

## Case description from the project “FAIRify Humanities” of the National Data management Forum 2019.

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**Title:** Materials related to the former Danish West Indies colony

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**Research area:** Visual Culture, photography, colonialism, digital cultural heritage.

In 2015 we began a process of digitizing material related to the former Danish West Indies colony (DVI). As a Senior Research Fellow in Special Collections specialized in photography / visual culture, I was particularly interested in assessing visual material in the collections in order to analyze its content. On an overall level I wanted to describe or to make available material and information in order for other researchers to be able to investigate 1) which kinds of materials were available in the collections of The Danish Royal Library 2) what where their origins (creator) 3) what use had they been made of 4) which role had they played in and were continuously playing in the conception of the former Danish colony and in the description of Denmark as a colonial power more broadly.

**Data set(s):** In 2017 more than 200.000 pages or units had been digitized. As for images, the collection consists of 6.732 photographs (drawings and prints from 1700-2017). Specified:

**17** private photoalbums (729 pages) from 1870-1950 >>all albums related to DVI from the album collections / donated and bought;

**2.911** portraits of persons related to DVI >>chosen from the portrait collection on the basis of references and advice from researchers / donated, bought and acquired through Legal Deposit Act;

**1035** postcards with topography and so-called folklife >>all DVI postcards from the collection / acquired through Legal Deposit Act;

**36** satire drawings >>chosen from *Klods Hans*, *Svikmøllen* and *Blæksprutten* / acquired through Legal Deposit Act;

**1.742** topographical images and so-called folklife >>all DVI images as well as images from Ghana in topography / donated, bought and acquired through Legal Deposit Act.

As for maps the collection consists of **306** maps >>all maps from Virgin Islands and Ghana. To this can be added the number of images featuring in printed materials such as books, journals, and small prints. Each digitized image and map has its own URL and ID, whereas images in books and journals etc. have URLs per publication.

Images <http://www5.kb.dk/images/billed/2010/okt/billeder/subject5259/da/>?

Maps <http://www5.kb.dk/maps/kortsa/2012/jul/kortatlas/subject306/da/>?

Books (some with illustrations)

[https://soeg.kb.dk/discovery/collectionDiscovery?vid=45KBDK\\_KGL:KGL&inst=45KBDK\\_KGL&collectionId=812101003000005763&lang=da](https://soeg.kb.dk/discovery/collectionDiscovery?vid=45KBDK_KGL:KGL&inst=45KBDK_KGL&collectionId=812101003000005763&lang=da)

### **What efforts was carried out to make your data more FAIR?**

**More “Findable”:** What regards the singular images and maps metadata was added by extracting data from the archive (writings on envelopes and materials and placement in collection) and filling it into the Cumulus template (Title, Creator, Resource type, Topic, Place, Id, Shelf mark, Comment, Related, Dimension, Copyright, Is part of). In some cases extra metadata was added on the basis of knowledge provided by specialists and the images and their metadata were made accessible and searchable in the online catalogue. Singular PIDs do not exist but there is an URL for each image, and each image is provided with an ID. Ex. <http://www5.kb.dk/images/billed/2010/okt/billeder/object276613/da/> (Id DT134669.tif).

**More “Accessible”:** Images and metadata can be harvested via the library’s API <https://rawgit.com/Det-Kongelige-Bibliotek/access-digital-objects/master/form-demos/copy-form.html>

**More “Interoperable”:** The metadata template of The Royal Danish Library was used in order to secure standardized placements of information, as for names, places and keywords they were added according to standards.

**More “Re-usable”:** Extra keywords were added in order to increase findability. David Berg, a photographer from the US Virgin Islands doing an internship at the library helped to develop metadata in order to secure local interests. Usage licenses were added (**No copyright protection**: Material created before 1850 and material where the creator has been dead for more than 70 years. **May be copyright protected**: Material by living photographers or photographers who has died within the last 70 years and where images can be claimed “photographic works”. **Copyright protected**: Material by living professional photographers and professional photographers who have died within the last 10 years.

#### **What was the biggest challenges to make your data more FAIR?**

**More “Findable”:** Many images come with little information on their motive, creator, use etc. By special efforts further information could be applied (by using acquisition information, searching other sources, comparing to printed material etc.), including more knowledge from academics and users. All information are in Danish and most metadata to this day are too. Some key words have been added in English by the help of David Berg, a photographer from the US Virgin Islands who did an internship at the library.

**More “Re-usable”:** Extra keywords were added in order to increase findability. David Berg, a photographer doing an internship at the library helped to develop metadata in order to begin securing local interests and creating community engagement.

#### **Other comments or conclusions:**

A challenge not mentioned but of the greatest importance is the question of ethics regarding the images. A large number of images are taken by Danes and are depicting the Afro-Caribbean population (field workers, servants, sellers, children) mostly without their consent and some in very vulnerable situations. The images have been digitized with the intention of providing historical images to persons interested in local and global history in the period of Danish colonization. They are a source to the everyday life of the population – not only the wealthy – and as such the intention is to help develop the historical awareness beyond the cultural heritage often promoted in Denmark – such as governmental architecture and famous governors. At the same time people may feel reluctant to use such a heavily biased material – and the case could be made that at least some of it should be kept in storage and not made available online (as is the case in ethnographic institutions elsewhere in former colonial powers).

#### **Conclusions:**

In order to make the data more FAIR, I would suggest moving along two lines. 1) To develop metadata to suit the needs of the local community at the United States Virgin Islands and to engage with the historical awareness in communities, schools etc. This could be done in a community project and would include the translation of metadata into English but also adding of data not included such as acquisition numbers and information regarding provenance. 2) To seek ways of managing the compromising content of the collection by adding information about the collection and or changing its online appearance. 3) To add PIDs for each image. The current URL’s are meant to be persistent, but PID’s would guarantee for persistent references.