

October 2018

Instant Architecture: Hosted Access to the Archivision Research Library with Built-In Image Management & Presentation Tools

Maureen A. Burns Ed.D.

Archivision Inc. & IMAGinED Consulting, moaburns@gmail.com

Andreas Knab

vrchost LLC, info@vrchost.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://online.vraweb.org/vrab>

Recommended Citation

Burns, Maureen A. Ed.D. and Knab, Andreas (2018) "Instant Architecture: Hosted Access to the Archivision Research Library with Built-In Image Management & Presentation Tools," *VRA Bulletin*:Vol. 45: Iss. 1, Article 10.

Available at: <https://online.vraweb.org/vrab/vol45/iss1/10>

This Perspectives is brought to you for free and open access by VRA Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in VRA Bulletin by an authorized editor of VRA Online.

Instant Architecture: Hosted Access to the Archivision Research Library with Built-In Image Management & Presentation Tools

Abstract

The Archivision Research Library is a collection of 100,000 digital images of art and architecture professionally photographed by a trained architect. It documents the built environment--from ancient monuments to cutting-edge contemporary constructions--with extensive, standardized descriptive metadata. Archivision is accessible for research and teaching through a web-based application--a dedicated hosted instance of MDID--with vrcHost LLC delivering full services and technical support: installation, integration, and maintenance. This combination provides not only instant access to Archivision, but also to sophisticated tools for managing images using an open source media management system to discover, aggregate, study, and present digital media.

Keywords

Archivision, MDID, vrcHost

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge and profusely thank Scott Gilchrist, President of Archivision, for his collaborative nature and the enormous contribution he has made to the field of visual resources over the last twenty-five years by making his high quality, well-described, professional photography/digital images commercially available for educational purposes as well as for his generous support of VRA activities.

Maureen Burns is an information professional with over 30 years of experience developing and managing teaching resources of analog and digital images at UC Irvine, the Getty Villa, and CSULB. Presently working on a consulting basis through IMAGinED, Burns is handling sales for Archivision and is partnering on a CSU Archives Japanese American history digitization project as well as other image-focused work. With a doctorate in Educational Administration from the UCI/UCLA joint Leadership program, Burns provides editorial support for the electronic *Journal for Learning through the Arts* and works as a project coordinator for a UCI NSF K-12 arts integration professional development grant. She is completing four years of service as the Content Editor for the online *VRA Bulletin* and participating in the work of VRA's LA Conference Planning, Development, International, and Financial Advisory Committees as well as Affiliate Representative to the College Art Association. She is also a past VRA president, past director of the VRA Foundation, and past chair of the VRA's Southern California Chapter.

Andreas Knab is a software developer and entrepreneur. Through his work at James Madison University from 1998 to 2012, Andreas lead the development of the Madison Digital Image Database (MDID) in various positions, last as Lead Software Developer in the Center for Instructional Technology. Andreas founded vrcHost LLC in March 2013 to continue development and support of MDID by offering commercial support and hosting services. Since 2003 Andreas presented on MDID at most annual VRA and other conferences such as NMC (2005 and 2006), EDUCAUSE (2007) and SEI (2008). He has been secretary, treasurer and interim chair of the VRA International Chapter and currently serves as treasurer for VRA.

Introduction

In today's technology-filled world, we are surrounded by art and architecture, often spontaneously snapping and sharing the images that capture our attention. Yet, seeing the built environment through the eye of an architect is a singular experience. The Archivision Research Library, a growing collection of 100,000 plus digital images, does exactly this,¹ with the added bonus of also providing extensive descriptive information and seamless hosted access in the Madison Digital Image Database.² MDID provides sophisticated tools for managing this inspiring vision of the built environment using a freely distributed, open source media management system to discover, aggregate, study, and present digital media, while vrcHost LLC delivers full hosted services and technical support.³ This summary explores the depth and breadth of Archivision and demonstrates the utility of accessing the digital images in MDID for research, study, and teaching.⁴

