory course to The Semantic Web, open linked data* in collaboration with the ICT and Modern Painting Departments, taught by the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED) (in preparation).
- The integration of the library into the database of the Museum's Virtual Archive, through bibliographic references of the artworks in the collection and linked to its catalogue.
- Participation in congresses and professional forums.
- Visibility of the library on social media (Facebook and Twitter).

#### **Conclusions**

These two models show how libraries must adapt to technological advancements in order to be able to present all their available resources and facilitate the access of information from different platforms.

- Art Libraries are an essential intermediary between the public and the collections, and must satisfy the needs of diverse audiences and reconcile its objectives of dissemination and conservation of its collections.
- Libraries must redefine their identity and offer quality information and the best service adapted to the changing needs of its users. The strategy is based on innovation and library cooperation.
- The need for integration in specialized aggregators and repositories, thus fostering cooperation and the development of shared library policies and services.

- For this, it is necessary to train the staff that cares for these collections in new information technologies and content management.
- To push for the correct management of research data. In this way, the visibility of its resources will be optimized, now accessible through the web to a multitude of virtual users of different backgrounds and different parts of the world.
- The unification of the metadata of the artistic, bibliographic and archival collections so that, by using the technology of the semantic web and the open linked data, the web user may receive the information about the works in a unified way, whatever the type of information or the unit that has generated them.

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