

The Blue Mountain Project: A Digital Library of the Avant-Garde

Sandra Ludig Brooke

The recently inaugurated [Blue Mountain Project](#) draws together Princeton University's premier library collections and curatorial and academic expertise to create a trusted digital repository that chronicles the emergence of modernity in the arts. Named in honor of Wassily Kandinsky's pivotal, proto-abstract painting *The Blue Mountain*,ⁱ the project focuses on developments in the literary, visual, building, and performing arts during the period 1848 to 1923. Beginning with thirty-four European and American journals, the archive is designed to grow. Eventually it should include all manner of international avant-garde arts documents, e.g., broadsides, manifestoes, and publications from Latin America and Japan.

Thanks to university support and funding from a two-year National Endowment for the Humanities grant, Blue Mountain will be made freely available on the web. The database will comprise high-resolution page images with fully-searchable text and enhanced metadata. Encoded texts and illustrations will be accessible to machine-assisted translation, geo-referencing, and other digital humanities research tools. Funds have been ear-marked to support the writing of scholarly bibliographic histories that will also be incorporated into the website.



As pilot projects, the Princeton University Library created searchable digital editions of two premier arts journals and these are already available to the public. [Pan](#), the most distinguished German arts journal of the Jugendstil period, was a deluxe production. Princeton's set contains all 106 *hors texte* prints, including works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Peter Behrens, and Käthe Kollwitz. [Ver Sacrum](#) was the official organ of the Vienna Secession. Its artist-designed issues are replete with original prints by Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, and others. The thirty-four journals in phase one of Blue Mountain are:

Action (Paris, 1920-1922)

La Cité (Brussels, 1919-1932)

Le Coeur à barbe (Paris, 1922)

Dada (Zurich et al., 1917-1921)

L'Élan (Paris, 1915-1916)

Klingen (Copenhagen, 1917-1942)

Das Kunstblatt (Weimar, 1917-1933)

MA (Budapest et al., 1916-1925)

Poesia (Milan, 1905-1920)

East & West (New York, 1899-1900)

Les Entretiens politiques et littéraires (Paris, 1890-1893)

The Glebe (Ridgefield, 1913-1914)

The Mask (Florence, 1908-1929)

New Numbers (Ryton, 1914)

Nord-Sud (Paris, 1917-1918)

The Plowshare (Woodstock, 1916-1920)

Secession (Vienna et al., 1922-1924)

Surréalisme (Paris, 1924)
De Stijl (Leyden, 1917-1932)
Sturm-Bühne (Berlin, 1918-1919)
Umělecký měsíčník (Prague, 1911-1913)
Veshch=Objet=Gegenstand (Berlin, 1922)
Volné směry (Prague, 1897-1948)
291 (New York, 1915-1916)
Broom (Rome et al., 1921-1924)
Bruno's Weekly (New York, 1915-1916)

SIC (Paris, 1916-1919)
Signature (London, 1915)
Zeit-Echo (Munich et al., 1914-1917)
La Chronique musicale (Paris, 1873-1876)
Dalibor (Prague, 1858-1927)
Le Mercure musicale (Paris, 1905-1914)
Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung (Cologne, 1859-1865)
La Revue musicale (Paris, 1901-1911)



Like *Pan* and *Ver Sacrum*, these journals are rarely obtainable through interlibrary loan or mass digitization programs. They are scarce and fragile publications, and many have substantial market value. In addition to traditional plates and illustrations, several incorporate imaginative typography and experimental graphic design. Eight languages are represented—English, German, French, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Hungarian, and Italian—and several titles are multi-lingual. All these factors increase the challenge of creating robust digital editions that are readable by humans, fully searchable, and also accessible to data mining. While methods and standards exist for some aspects of the digitization process, others will require experimentation and collaboration with digital humanists and colleagues at sister projects.

Blue Mountain was established in 2010 by a group in the Princeton University Library led by Clifford Wulfman, the library's digital initiatives coordinator. Rounding out the board of directors are Stephen Ferguson, Darwin Scott, and Sandra Brooke who respectively oversee the collections from which Blue Mountain is chiefly drawn—Rare Books and Special Collections, the Mendel Music Library, and the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology—and David Magier, the associate university librarian for collection development. There will also be a full-time project manager beginning in September 2012—a scholar with expertise in periodical studies, the historical avant-garde, and the creation of digital collections.

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ⁱ Wassily Kandinsky, *The Blue Mountain*, 1908-1909, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York NY
http://emuseum2.guggenheim.org/media/full/41.505_ph_web.jpg