

**Title**

The e-artexte digital repository: Promoting open access in the Canadian contemporary arts research and publishing community

**Abstract**

How can an open access publishing and distribution model benefit research in contemporary art? In 2013 Artexte, a non-profit organization dedicated to documenting contemporary art in Canada, launched the e-artexte open access digital repository to offer self-archiving services to publishers, authors and artists in Canadian contemporary art. Although the fine arts community has generally been slow to adopt open access, Canadian contemporary arts publishers, many of whom have small budgets and limited resources, are finding the open access e-artexte repository an effective means of increasing distribution of and access to their publications.

Artex-te is an independent, non-profit arts organization with a mandate to document contemporary Canadian art. Artex-te engages in research, interpretation and dissemination activities based on a collection of publications that document contemporary art from 1965 to the present day, with special emphasis on the art of Quebec and Canada. Founded in 1980 and located in Montreal, Artex-te publishes its own titles, presents contemporary art exhibitions, offers research residencies and operates a publicly accessible documentation centre within local, national and international information networks.



[Artex-te holdings. Photo credit: Guy L'Heureux]

In February 2013, Artex-te launched e-artex-te (e-artex-te.ca), a thematic open access repository for Canadian visual arts publications. e-artex-te offers a self-archiving service to publishers, authors and artists who want to upload digital versions of their published works and make them openly accessible over the Internet. In undertaking this project Artex-te aims to expand access to Canadian art writing online, and to showcase the intellectual production of the visual arts community internationally.

This paper aims to explore the ways in which the open access publishing model may benefit research in Canadian contemporary art. It discusses the principles behind the open access movement and the use of open access within arts scholarship. For comparative purposes, an overview is provided of the dissemination and publishing activities of organizations similar to Artex-te outside of Canada. This article describes the

e-artexte repository, its development, and the outreach and collaborative activities that have accompanied the introduction of this platform within the publishing community.

## Open Access and arts scholarship

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The principle goal of the open access (OA) movement in scholarly communication is the universal and free online access to the results of publicly funded research. The meaning of ‘access’ in this context has been discussed over the course of the last decade. The most influential declaration of the movement, the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), defines open access as ‘free availability on the public internet’, and lists the following as implied user permissions with respect to the content:

- Reading
- Downloading
- Copying
- Distributing
- Printing
- Searching
- Linking to the full texts
- Crawling for indexing
- Passing as data to software
- Using for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than access to the Internet

The only constraint that the BOAI outlines on the above permissions is a requirement ‘to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited’<sup>1</sup>. Since free public access to research results leads to more citations and impact, the open access movement aims to increase the benefits of research on society.

An important development in the university context is the institutional digital repository, which provides open access to the scholarly output of faculty and students. A digital repository is more than just an online database of digital documents – it can be defined as ‘a set of services offered to a community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by members of that community’<sup>2</sup>. The technical services provided by a repository are designed to ensure the longevity,

interoperability and accessibility of its contents, thereby aiding in knowledge transfer and preservation. The services of an institutional repository also include support for depositors in understanding the copyright subtleties of open access self-archiving, as well as documentation and support in navigating the deposit interface.

Community commitment to open access combined with digital repository software and support services are the most promising avenue towards ensuring the growth of open access<sup>3</sup>. An increasing number of university faculties as well as research funders have now passed mandates that favour and promote open access<sup>4</sup>. Although the benefits of open access are well known to advocates in scholarly publishing, it is important to promote a greater understanding of these benefits to other community members. The increased accessibility and discoverability of open access content will lead to new audiences, and most importantly, the fulfillment of the public mission of cultural and research institutions.

Although awareness of open access and its potential applicability to the arts research community is still low, there is some movement towards adopting less restrictive access policies. The 2008 *Resolution on Copyright* by the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art is a significant declaration, as it discourages copyright and licensing rules from ‘inhibiting the development and diffusion of original scholarly research’<sup>5</sup>. Among the communities of art galleries, libraries, archives and museums, open data is also increasingly embraced. The European Commission, for example, has endorsed open data for cultural institutions, while Europeana<sup>6</sup> has moved to a universal public domain license on its descriptive metadata as a condition of participation for its contributing partners.

