

omissions or potential redundancy. The National Register uses fourteen principal categories to group 92 use types; Historic England's "Monument Types" Thesaurus uses 18 classes and multiple subclasses to group a list of 125 *pages* of building, structure and site types. Illustrated modules could be developed to define each of the use types, styles, or areas of significance, functioning in a similar way to an 'architects module,' described above. A useful model is the successful Flanders Heritage Inventory (<https://inventaris.onroendergoed.be/>), combining a robust thesaurus and thematic and biographic modules.

Currently, MHC has no means of tracking usage of the MACRIS site, or to query and monitor how often search fields are used. This limits the agency's ability to improve search queries or improve access to less-used tools. (Unknown, for instance, are questions such as the means by which users enter MACRIS - by default welcome screen or direct link to Location Search screen, or to a specific record page? What are typical significance or date queries? What filters are most or least frequently used?)

Another object of the redesign would make MACRIS and MACRIS maps accessible from smart phones and tablets. And while the development of mobile apps is not currently in MHC's mission, a redesigned web interface would encourage outside developers to create a MACRIS map app with GPS sensitivity, making possible MACRIS-driven walking tours of historic places and districts. Designated properties, such as National Register sites or local landmarks could be augmented by separate free text summary fields, like those already adopted by the National Register in its weekly list of recently listed properties.

Interoperability

In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act called for the identification of the nation's historic resources. On the Act's 40th anniversary, the Preserve America Summit reiterated this call with a demand for a "national comprehensive inventory." Today, just past the 50th anniversary, we are no closer to this 'Holy Grail' of heritage identification. Cross-platform searches - interoperability -remains elusive and beyond the ability of most players to implement. In this writer's opinion, national standard setting organizations, whether the National Park Service, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers or other independent non-profit institutions with a standard-setting agenda, could develop a "federated search" ability to search across participating databases of similar resources. (Historic England's HeritageGateway (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway/>) is such a "front-end" search facility across over 60 databases with full access to its Monument Types.) Today, however, the trend in database construction, among library web searches and increasingly among heritage databases, seems often to follow the Google lead, with a single "unified" search box, expected to search multiple fields. (There is nothing more discouraging than a search for the architect "Chambers, William" in a single unified search box which retrieves "City Chambers" or "9-15 Chambers St" as results.) "Advanced search" usually offers very few additional field options. By seeking to simplify searches to appeal to a broader public we may often hide the wealth that lies in our heritage databases. It often seems that heritage database designers come from a tech environment and have limited experience in the research queries that users will need. Most heritage databases are also limited to the geographic region of their agency's remit.

If we truly value the resources represented in heritage databases, it is important not only to make them searchable by as wide a variety search terms as possible, but to share that wealth across

data sets. In this respect, the work of the Forum on Information Standards in Heritage (FISH) has been notable and deserves to be better known outside the United Kingdom and CIPA (MIDAS 2012).

REFERENCES

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Notes

1. Prior to 2016, MACRIS had only a single field for "Record Date," updated with each new form or supplementary file. Record Date became a multivariable field when Pick transitioned to SQL Server, but there are no plans to retroactively enter record events for legacy records in the 20-year old database.

2. Database Designs, Inc. of Boston took over the maintenance and design of MACRIS within a decade of its launch.

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