

Fig. 1: Artists' books metadata remediation spreadsheet

# BROADENING ACCESS TO ARTISTS' BOOKS THROUGH EXPANDED VOCABULARIES AND METADATA ENHANCEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

**THOUGH AN INCREASING NUMBER OF LIBRARIES** are building artists' books collections, problems persist with describing these resources in online library catalogs that use standardized terminology. A large number of creator, subject, and format terms are often required to provide adequate access for patrons, but library catalogers may not have the training to ascertain these characteristics through observation. To design a solution for this issue, a special collections cataloger and a book arts faculty member are collaborating to remediate existing catalog records by combining the hands-on knowledge of working book artists with the controlled vocabulary expertise of catalogers. The enhanced records are also being used to support a public-facing, searchable database of book art terminology that facilitates common language between artists, patrons, and librarians who may describe the same bookmaking technique or visual characteristic in different ways. By outlining their steps and workflows, the project team seeks to build a model that other institutions collecting and curating artists' books can use to enhance their own collections. The impact of the new website and a qualitative analysis of the record enhancements will also be discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

**IN RECENT DECADES**, the cultural history of textual transmission, printing practice, and the public reception of the book has become a site of innovative and interdisciplinary scholarly and creative work. While critical studies and artistic responses to book production have drawn upon the records of printing houses and individual archives, other approaches center upon the significance of physical features of the book, such as the relative costs of various binding materials or the meaning represented by the choice of visual media and materials. While repositories of artists' books<sup>1</sup> and fine press books provide valuable models for this work, the resources housed in institutions are often described too generally to provide meaningful access. Researchers and students interested in illustration techniques, bookbinding structures, typography, and other artistic or material features of rare books have long struggled to identify and locate relevant materials in libraries. For example, while scholarly treatises on a historic artist might list editions incorporating illustrations by that figure, finding particular details of the technique included in the book, whether drypoint, mezzotint, or wood engraving, is entirely hit or miss. When seeking contemporary exemplars, the matter is even muddier. New and innovative conventions and methodologies are difficult to consistently describe, so the only way to access the visual elements of many books is to page through the work. In that the majority of artists' books are not in browsable collections, this issue translates to a lack of access.

While library catalog records in WorldCat, a publicly searchable bibliographic database, and OCLC Connexion, one of the software interfaces that allows users to create and edit bibliographic records, usually note the presence of illustrations and other artistic content, the records rarely state the type or creator of the visual aspects in a work. This is especially true for artists' books, for which physical components such as binding style or movable elements are integral to how patrons interact with and experience the objects, as well as fine press books; in both cases, the materiality, design, structure, and production method are as important as the book's content. Consequently, even straightforward queries such as "books with woodcut illustrations published in England in the 1850s," "tunnel books published in the 2000s," or "artists' books with exposed sewing" often cannot return reliable and inclusive results from the databases. In addition, a book's author is traditionally noted as the creator in the catalog record, and with collaborative publications, as is often the case with artists' books, there is no way to search by binder, designer, illustrator, printer, or other maker.

Since 2005, scholars—notably Richard Minsky, Lynne S. Vieth, Daniel Starr, R. Arvid Nelsen, Johanna Drucker, and Jerome McGann—have advocated for "digital platforms that will deepen and expand the scholarly study of print documents by exposing hitherto invisible levels of artifactual signification."<sup>2</sup> The project described here seeks to contribute to that critical work. The visual components of fine press books and artists' books are nearly impossible to research digitally. Catalog records need significant enhancement to improve discoverability of these objects. Furthermore, as scholarship and makership in the field of book arts continues to increase, so does the number and variety of artists' books that fall into the miscellany of the Library of Congress call number range for artists' books (N7433.3–N7433.4). Notoriously difficult to research but rich with a variety of content, artists' books are potential resources with a multiplicity of access points for a broad range of users, even outside of the arts and humanities. Because many book artists tend to be obscure in their approach to multifaceted content, it is typically challenging to