In this context, ArtexTe has been collaborating with the contemporary Canadian art community of publishers, authors and artists to promote self-archiving and the use of the open access repository e-artexTe. This particular activity is in keeping with our commitment to the understanding and advancement of the visual arts through reliable information sources; to support the experimental, innovative and critical nature of

contemporary visual art; and to foster a multidisciplinary discourse through alliances and partnerships.<sup>7</sup>

## International Context

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Artex te is one of a handful of National Visual Arts Service Organizations recognized by the Canada Council for the Arts, and is part of a national network of art libraries and centres dedicated to documenting contemporary art. Other organizations within that network in Canada include the médiathèque du Musée d'art contemporain, the Library of the National Gallery of Canada, various university libraries and the CCCA Canadian Art Database Project. There are also a number of non-profit arts organizations outside of Canada that share similar mandates to document contemporary art internationally and along cultural, regional or national lines. We were curious to see if such similar organizations were providing self-archiving services or open access to arts publications. While many of the organizations mentioned below provide free online access to some of their publications, they do not explicitly align themselves with the open access movement.

The Archives de la critique d'art ([archivesdelacritiquedart.org](http://archivesdelacritiquedart.org)) was founded in Rennes, France in 1989. In addition to preserving approximately 70 archival fonds of individual art critics and cultural organizations (from 1950 to the present day), they operate a special library dedicated to contemporary art and art criticism in France and abroad. The Archives has been publishing their biannual periodical *Critique d'art* in collaboration with other specialized publishers since 1993. Although not conceived of as an OA journal, issues 13 to 39 (1999-2012) may be downloaded for free from the Archives' website. Earlier issues will become available as they are digitized; and a one-year embargo period is in effect for their most recent issues (currently accessible through subscription and membership only).

The Asia Art Archive ([aaa.org.hk](http://aaa.org.hk)) began in 2000 in Hong Kong, China. It maintains a publicly accessible library, oversees numerous archival projects and hosts international research residencies. The Asia Art Archive documents and shares information about contemporary Asian art, and publishes its own titles both online and in print. Their

online journal *Field Notes* (2012 - ) is openly accessible through their website, as are the interview transcripts from the *Materials of the Future* (2010) research project, the documentary video *From Jean-Paul Sartre to Teresa Teng* (2010) and their ongoing AAA-organized talks, workshops and seminars. *Collection Online* is the online platform for the AAA's archival holdings and special collections.

Located in Ghent (Belgium) and founded in 2001, BAM - the Flemish Institute for visual, audiovisual and media art ([bamart.be](http://bamart.be)) - does not have a physical documentation centre, but it supports the Flemish visual, audio-visual and media arts sectors through its numerous initiatives, online presence and publishing. Their online databases document the work of Flemish artists, curators, critics and writers, and also serve as a directory of arts and cultural organizations. BAM has published approximately 30 titles (monographic and periodical) either independently or in conjunction with other arts organizations. Over 20 Dutch titles (published since 2007) are available to download for free from their website, and approximately 10 English titles are similarly openly accessible. BAM also publishes a national newsletter on a weekly basis through their website, as well as a monthly international newsletter.

Since the establishment of its archive in 1997, Basis Wien ([basis-wien.at](http://basis-wien.at)) has been actively documenting contemporary art in and outside of Austria from 1945 to the present day. Located in Vienna (Austria), the organization's holdings of art publications and printed ephemera are the chief sources of information for their online database. Available through their website, this resource provides information and digital images for individuals, institutions, events and objects.

The Marseilles-based Document d'artistes ([documentsdartistes.org](http://documentsdartistes.org)) began operations in 1999 with an online presence in order to document and promote contemporary artists in the south of France region. Several years later, they opened up a publicly accessible documentation centre in Marseilles and another branch for Bretagne ([ddab.org](http://ddab.org)). Their Marseille website offers over 200 digital artists' files for contemporary artists while the Bretagne site provides files for about 50 artists. All of these dossiers are developed in

consultation with the participating artists. The artists' CVs and bibliographies, as well as the introductory texts that accompany each file, are openly accessible.

### e-artexte, a digital repository for visual arts publishing

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Artexte collects many types of publications relevant to Canadian contemporary art, including exhibition catalogues, periodicals, monographs, audiovisual materials, exhibition ephemera and artists' books. Publishers in contemporary visual arts in Canada include museums, galleries, artist-run centres, and other arts organizations or collectives as well as individual artists and curators. The research and work of these individuals and organizations, many of them small, contributes to a rich landscape of critical writing on contemporary art in Canada. Much of this material is only available in print form, often in limited print runs and accessible through a small number of libraries.

