

PROJECT PROPOSAL

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PROBLEM STATEMENT:

The Picasso Project is an online collection of Picasso's work, self-described as a "comprehensive illustrated catalogue". As of this writing, the project contains 11,293 catalogued artworks, over 7,000 biographical entries, and nearly 4,000 articles related to Picasso's life and works, among other material. There is a large set of metadata connected to the catalogued items, which enables the user community to ask and answer a variety of questions, such as "Show me all of the catalogued works that were created in 1925", or "Show me everything in an oil-based medium". Additionally, users can create and save customized collections based on their own criteria, and generate gallery-style printable catalogues of their collections.

Unfortunately, the metadata attached to the items is fairly static, and there are no feedback mechanisms in place to allow for input from the user community. The exact composition of that user community is also in question, as no comprehensive analysis has been performed regarding the real-world usage of the collection, although anecdotal evidence suggests that the users range in demographics from high-school teachers to university-level researchers.

Because of the limited nature of the metadata, the questions that users are able to ask are fairly fixed and pre-determined. Therefore, a necessary task is the identification of the questions that users ask about the collection, or the questions they would like to ask, had they the mechanism. Knowing this, we could then explore ways of providing the answers: the collection and storage of metadata to provide searching and filtering in new ways, and/or the presentation of the results of those questions in novel and useful ways.

PROPOSAL:

The main focus of the project for the DH class would be:

1. The identification of the user community, and its composition, in order to understand the needs of that community.
2. The identification of the research methods used by the user community today, and the questions that they would like to be able to ask.

3. Propose a structure to provide those questions, starting with the metadata that would need to be collected, and how it should be stored.
4. A prototype of some sort (functionality level as yet undetermined) should be developed to allow for a small set of user studies, which would allow a degree of refinement on the initial ideas.

There are a number of key open questions in this approach. First, what structures are needed to adequately represent the motifs in Picasso's work? Are hierarchical taxonomies adequate (this seems unlikely from our early discussions). If not, what other types of structures will be needed? How can these taxonomies (hierarchical or otherwise) be initially developed and edited? What controlled vocabularies are needed/possible? Can these be built descriptively rather than prescriptively? Is it possible to have multiple and/or conflicting taxonomies or vocabularies?

Attached is an example of a first-pass attempt at a (semi-) hierarchical taxonomy sent to us by Dr. Mallen. Many of the items contain multiple keywords in the “subtheme” column, illustrating the orthogonal nature of many of his classification concepts. Because of this fact, our initial approach has been to consider **tagging** as the most appropriate data structure, since it would easily allow multiple and conflicting keywords to be applied to any specific item.

Scarcity of resources was also a concern for Dr. Mallen; he specifically mentioned his inability (due to time constraints) to assign the necessary metadata to the 11,000+ items in his catalogue. This restriction prompted us to consider utilizing the generative power of social data collection in order to obtain the necessary keywords. This would shift the approach away from the concept of a structured taxonomy and toward a **folksonomy**, built from the ground-up by the user community itself.

The key problems in this method involve the potentially lower-quality of the resultant metadata. As a counter to this potential, we proposed the concept of hierarchies of authority connected to the tags, based upon the user that created (or approved) them. The user community could be partitioned into multiple stages, from novice to experienced, qualified researcher, and the actions taken by different users would have varying “weights”. Additionally, accurate visualization of those authority levels would be crucial during the final display stage of the metadata.

APPENDIX A: Sample subdivision of artworks from Dr. Mallen (partial)