assign subject headings to artists' books. Existing catalog records often lack topical subject information entirely, and it takes a skilled and informed viewer's close study to determine the subject of an artists' book and assign appropriate subject headings. Globally, there are a number of individuals, small groups, and institutions who are employing localized methods to aid in discoverability and access to visual book work, illustrating the need for a larger, cross-disciplinary effort at conjoining expertise and information to open and sustain access to the study and general use of both artists' books and illustrated books. Several notable projects include Johanna Drucker's Artists' Books Online,<sup>3</sup> Otis College's Artists' Books LibGuide,<sup>4</sup> Vanderbilt University's browsable online collections,<sup>5</sup> University of Wisconsin Libraries' browsable online collections,<sup>6</sup> and University of North Carolina's Artists' Books Critical Index project.<sup>7</sup> As active members of Art Libraries Society of North America's Book Art Special Interest group, this project's principal investigators remain apprised of national efforts at improving access to artists' books and are actively partnering with the University of Iowa's Book Arts Research Database (BARD)<sup>8</sup> and other colleagues toward wider discoverability. Led by Book Arts Program Director Marnie Powers-Torrey and Original Cataloger for Special Collections Allison McCormack at the University of Utah's J. Willard Marriott Library, the project's goal is to cull as much data as possible and make it available to a global audience in support of greater discoverability of these unique and vital publications.

## BOOK ARTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

**THE RARE BOOKS DEPARTMENT** of the Marriott Library seeks to “document the record of human communication from clay tablets to artists' books.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the rare books collection contains both cuneiform tablets and artists' books, as well as the largest collection of Arabic papyri in the United States, numerous books that illuminate the history of printing in Europe, and significant holdings in the exploration, settlement, and literary culture of Utah and the American West. As of the writing of this article, the Rare Books Department's collection holds 88,544 items. These items represent 56,375 works; of these, 660 are cataloged as fine press books and approximately 1,800 are cataloged as artists' books, and it is likely that there are many additional titles that are not currently cataloged as artists' books. Highlights of the collection include 172 books, catalogs, and prospectuses issued by the Arion Press; books incorporating the work of notable fine artists and book illustrators working in a broad range of media; and artists' books by numerous creators, with new work being acquired regularly. The breadth and depth of the Rare Books Collections provide an ideal resource and foundation for this investigation and output.

In addition, the Book Arts Program at the University of Utah is unique in that it is part of the Special Collections Division and is located on the same floor, supporting the continued and close collaboration between the two areas and allowing for quick and unprecedented access to the collection materials. One way the Marriott Library's Rare Books Department accomplishes its stated mission is by supporting research and teaching in the university's Book Arts Program. Established in 1995, the program offers an undergraduate minor and certificate in Book Arts, as well as an MFA in Creative Writing and Book Arts. Beginning in Spring 2024, new book arts emphases are offered within the Studio Art BFA and MFA. Though book arts classes are budding across the country, Utah's Book Arts Program is, to our knowledge, one of only fourteen in the United States

that offers a major, minor, certificate, and/or graduate program in book arts. As part of classroom instruction, Book Arts faculty regularly utilize both historic and contemporary visual exemplars from the rare book collections, but they create personal book lists based on individual research that are not accessible to library patrons. This project channels that research into publicly accessible catalog records. In addition to creating their own prints, books, and other artworks, Book Arts students at the University of Utah often consult books from the Rare Books Department and Fine Arts Library for their projects. However, the metadata for rare books in the library's online catalog is not sufficient to meet the needs of book arts patrons who are often seeking exemplars of particular techniques, such as "dos-à-dos bindings" or "boustrophedons," and keywords or authorized access points for those topics are often not present in Marriott Library or OCLC catalog records. Some students even give such specific requests as "that accordion book with linoleum cuts on handmade paper that you showed us in class two years ago," or want to see artists' books about the environment. Given that the subject matter investigated by book artists runs a limitless gamut, these published works are critical resources for researchers in any field, provided they can be discovered.