Not surprisingly then, while the concepts of open access and self-archiving are new to most of the community of publishers that deposit their print publications with Artexte, there seems to be widespread interest in new avenues for distribution and access. Although many artists, authors and publishers sell their publications, the revenue generated from publishing is often secondary in importance to distribution. For publicly funded organizations, the need to disseminate the results of their work more widely is an important concern.

e-artexte functions both as the library catalogue of Artexte, providing access to the metadata that describe items in the collection, and as a repository permitting the self-archiving of digital documents. Documents uploaded to e-artexte are made available for online consultation or free download using Creative Commons licensing. In order to deposit publications in the repository institutional publishers pay a small yearly subscription fee (between 50\$ and 250\$) based on their annual operating budget. Individual authors and artists do not pay a fee in order to deposit.

# e-ARTEXTE

## ARTEXTE

FRANÇAIS

### SEARCH

SEARCH

ADVANCED SEARCH

### BROWSE BY

ARTIST  
AUTHOR  
CRITIC/CURATOR/HISTORIAN  
EVENT  
ART ORGANIZATION  
ITEM TYPE  
PUBLISHER  
DATE OF PUBLICATION  
PLACE OF PUBLICATION

### E-ARTEXTE

ABOUT E-ARTEXTE  
GUIDELINES  
FAQ  
CONTACT

### MEMBERS

LOGIN  
DEPOSIT AN ITEM  
BECOME A MEMBER

Welcome to e-artexte, the library catalogue of Artexte and our digital repository for contemporary Canadian art publications.

**LIBRARY CATALOGUE:** e-artexte contains over 23,000 records for contemporary art publications in our collection. These art books, magazines and other published works may be consulted in our reading room during our regular opening hours.

**DIGITAL REPOSITORY:** e-artexte is also an open access platform for contemporary Canadian art publishers (museums, artist-run centres, art galleries, etc.), authors and artists to upload digital versions of their publications (or born digital publications) for anyone to download for free. A Creative Commons licence is attached to each digital document, and these licenses will inform users how they may re-use these digital documents.

### LATEST ADDITIONS

- Moffat, Douglas and Canty, Daniel. *Montréal Phonographe*. Montreal, Qc: Douglas Moffat, 2012.  
DOSSIER: 410 - MOFFAT, DOUGLAS
- Carruthers, Meredith. *Meredith Carruthers : Samples of Work*. S.l.: Meredith Carruthers. DOSSIER: 410 - CARRUTHERS, MEREDITH
- Roussil, Robert. *Art modulaire : histoire d'une sculpture*. Other (or unspecified), 1974.  
DOSSIER: en traitement



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[e-artexte home page at <http://e-artexte.ca> ]

The idea of using digital repository software for visual arts publishing arose out of discussions around how to renew Artexte's bibliographic database, improve access to the centre's holdings online and permit the future integration of digital objects into the collection. The new platform needed to serve the core activities of cataloguing and management of resources, as well as to provide reference and access services to users. In addition, the idea of offering a self-archiving service to our user communities as a complement to collecting their print publications seemed like a natural extension of Artexte's mandate into the digital realm and one that might offer authors, artists and publishers new tools and avenues through which to promote their work.



EPrints<sup>8</sup>, an open source digital repository software developed and maintained by the University of Southampton, was selected for e-artexte, and the rationale for this choice is explained in an earlier publication<sup>9</sup>. EPrints met all of the functional requirements for the library catalogue and self-archiving services. It has a large install base and active user community and it is used by three other institutions in the same city as Artexte. EPrints was also used by the University of Arts London research repository<sup>10</sup>, evidence for its adoption within the field of visual arts.

The initial development of e-artexte required an in-depth assessment of the current cataloguing practices at Artexte. This analysis was necessary in order to understand how the classification system and custom metadata could provide access to digital documents in an online environment. Redesigning the metadata schema for our resources provided us with an opportunity to improve access to the collection using the new tools offered by EPrints. For example, we were able to implement the use of subject trees for browsing by fields relevant to research in the visual arts, such as Artist, Author, Publisher, Arts Organization, Item Type (e.g. exhibition catalogue or artists' book) and more.