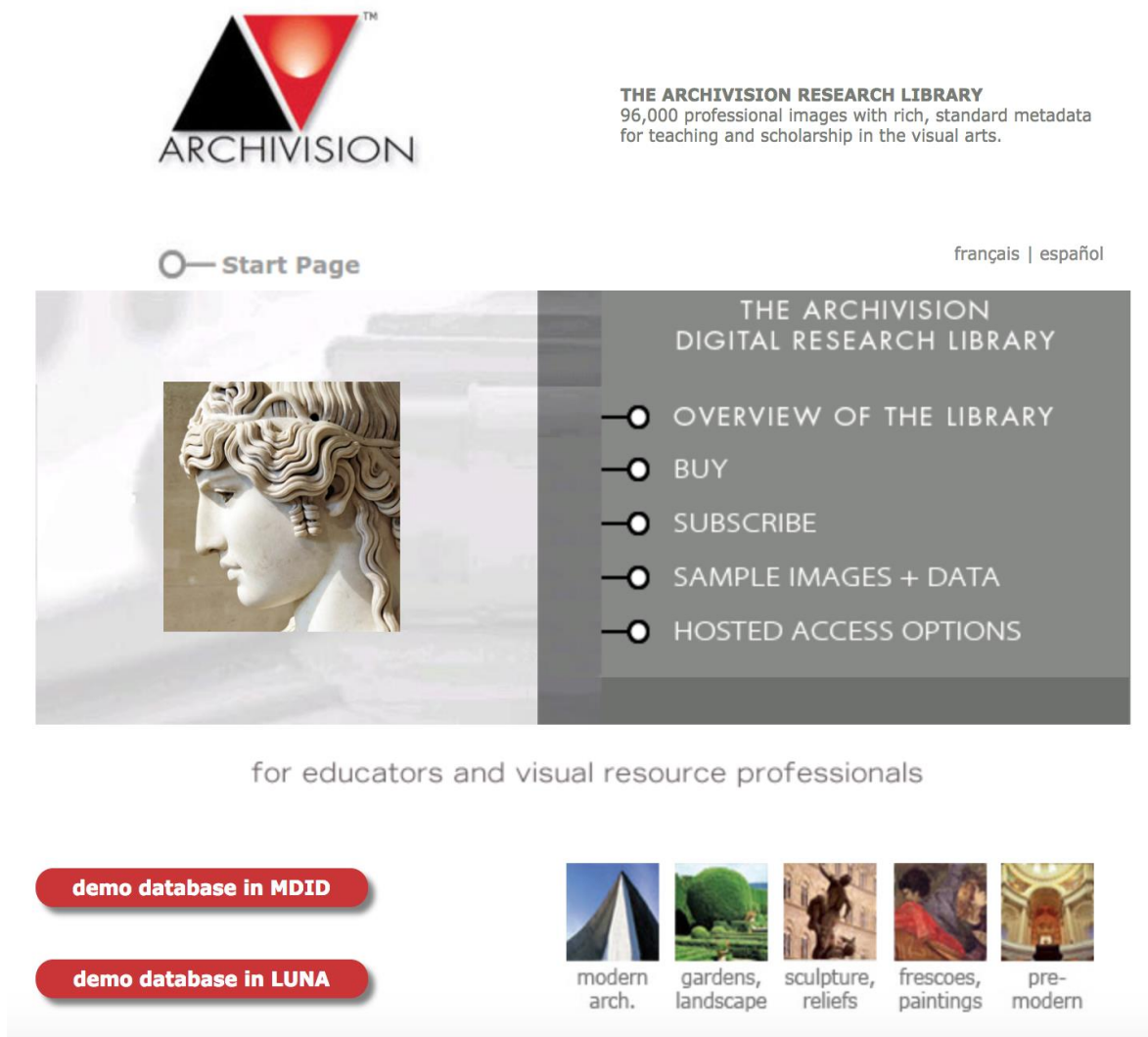


Figure 1 - Archivision Research Library Web Site

Archivision

The Archivision Research Library contains over 100,000 digital images of world architecture, urban design, gardens, landscapes, archaeological sites, and fine art (Figure 1), professionally shot by Scott Gilchrist, photographer and trained architect (Bachelors and Masters Degrees in Architecture). The collection has been meticulously built over the last 25 years capturing the architectural world, from ancient monuments to cutting-edge contemporary constructions.

One of the strengths of the library is the completeness of the visual documentation of any given architectural work, from overall views to exacting details. For example, Archivision holds 295 images of Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, showing exterior and interior views as well as fascinating details (Figure 2). Similarly, for a sculpture example, there are 51 images of Cellini's 'Perseus with the Head of Medusa' in Florence (detail in Figure 3). What also separates the Archivision material from the casual shots many of us take as we travel is the mesmerizing quality of the images, this detail of the San Francisco Federal Building by Thom Mayne of Morphosis (102 images) and an interior view of the Monastery of Sainte-Marie de la Tourette by Xenakis and Le Corbusier (242 images) are good examples (Figure 4).