Dating back to the 1960s, the Katherine W. Dumke Fine Arts and Architecture Library within the Marriott Library has also collected books that would be included in the broad category of visual books. In the late '70s and early '80s, the collection began to actively acquire artists' books, and a dedicated space was built to house the fine arts collections in 2000. There are 762 items in the Fine Arts Library that are cataloged within the N7433.3–N7433.4 range, and there are many additional titles in the collection that are not tagged as artists' books but would qualify as visual books. The Fine Arts Collection permits approved users to check out items, allowing a focused, extended study of materials. Thus, the Fine Arts Library commonly collects artists' books to which at least two or three of the following conditions apply: relatively large editions (over 300); open-ended editions, reprints, or print on demand; commercially produced editions (digital or offset production, particularly if text heavy); critical writing on artists' books; topical serials, magazines, and zines; items under \$250; and experimental work, particularly from lesser-known artists. Conversely, items typically collected by the Rare Books Department tend to be small editions (under 100); one-of-a-kinds costing over \$250; hand printed items produced via letterpress, relief, intaglio, hand lithography, etc.; items that incorporate original, historical photographic pieces, and/or hand-processed photographic work; fine press books; and deluxe editions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**WHILE MUCH OF THE LITERATURE** on artists' books in libraries focuses on collection development and outreach, the complexities of providing access to these objects has also received attention. Hemming writes about the importance of browsing for visual artists using library collections and notes that most ask for books by subject, color, or other physical characteristics rather than the names of book artists or title.<sup>10</sup> Hillbruner confirms that students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago similarly request artists' books in this way.<sup>11</sup> Strizever also discusses the importance of browsing and describes a digital reference tool she created to facilitate this across several Washington, D.C.-area libraries.<sup>12</sup>

To provide enhanced access, some libraries have experimented with bespoke internal databases, reference guides, and other tools beyond the library catalog. For example, Carter and O’Keefe discuss creating the Artists’ Book Index digital collection at the University of Louisville’s Bridwell Art Library so patrons could see images of artists’ books along with enhanced style, material, and technique keywords.<sup>13</sup> Chemero, Seigel, and Wilson state that five of twenty-seven libraries surveyed in their work reported the creation of an in-house finding aid, ranging from paper lists to fully separate catalogs, to assist users with finding and locating artists’ books in their collections.<sup>14</sup> However, as Dyer and Hibben point out, these resources often fail to improve the experience of patrons using the existing library catalog.<sup>15</sup> The success of these resources was also dependent on the existence of detailed metadata, as discussed by Athanasiu.<sup>16</sup>

The need for high-quality and comprehensive metadata is especially critical given that many libraries house artists’ books in special collections departments or other restricted areas where casual patron browsing is not possible. As Myers and Myers note, catalogers without a strong background in the visual arts are at a distinct disadvantage when trying to describe the physical format of artists’ books and assign appropriate genre and format terms from controlled vocabularies.<sup>17</sup> Some libraries initiated purposeful collaborations to solve this knowledge gap. For example, Sandridge and Merkel outline how catalogers, curators, and other experts at James Madison University Libraries created a custom 183-term illustrated glossary to assist with artists’ books cataloging.<sup>18</sup> At the Clark Art Institute Library, Ha has begun enhancing existing records for artists’ books with controlled vocabulary terminology and free-text descriptions that include other commonly used keywords.<sup>19</sup> This detailed level of cataloging does make a difference to patrons: Sandridge and Merkel report that James Madison University’s artists’ books collection is the most heavily requested resource in Special Collections and supports many class visits and other community initiatives every semester.<sup>20</sup>

While there are several controlled vocabularies that can be utilized for artists’ books cataloging, including Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT), Getty Research Institute Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), and Art Libraries Society of North America Artists’ Books Thesaurus (ABT), knowing which vocabulary to use in what situation poses a challenge for catalogers. While the Bridwell Art Library project largely used ABT terminology, staff included terms from AAT and other sources as well.<sup>21</sup> At the Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries, on the other hand, staff developed a local genre heading index based on several existing vocabularies.<sup>22</sup> Overall, as Myers and Myers suggest, there is more work needed to establish national-level terminology for artists’ books, “even if it was simply a compilation of appropriate terms from existing controlled vocabularies.”<sup>23</sup>

## ARTISTS’ BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY CATALOG

**LIBRARIANS, CURATORS, AND OTHERS** who seek to provide access to artists’ books have long recognized that existing catalog records do not meet the needs of patrons who wish to examine or study these items. Unlike users of general library collections, these patrons are much less likely to request items by creator or title, but rather search for bookmaking and illustration techniques, materials, or subjects (for example, “carousel books,” “abaca paper,” or “artistic representations of grief”). However, these access points are difficult for library

catalogers to provide. Without background knowledge in bookmaking and the visual arts, a cataloger may not know the correct term for dos-à-dos binding, offset print, or full bleed. The colophon of an artists' book can provide keywords that can be cross-referenced in controlled vocabularies like Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), LCGFT, AAT, or ABT. Of course, not every artists' book has a colophon, and not every colophon contains a comprehensive list of techniques and materials or additional clarity on content. Furthermore, the language used to describe various techniques and structures may vary from one institution to another and one maker to another. While some library catalogs allow photographs, videos, and other media to be embedded in records, not all do, and such media would still require metadata tagging to transform them into searchable resources.