Besides its customized metadata, e-artexte is also unique in that it merges the functions of library catalogue and repository, two roles that are usually fulfilled by separate software products. This functionality is quite complementary for Artexte. Publishers that have digital copies of publications already catalogued in print form do not need to re-catalogue their material; the digital file can be easily attached to the existing catalogue record and made available for download. It also means that all Artexte metadata, for both print and digital documents, is made more widely accessible through interoperable standards to a variety of search engines. We receive regular requests from researchers who have arrived directly in e-artexte from Google and Google Scholar for example.

## Community collaboration and outreach

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The launch of e-artexte in February 2013 featured a discussion panel which brought together open access advocates and scholars from the academic community as well as members of the art publishing community on the subject of *Open Access and the Fine*

*Arts*. Since the launch the focus of our work has shifted towards advocacy, outreach and training on topics related to digital publishing and open access within our community of publishers and artists.

Over the winter of 2012-2013, Artex te worked with the Centre des arts actuels Skol<sup>11</sup>, a Montreal artist-run centre, to deposit many of their past publications into the repository. Skol was approached as an early collaborator in the project because they had already digitized a large number of their past publications and made them available for download on their website using Creative Commons licenses. These digital versions of their publications complement the sale of print copies online.

Artex te also worked with individual artists to deposit digital versions of artists' books. For example, a series of works from Michael Maranda's Parasitic Ventures Press have been self-archived in e-artex te<sup>12</sup>. We also now have the means to provide access to digital artists' books that may have no print counterpart, for example the work *Venetian Proposal* by Cliff Eyland<sup>13</sup>.



[Cliff Eyland, *Venetian Proposal*. <http://e-artex te.ca/23710/> ]

In April 2013, we conducted a workshop with a targeted group of local Montreal publishers that included artist-run centres, university art galleries and museums. This workshop provided an overview of the research capabilities of the repository and the self-archiving functionality. It introduced the principles of open access, the ways in which

Creative Commons licenses can be used to distribute work online, the choice of file formats for self-archiving, and practical instruction about the deposit workflow. In June 2013 a similar workshop was given to participants in the Forum on Independent Publishing in Saint John, New Brunswick. This event was organized by the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference; a national advocacy organization for Canadian artist-run centres.

## Benefits of e-artexé for Canadian visual arts publishing and research

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The e-artexé repository benefits the visual arts community in several ways. Access to the holdings in the Artexé collection has been improved significantly through user-friendly interfaces for searching and browsing, and interoperable standards that allow our metadata to be searched via multiple search engines. The number of requests received each week regarding bibliographic records in e-artexé is a direct measure of this increased access to our metadata through various channels. Search and browse results can also be subscribed to via RSS/Atom feeds allowing researchers to be notified when new items meeting their search criteria are deposited. Each item in e-artexé has a unique and persistent URI (Uniform Resource Identifier) which makes it easy to cite and share links to documents that will be persistent over time. e-artexé metadata can be exported in a variety of formats, and can be re-used in innovative ways that facilitate new methods of research. For example, e-artexé Researcher in Residence Tomasz Neugebauer developed an interactive web-based timeline interface for exhibition catalogues in photography from e-artexé<sup>14</sup>. The steps taken in order to produce this timeline using e-artexé metadata were documented online as well<sup>15</sup>.

## Conclusion

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The e-artexé project has provided an avenue through which we are able to engage directly with our publishing community, to provide expertise and guidance relevant to digital publishing and distribution. Although the community has been generally enthusiastic about the services offered by the repository, some challenges remain that impede the widespread adoption of open access. Many small organizations lack the

resources necessary to carry out digitization projects, or even to deposit their digital documents. Artexte has attempted to mitigate this problem by offering assistance to individual depositors, sometimes depositing publications on their behalf. Additionally, there is significant research required in order to clear all the necessary rights to make past publications available online. Ideally, we would like publishers to deposit their documents in full, but if necessary, they can submit partial versions of publications if all rights cannot be cleared. Going forward, we suggest that publishers and authors include clauses in their publishing contracts that permit deposit in e-artexte, and we provide sample clauses to this effect. Through our current outreach work we hope to gain a better understanding of existing publishing practices and propose new practices and approaches that will favour long-term access to the intellectual productions of the Canadian contemporary art milieu.

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