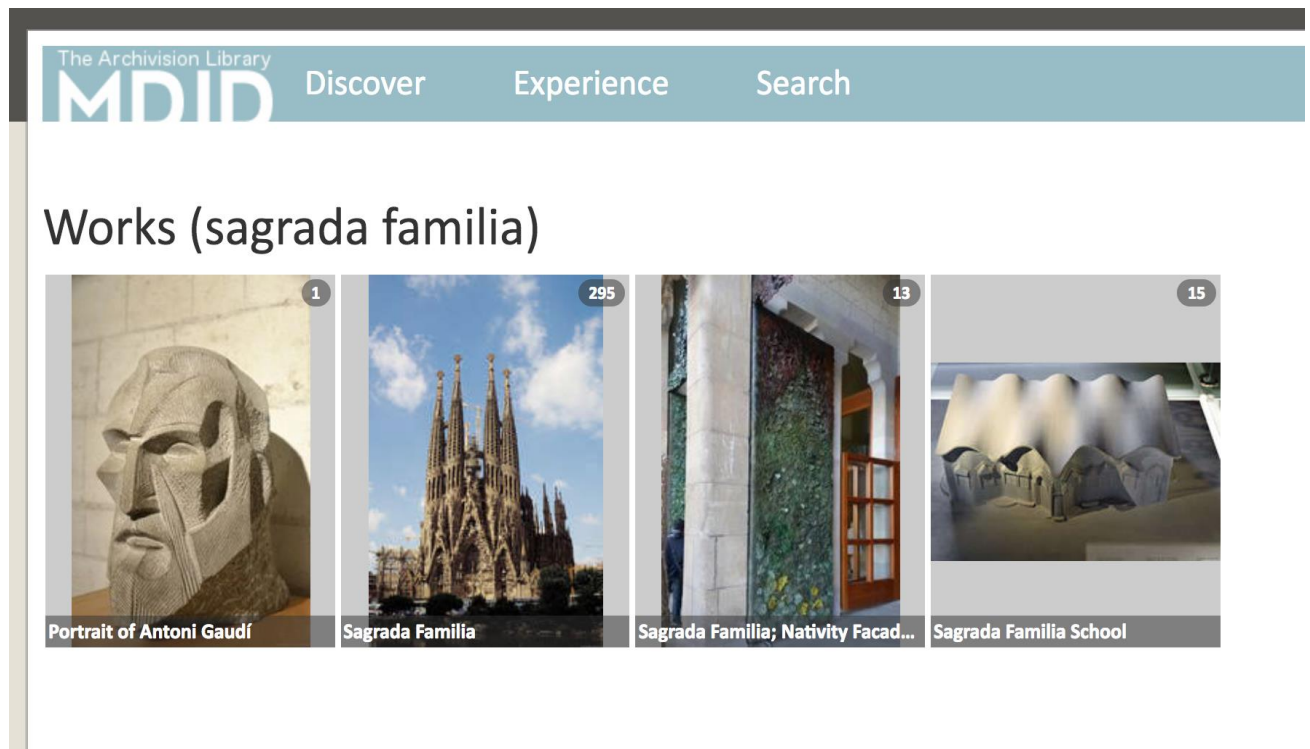


Figure 2 - MDID Works Overview Screen

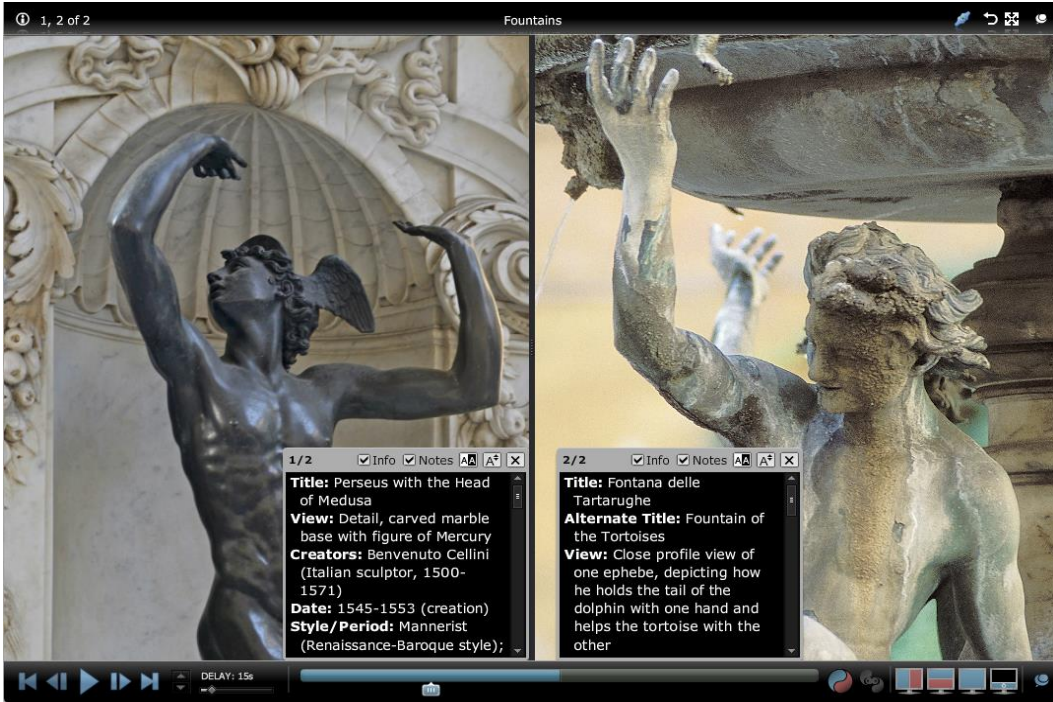


Figure 3 - Image Comparison in the MDID MediaViewer



Figure 4 - Sample Archivision Images - San Francisco Federal Building (left) and Monastery of Sainte-Marie de la Tourette (right)

Then, there is the extensive descriptive metadata that is applied to each architectural or artistic work. For example, standardized terminology like Deconstructivist, government office buildings, precast concrete, galvanized steel, perforated steel panels, architecture and city planning, etc. are all used to describe Mayne's Federal Building mentioned above (Figure 4). The descriptive metadata follows the VRA Core data standard for the description of images and works of visual culture⁵ and Archivision staff can provide clients with this metadata in Microsoft Excel, Core 4 XML, and RDF with linked open data. For structured terminology, the Getty Vocabularies provide authoritative information to insure efficient online search and retrieval.⁶ Expansive information from fully-cited resources, such as the Grove Dictionary of Art, is added to the description field for research and study purposes.⁷

Title:	San Francisco Federal Building
View:	Northwest corner (7th Street and Stevenson St.), viewed from 7th street, short end wall of tower with fire escapes and solid panel cladding in irregular shape
Creators:	Morphosis (American architectural firm, founded early 1970s); Thom Mayne (American architect, born 1944)
Date:	2003-2007 (creation)
Style/Period:	Deconstructivist; Twenty-first century
Location:	site: San Francisco, California, United States
Location Note:	90 7th Street on the corner of Mission and 7th streets
GPS:	+37.779167-122.411944