Providing subject access to artists' books is especially tricky. For books that are primarily image-based instead of textual, or that may not contain any text at all, how can a cataloger accurately determine whether they are about loyalty, the immigrant experience, the unrelenting passage of time, or another similarly abstract topic? Colophons, statements on artists' websites, or bookdealers' descriptions may also be of help in this circumstance, but such information is not available for every artist's book. Because of these issues, many catalog records for artists' books are sparse and unhelpful for patrons, and curators, reference librarians, and other library workers may or may not have a deep enough working knowledge of the collection to provide additional information. Unfortunately, when such a large gap exists between a patron's expectations and experiences, they may quickly become frustrated and even eschew searching the library catalog altogether. Part of pedagogical efforts at the University of Utah's Book Arts Program is to support students in developing thorough colophons that utilize controlled and common vocabulary.

Fig. 1: Artists' books metadata remediation spreadsheet

Powers-Torrey and McCormack discovered their shared belief in the need for detailed

Updated	MMS ID	Barcode	Location	Call Number	Title	Creator	Genre Terms to Add	Subject Headings to Add	Creator Terms to Add	Edits, Deletions, & Notes
Y	9915029520102001	31114020090678	SPRBK	N6834.5.K56 P7 1993	Procházka Prahou = Walk through Prague	Knižák, Milan.	paper, handmade (LCSH); Réalia (LCSH); pamphlet bindings (ARLIS); moldmade paper (Getty); India ink (LCSH); chipboard (Getty); letterpress printing (LCSH); Artists' books (LCGFT)	Walking; (Prague in art); (People in art); Pedestrians in literature. (No scope notes); Performance Art (Scope notes specify "works about live art by artists" but this gives instructions to the reader for a specific act of performance art)	Jacobs, J.P.: Book designer [bkd], Benington, George: Typographer [tyg], and Printer [prt]; Knižák, Milan: Author [aut]	Note: Rare books copy "T" Note: Photographs are continuous tone images printed full frame on paper coated paper by J.P. Jacobs. Note: Milan Knižák was a Czech performance artist. Note: Event score - instructions for a mass performance art event. Delete subject: Artists' books   z New York (State)   z New York City   v Specimens.
Y	9934129420102001	31114039387502	SPRBK	N7433.3 .A58 2009	Anything from anywhere.		Poetry (LCGFT); Group work in art (LCSH); silhouettes (LCSH); letterpress printing (LCSH); paper, handmade (LCSH); pamphlet bindings (ARLIS); Clamshell boxes (ARLIS); Photopolymer prints (ARLIS); Artists' books (LCGFT)	Found objects (Art)—United States.	Tipps, Emily	In second 500 field, which starts "Anything," delete second ellipsis and insert "Text pages are a blend of cotton and abaca; covers are cotton, abaca, linen, and silk; endsheets are hemp and cotton." Delete all subjects as they are all genre/form terms



and comprehensive catalog records for artists' books shortly after McCormack began working at the University of Utah in 2018. The two, along with graduate student Jonathan Sandberg, piloted a record remediation project beginning in 2019. McCormack created a spreadsheet of over 1,660 artists' books in the collection; this spreadsheet contained current metadata, as well as columns where new controlled vocabulary terms and free-text notes, including the full text of colophon statements, could be added. She also demonstrated the best ways to search various controlled vocabulary databases, including LCGFT, AAT, and ABT. Powers-Torrey and Sandberg began recording information in the spreadsheet, including the names of bookbinders, designers, and other creators; terms both present and absent from colophon statements; and other data points. However, other job duties and competing responsibilities made dedicating large amounts of time to the project difficult on the part of all three project members.

**IN NOVEMBER 2021**, McCormack hired a part-time Special Collections Cataloging Assistant, Ashley Shaw, whom she trained to catalog modern rare books, including artists' books. One of Shaw's tasks was to review the artists' books spreadsheet and incorporate Powers-Torrey and Sandberg's edits into the existing catalog records in OCLC Connexion (and, therefore, WorldCat) and Alma, the Marriott Library's online catalog. Including the edits in OCLC was especially important to the group, as this would allow all enhancements to be viewable by the greatest number of people possible.<sup>24</sup> Shaw also solicited feedback from Powers-Torrey and Sandberg as she created new records for artists' books. To date, approximately fifty artists' books records have been remediated using this process. McCormack and Powers-Torrey believe that hiring a full-time project assistant to do this work, for which they have been awarded a three-year National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant, is the best way to address the workflow going forward.