ARTWORK	THEME	SUBTHEME	SUBTHEME
Femme. [Paris], [1911]. India ink & pencil on paper. 21,5 x 31,5 cm. Bernard Ruiz-Picasso Collection, courtesy Fundación Almine & Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte; Museo Picasso, Málaga. OPP.11:092 MPM.03:1.51	person	full	woman
Tête. Paris, 1911 [January~March/1912]. Charcoal on paper. 64,5 x 49,5 cm. Marina Picasso Collection. OPP.11:063 P.II:666 Z.VI:1127 MP.87:1296	person	head	unisex
Saint Matorrel, Illustré d'eaux-fortes par Pablo Picasso. Paris, 1911. Paper. 26 x 19 cm . Christie's #137, 5059, 04/29/04. OPP.11:075	person	full	man
La coiffeuse. Paris, 1911. Oil on canvas. 33 x 46 cm. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou,. Paris (Inv AM4392P), Legs Georges Salles 1967. OPP.11:086	still life	bottle	
Les allumettes. Paris, 1911~1912. Oil on oval canvas. 16 x 24 cm. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou,. Paris (Inv AM1984-623), Donation Louise et Michel Leiris 1984. OPP.11:057	still life	glass, matchbox, table	
Les échecs. Paris, Early [Fall]/1911 [Spring/1912]. Oil on canvas. 33 x 41 cm. Jean Masurel Collection,. Paris. OPP.11:013 DR:441 P.II:653 Z.IIa:278	still life	bottle, glass, cup, chess	
Tête de femme. Paris, Early/1911. Oil on canvas [OiC]. 41 x 33 cm. Riccardo Jucker Collection, Milan. OPP.11:059 DR:376 PK.03:168	person	head	woman
Femme à la mandoline. Paris, Early/1911. [Ink] & wash on paper. S/U. The Picasso Estate (Inv 1210). OPP.11:088 K:67 PK.03:169	person	full	woman
Femme à la guitare. Céret~Paris, 1911~1913~Early/1914. Oil on canvas. 130 x 89 cm. Kunstmuseum Basel. OPP.11:020 DR:647 P.II:1043 Z.IIb:447R.89:307	person	full	woman
Femme à la tenora [Femme à la clarinette]. Céret, Summer/1911. Lead pencil on paper. 29 x 22,5 [23] cm. Bernard Ruiz-Picasso Collection, courtesy Fundación Almine & Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte; Museo Picasso, Málaga. OPP.11:006 Z.XXVIII:42 K:93 MPM.03:1.50	person	full	woman
Guéridon, verres, tasses, mandoline. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas. 61 x 50 cm. Private	still life	table, glass, cup,	

Collection, London. OPP.11:003 DR:386 P.II:577 Z.IIa:262		mandolin	
Le verre. Paris, [Fall] Spring/1911. Oil on canvas. 32 x 17 cm. Private Colection, Chicago. OPP.11:004 DR:439 P.II:586 Z.IIb:731	still life	glass	
Femme à la guitare près d'un piano. Paris, [Spring]/1911. Oil on canvas. 57 x 41 cm. Národní Galerie, Prague. OPP.11:007 DR:388 P.II:587 Z.IIa:237R.89:188	person	half	woman
La pointe de la Cité. Paris, [Spring]/1911 [1912]. Oil on canvas. 90 x 71 cm. Private Collection. OPP.11:014 DR:400 P.II:782 Z.IIa:309	landscape	city	
Nature morte sur un piano ('CORT'). [Céret]. Paris, [Summer/1911] Spring/1912. Oil on canvas. 50 x 130 cm. Sammlung Heinz Berggruen, Berlin. OPP.11:021 DR:462 P.II:643 Z.IIb:728	still life	glass, bottle, piano, violin, tenora, pipe	
Le Pont-Neuf. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas. 33 x 24 cm. Phillippe Nordmann Collection, Geneva. OPP.11:022 DR:401 P.II:571 Z.IIa:248	landscape	city	
Buffalo Bill. Paris, [Spring/1911]. Oil on canvas. 46 x 33 cm. Carlos Hank Collection. OPP.11:023 DR:396 P.II:572 Z.IIa:255R.89:185	person	bust	man
Soldat et jeune fille [Étude]. Paris, Spring/1911 [Spring/1912]. Ink & pencil [charcoal] on paper. [31 x 19,5] 30,5 x 11,5 cm. The Picasso Estate (Inv 1220). OPP.11:024 P.II:573 Z.XXVIII:24PK.03:170	person	full	man/woman
La mandoliniste. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas. 100 x 65 cm. Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel. OPP.11:025 DR:425 P.II:579 Z.IIa:270 PK.03:145	person	full	woman
Table et mandoline. Paris, Spring/1911. Ink on paper. 30,5 x 19,5 cm. The Picasso Estate. OPP.11:026 P.II:580 Z.XXVIII:63	still life	table, mandolin	
Pomme. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas [OiC]. 19 x 26,5 cm. The Picasso Estate. OPP.11:065 DR:380 Z.IIb:733	still life	apple	
Pomme et verre. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas [OiC]. 22 x 16 cm. The Picasso Estate. OPP.11:066 DR:381 Z.IIb:730 Commentary	still life	apple, glass	
Verre et pomme. Paris, Spring/1911. Oil on canvas. 27 x 16 cm. Dr Herbert Batliner Collection, Vaduz, Liechtenstein (Inv. no.: G 232). OPP.11:067 DR:383 P.II:576 Z.IIa:258	still life	glass, apple	