Measurements:	605,000 ft2 (area)
Materials:	precast concrete; galvanized steel; glass; wood; perforated steel panels
Work Types:	buildings; public buildings; government office buildings
Description:	Thom Mayne of Morphosis designed the building using a juxtaposition of gray concrete walls, perforated metal panels, and custom, faceted wood ceilings. The building was designed to be a 'green' building consuming less than half the power of a standard office tower and was the first Federal Building to be certified under LEED criteria (although it only rated silver). It was the first naturally ventilated office building on the west coast since the advent of air conditioning. However the building has been criticized as being dysfunctional for its employees, with inadequate thermal comfort, lighting and acoustics. In addition, in an attempt to promote exercise, a skip stop elevator system was designed that only stops every 3 floors, requiring able-bodied workers to walk up or down to reach their desired floor. This caused most of the workers to use those elevators designed for the disabled which stop at every floor, leading to overcrowding. The design's nonfunctional use of extended, folded metal sun shading at ground level, which in the opinion of some are purely for aesthetic effect, required extensive galvanized steel bracing, and added millions in materials and fabrication costs into the project. (Source: Wikipedia; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)
Classification:	Architecture and City Planning
Image Rights:	© Scott Gilchrist, Archivision, Inc.
Vendor ID:	1A1-MAYNE-FBSF-A84
MDID Identifier:	91427
Archivision Set:	Archivision Addition Module Twelve
Collection:	Archivision Module 12
Record created:	Oct. 15, 2017
Last modified:	Oct. 15, 2017