One example illustrates the impact these enhancements have on the accessibility of the artists' books collection. The 1988 edition of *Aunt Sallie's Lament* is an artists' book by Margaret Kaufman and Claire Van Vliet containing "a poem that is the autobiography of a spinster quilter stitched with mutterings that accumulate as the cut pages are turned becoming a diamond quilt shape."<sup>25</sup> In the pre-enhancement catalog record for the item, the only subject heading was "Artists' books—United States." Information about the genre and physical construction of the work was present in textual notes, but these fields are not hyperlinked. The techniques used in this particular work were developed by MacArthur Genius Grant awardee Claire Van Vliet, whose woven and interlocking

Fig. 2a: Original record for *Aunt Sallie's Lament*

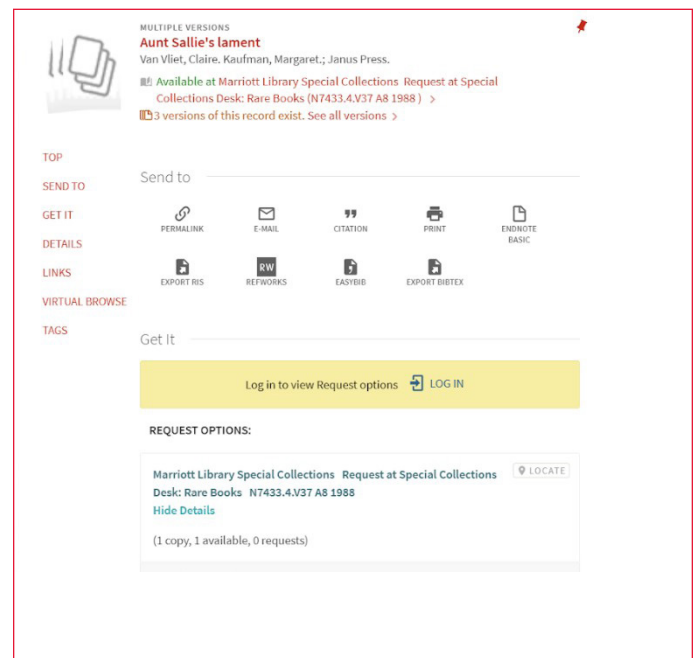


Fig. 2b: Original record for *Aunt Sallie's Lament*

1 - 1 of 1 Records				
BARCODE	TYPE	POLICY	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
31114018338220	Book	Log in for options		Item in place

Details	
<b>Title</b>	Aunt Sallie's lament
<b>Creator</b>	Van Vliet, Claire. > Kaufman, Margaret. > Janus Press. >
<b>Subjects</b>	Artists' books -- United States >
<b>Description</b>	Poem. Diamond-shaped, accordion-fold volume, printed on multi-colored multi-shaped construction paper, designed by Claire Van Vliet. Issued in a decorated case. Edition of 150 copies.
<b>Publisher</b>	West Burke, Vt. : Janus Press
<b>Creation Date</b>	1988
<b>Format</b>	12 unnumbered leaves ; 29 cm.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Source</b>	UUU_ALMA
<b>Uncontrolled Related/Analytical Title</b>	Marriott Library Rare Books Collection

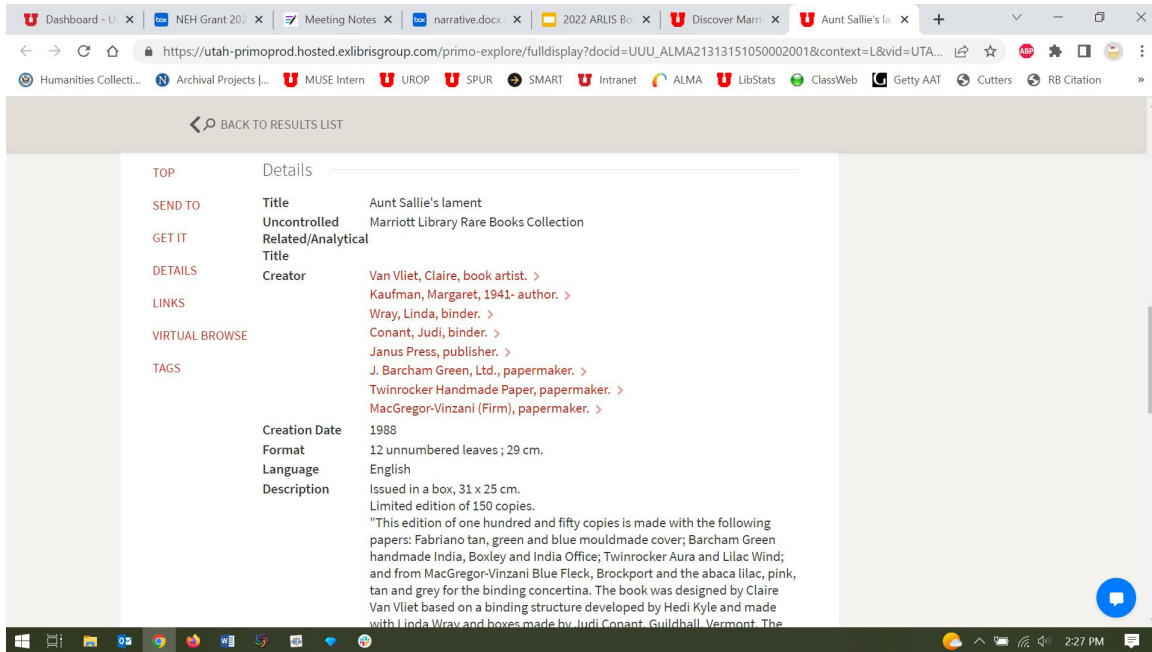


Fig. 3a: Enhanced record for *Aunt Sallie's Lament*

structures are of considerable interest to bookmakers. After the metadata enhancement process, controlled vocabulary terms were added for the genres, “Poetry” and “Artists’ books,” and the physical components, “Cut-paper work,” “Accordion books,” and others. Additional subject heading terms including “Quilts in art,” “Women—Southern States—Poetry,” and “Quilting—Poetry” were also added, allowing patrons not only to understand the physical and intellectual context of Aunt Sallie’s Lament, but letting them seamlessly click on hyperlinked terms to find similar items in the collection. The enhanced record also enumerates the roles that named artists played in the creation of the book.<sup>26</sup>

### OPENING ARTISTS' BOOKS WEBSITE

**PRIOR TO THE HIRING** of the current Original Cataloger for Special Collections in 2014, metadata describing illustrative content in artists’ books and fine press books was not actively added to the Marriott Library’s catalog records, though some records downloaded from OCLC included basic information about illustration processes. The Original Cataloger creates access points for the names of artists and engravers, particular illustration techniques, and other visual characteristics in the records she creates or copy-catalogs, but, as discussed above, she is unable to recatalog or enhance existing rare books records. Powers-Torrey has been actively gathering data for years regarding elements in specific artists’ books, but does not have the expertise or the time to enhance records. As described above, Powers-Torrey was assisted by Sandberg in systematically collecting this data in a spreadsheet intended to provide the metadata for catalog enhancement and has gradually continued to gather data. The two have added as much notable and verifiable information to the spreadsheet as possible, focusing on creator terms, book structure, production method/media, materials, typeface, and subject.

Powers-Torrey received \$5,000 in both 2020 and 2021 to create a public-facing website, Opening Artists’ Books (OAB),<sup>27</sup> which facilitates use of a common, descriptive vocabulary to aid in the discovery of artists’ books. The site provides directives for using the index to ascertain the appropriate vocabulary and invites the public to submit commonly used terms to link to controlled terms. The expanded, searchable index, visual exemplars, and links to additional resources continue the work of the ABT, but with a wider target



audience. OAB has met the goal of becoming a stable platform for this collective research, but its scope has expanded as the project has garnered interest. To date, 276 primary terms and thirty-one secondary terms have been published of the 389 total terms that project workers, along with other makers, researchers, and librarians, have identified as important descriptive vocabulary. Each of these 307 published terms has numerous linked terms that either connect the user to other OAB terms or to the appropriate controlled vocabulary. The site educates patrons worldwide on the appropriate vocabulary to use when researching and locating artists' books in online catalogs. An extension of this project is the creation of a list of well-researched terms that can be submitted to the AAT for review and potential inclusion in the vocabulary, increasing the number and type of approved terms for artists' books to support expanded discoverability.