Figure 5 - Archivision Descriptive Metadata for the San Francisco Federal Building

Archivision is a growing collection with 9,000 new images and descriptions added annually. Intended for use primarily in educational contexts, the Archivision Research Library can be licensed to own in perpetuity, allowing it to be added to any existing digital collection or preservation repository, either by individual modules or in its entirety. Or, it can be accessed through subscription or hosted services.⁸ Many institutions cannot or do not want to load the images and metadata locally, therefore Archivision partners with vrcHost LLC to make the collection accessible and usable for research, study, and teaching through MDID, a web-based application with great functionality (extended information below). In this way, the Archivision content can be instantly accessed through a dedicated hosted instance of MDID with vrcHost LLC delivering full services and technical support, such as installation, integration, and maintenance. MDID provides sophisticated tools for: managing the Archivision collection of digital images, studying art and architecture, and presenting a variety of digital media in educational contexts.

MDID and vrcHost

MDID is a freely distributed, open source web application originally developed at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, and now supported mainly by vrcHost LLC. MDID is a digital media management system with sophisticated tools for discovering, aggregating, and presenting digital media in a wide variety of learning spaces (Figure 2). The project started in 1997 in response to increasingly digital curriculum requirements within JMU's School of Art and Art History. It evolved over time into a cross-disciplinary instructional application used at several hundred institutions in the United States and around the world. It is freely available for download from the Internet under an open source license.

MDID has support for audio and video, flexible metadata structures, a rich and robust discovery interface, granular access controls, PowerPoint compatibility, support for composite objects, and novel presentation mechanisms that run on most operating systems. It ships with a companion application, the MediaViewer, used primarily in mediated classrooms to display slideshows (groups of ordered images), featuring intuitive zoom and pan controls, intelligent navigation, image caching, catalog data display, and support for dual monitors or projectors for high resolution image comparison (Figure 3).

Andreas Knab at vrcHost started offering commercial support for locally hosted instances of MDID and the hosting of fully managed MDID instances in 2013. This service saves institutions from the worries of installing and administering a server and application software, allowing users at educational institutions to concentrate on their immediate tasks of collection curation, lecture slideshow creation, or research and study. The partnership with Archivision pushes this even further by preloading the application with a large number of high resolution art and architecture images accompanied by rich descriptive metadata.

Conclusion

Educational institutions are encouraged to join the over 200 existing clients worldwide who are finding the Archivision Research Library to be a key educational resource. Hosting in MDID is highly recommended for instant access and the use of powerful tools that enhance research, teaching, and the study of art and architecture. This collection, curated by a trained architect and professional photographer, provides an inspiring vision of the built environment and access to many other associated art works. People want to get their information online and this Archivision/vrcHost collaborative wants to contribute to the development of digital libraries for current and future learners.

¹ “Overview of the Library.” Archivision. 2017. <http://archivision.com/educational/overview.html>.

² “Introduction.” MDID. Accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.mdid.org/>.

³ “MDID Services.” vrcHost. Accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.vrchost.com/>.

⁴ This article was written to summarize a presentation with the same title at the Electronic Imaging and the Visual Arts conference in Florence, Italy, on Thursday, May 10, 2018. For more information about EVA, see: <http://www.eva-london.org/international/>. Additional information about this specific event can be found on the VRA blog at: <http://vraweb.org/vra-members-at-eva-conference-in-florence/>.

⁵ “Official Website.” VRA Core. Accessed March 14, 2018. <https://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/>.

⁶ “Getty Vocabularies.” Getty Research Institute. Accessed March 14, 2018. <http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/>.

⁷ “Welcome to Grove Art Online.” Oxford Art Online. 2018. <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart>. It should be noted that a variety of sources are used to catalog Archivision material from library references to architecture and museum websites. The primary cataloger, Susan Jane Williams, has developed a source authority with over 400 references and provides links in the metadata when they are online.

⁸ The MDID collaboration is the subject of this article, but Luna Imaging also provides hosted access to Archivision through the LUNA Commons, see: <http://archivision.com/educational/luna.html>. The Archivision metadata has also been mapped to a number of institutional image management systems, such as Artstor’s Jstor Commons, CONTENTdm, DIMLI, Filemaker, etc.