In 2020, Powers-Torrey coordinated a panel titled "Colophon, Catalog, Curation, and Community: The Access Pipeline" at the College Book Art Association Conference and co-presented with Ruth R. Rogers, Curator of Special Collections at Wellesley College's Clapp Library, and Beth Shoemaker, Rare Book Cataloger at Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library. In 2022, McCormack and Powers-Torrey gave a presentation on their collaborative work to the ARLIS/NA Book Art SIG, precipitating a lively discussion among colleagues around the difficulty of accessing artists' books. Both presentations lead to partnerships and collaborative work with other scholars and institutions, and several institutions began using the OAB for research. In 2021, the OAB project initiated a collaboration with the University of Iowa's Center for the Book, which has been working on the BARD project. The BARD database links to OAB terms and definitions that have been vetted by faculty researchers at both University of Utah and University of Iowa. The OAB has also connected with a group at the Joseph C. Sloane Art Library at University of North Carolina, who have developed the Artists' Books Critical Index (ABCI) over the past seven to eight years. The OAB was cited as a resource during

Fig. 3b: Enhanced record for *Aunt Sallie's Lament*

The screenshot shows a browser window displaying a library catalog record for "Aunt Sallie's Lament". The URL is [https://utah-primoprod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primop-explorer/fulldisplay?docid=UUU\\_ALMA21313151050002001&context=L&vid=UTA...](https://utah-primoprod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primop-explorer/fulldisplay?docid=UUU_ALMA21313151050002001&context=L&vid=UTA...). The record includes a detailed description of the book's binding and content, a list of subjects, and a list of form/genre terms. The browser's address bar and tabs are visible at the top, and the Windows taskbar is at the bottom.

TOP	Van Vliet based on a binding structure developed by Hedi Kyle and made with Linda Wray and boxes made by Judi Conant, Guildhall, Vermont. The spine paper can slip out of the front cover so the book can accordion out."-- Colophon.
SEND TO	
GET IT	"Aunt Sallie's Lament [is] a poem that is the autobiography of a spinster quilter stitched with mutterings that accumulate as the cut pages are turned becoming a diamond quilt square. The binding is an accordion that can stretch to 105 inches revealing all the stanzas. Boxed. 150 copies."--Insert.
DETAILS	
LINKS	Subjects
VIRTUAL BROWSE	Women -- Southern States -- Poetry >
TAGS	Single women -- Southern States -- Poetry >
	Quiltmakers -- Southern States -- Poetry >
	Quilting -- Poetry >
	Quilts in art >
	Form/ Genre
	Folded books. >
	shaped books. >
	Cut-paper work. >
	Accordion books. >
	Non-adhesive bindings (Binding) >
	Clamshell boxes (Binding) >
	Accordion fold format (Binding) >
	Artists' books Vermont West Burke 1988. >
	Poetry. >
	Artists' books. >
Publisher	West Burke, Vermont : Janus Press
Source	UUU_ALMA

the “Cataloging Artists’ Books” webinar hosted by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section’s Bibliographic Standards Committee on May 5, 2023. These collaborations are in their infancy, but the hope is to be able to continue to hone a shared vocabulary toward expanded access to and discoverability of artists’ books in institutional repositories.

### IMPACT OF METADATA REMEDIATION

**THOUGH THE TOTAL** number of records remediated so far is small, the remediation has had a concrete impact on the discoverability of the artists’ books. As the scholars referenced above make clear, increasing the detail of metadata available to describe these resources will also increase patrons’ ability to search for and envision artists’ books in the library catalog.

Prior to the remediation, bibliographic records for artists’ books contained an average of 2.6 creator terms, that is, authorized access points for individuals and corporate bodies involved in designing, printing, binding, and otherwise making the books. Records that have been enhanced contain an average of 3.3 creator terms, representing an increase of 27 percent.

The number of genre/form headings, representing primarily physical characteristics of the materials, such as binding style, paper type, or illustration techniques, also went up after remediation. Before enhancement, the bibliographic records for artists’ books contained an average of 1.1 genre/form headings. The remediated records contain an average of 6.5 headings, representing an increase of 491 percent.

While the authors would have liked to analyze the impact of remediation on the circulation of the artists’ books, there is no data available to establish an initial baseline. Statistics for patron consultation of Marriott Library special collections materials only started to be collected during the coronavirus pandemic as a way to ensure the physical quarantining of items between patron visits. As the library has resumed normal operating procedures and more patrons return to the reading room, qualitative data on circulation will be collected for analysis. Anecdotal evidence from teaching faculty, however, suggests that the remediated records are indeed easier for patrons to discover and can be linked to increased requests for viewing.

### CONCLUSION

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER** development of this project arose when Powers-Torrey and McCormack learned that they had been awarded a Humanities Collections and Reference Resources grant from the NEH in May 2023. The funding has allowed them to hire a new colleague whose sole focus is increasing access to artists’ books through improved metadata during the nearly three-year grant period. Alongside record remediation, they hope to expand the terminology available to catalogers through a process that is informed by both current controlled vocabulary and language that is in common use by book arts educators, makers, and researchers. By encouraging use of the OAB website, they will continue to solicit new vocabulary terms from the public and carefully consider

appropriate terms to propose to the Getty AAT. They recognize that the process of contributing to Getty Vocabularies will involve substantial research and vetting and believe that the OAB project provides solid footing to undertake this aspect of the project. They see the OAB website as a bridge between catalogers and end users, and aim to be as inclusive as possible with “also called” terms suggested by the public and linked to existing controlled vocabularies. This ability to dedicate time and energy to the enormous project will significantly expedite the workflow at multiple levels, capitalize on current resources at the University of Utah, and allow the team to publicize the project in support of increased awareness of, access to, and engagement with artists’ books at a national and international level. ■

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## NOTES

1. The authors use the phrase "artists' books" throughout this article, as they are referring to a large collection of book art objects featuring the work of hundreds of different creators.
2. Vieth, "Artist's Book Challenges," 18.
3. [artistsbooksonline.org/](http://artistsbooksonline.org/)
4. [otis.libguides.com/images](http://otis.libguides.com/images)
5. [gallery.library.vanderbilt.edu/items?page=60&sort\\_field=added&sort\\_dir=d](http://gallery.library.vanderbilt.edu/items?page=60&sort_field=added&sort_dir=d)
6. [search.library.wisc.edu/search/digital/browse](http://search.library.wisc.edu/search/digital/browse) and [uwm.edu/lib-collections/?fwp\\_subjects=special-collections](http://uwm.edu/lib-collections/?fwp_subjects=special-collections)
7. [zotero.org/groups/2352415/abci\\_artists\\_books\\_critical\\_index/library](http://zotero.org/groups/2352415/abci_artists_books_critical_index/library)
8. [researchbookart.uiob.uiowa.edu/](http://researchbookart.uiob.uiowa.edu/)
9. [lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/](http://lib.utah.edu/collections/rarebooks/)
10. Hemming, "Information-Seeking Behavior," 343–62.
11. Hillbruner, "Automated Catalog," 26–28.
12. Strizever, "Artists' Books DC," 89–100.
13. Carter and O'Keefe, "Revealing Invisible Collections," 159–75.
14. Chemero et al., "How Libraries Collect," 22–25.
15. Dyer and Hibben, "Developing," 57–66.
16. Athanasiu, "Belonging," 330–38.
17. Myers and Myers, "Opening Artists' Books," 56–67.
18. Sandridge and Merkel, "Let's Get Technical," 67–69.
19. Ha, "Increasing Artists' Books Visibility," 18:03–25:06.
20. Sandridge and Merkel, 69.
21. Carter and O'Keefe, 166.
22. Dyer and Hibben, 60.
23. Myers and Myers, 67.
24. OCLC has approximately 16,000 member libraries in over 100 countries. These libraries share the work of cataloging and can edit, enhance, and download records created by other catalogers into their local library systems. In this way, a person cataloging in OCLC Connexion can share information and their expertise with dozens or potentially thousands of other libraries.
25. More information and images available here: [collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1290112/aunt-sallies-lament-margaretartists-book-kaufman-margaret/aunt-sallies-lament--margaret-artists-book-kaufman-margaret/](http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1290112/aunt-sallies-lament-margaretartists-book-kaufman-margaret/aunt-sallies-lament--margaret-artists-book-kaufman-margaret/)
26. [utah-primoprod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1rn6k8i/UUU\\_ALMA21313151050002001](http://utah-primoprod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/1rn6k8i/UUU_ALMA21313151050002001)
27. [oab.lib.utah.edu/](http://oab.lib.utah.edu/)