

# Demonstrating “RemBench: A Digital Workbench for Rembrandt Research”

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In the RemBench project<sup>1</sup>, we create an integrated online work environment that enables research about the life and works of Rembrandt van Rijn. We brought together four existing databases and disclosed them through one search interface.

The challenges of this project are:

- mapping the metadata schemes of the four databases onto one set of metadata categories;
- developing the technology that allows the user to search all databases at once;
- developing a user interface that is intuitive for our target group.

In this presentation we will show the results of our project, which consist of a combined metadata scheme, the fully functional demonstrator, and the results of a user study.

## 1. Mapping the metadata

RemBench connects four existing databases, all accessible through APIs:

- RkDartists and RkDimages<sup>2</sup>
- RemDoc<sup>3</sup>, a collection of original documents related to Rembrandt van Rijn from the period between 1475 to circa 1750.
- RUQuest<sup>4</sup>, a library system that provides access to full text articles, as well as the complete collection of (e-)books and journals from the University Library Catalogue.

From the metadata of each of the databases, we selected the fields that we needed for RemBench and we mapped the fields that refer to the same concept (e.g. date, location) onto each other. For example, in the RemBench metadata scheme we defined a data category ‘content type’ (used for faceted search). The 31 values for this category come from the fields ‘Document Main Type’ in RemDoc and ‘object category’ in RkDimages.

The result of this mapping has been delivered in the form of an ISOcat Data Category Selection with definitions for all data categories and their values.

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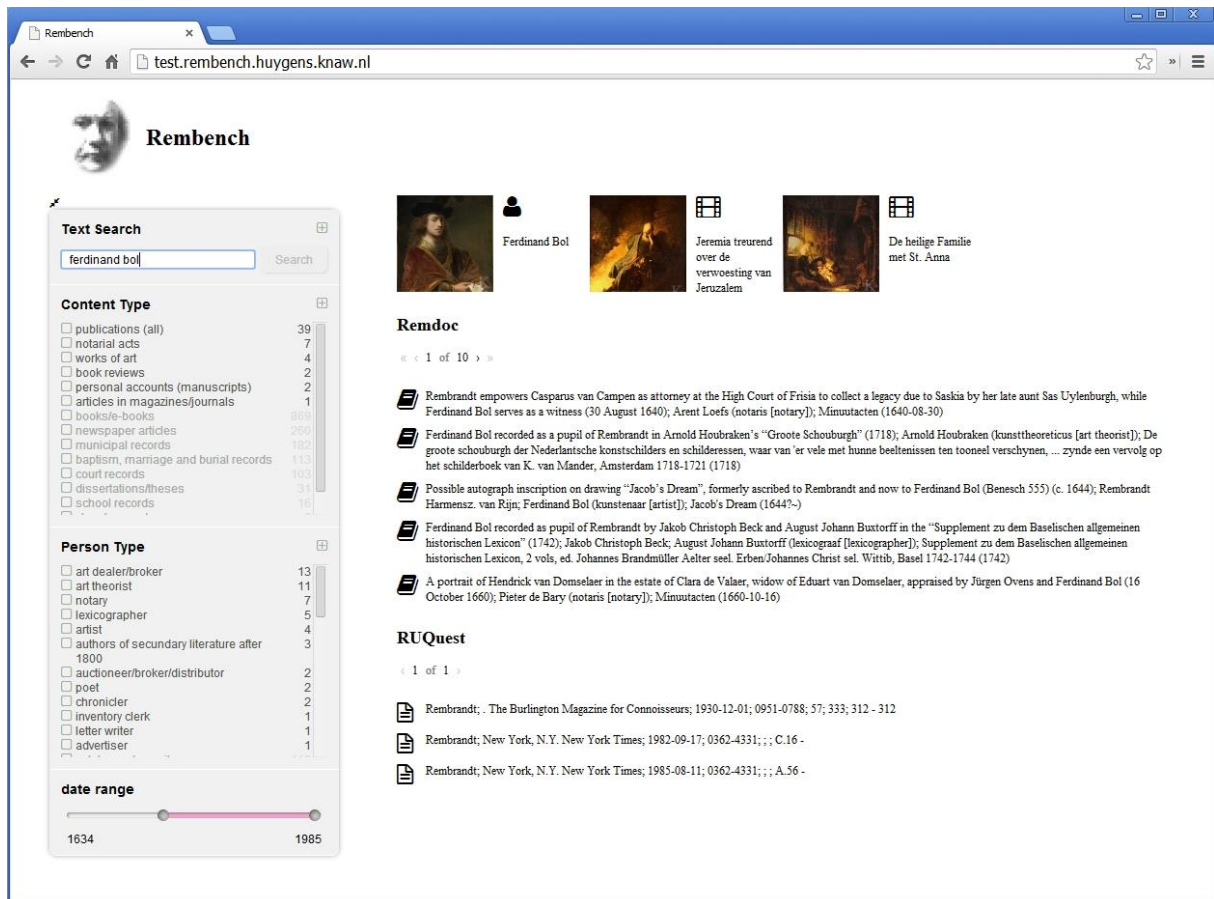
<sup>2</sup> <http://explore.rkd.nl/nl/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://remdoc.huygens.knaw.nl/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ru.nl/library/vm/ruquest/>

## 2. The demonstrator

Figure 1 shows a screenshot of the alpha version of the demonstrator, which has been released in January. On the left is the search box and the options for faceted search. On the right are the search results per database. The fully functional beta version of the demonstrator is planned for May. The final version is planned for July; its interface will be designed by a professional designer.



## 3. Evaluation

The alpha version has been evaluated internally by the members of the project team. The beta version of the demonstrator will be evaluated by external users. We have conducted a questionnaire among experts from the Rembrandt community in which we asked them to formulate actual *information needs* in the form of a recent search for information, including a description of their background knowledge on the topic.

Next, we designed a user experiment with the demonstrator in which we ask students to (a) find the answer for one of the information needs formulated by the experts and (b) use RemBench freely for their own information needs at the time of the experiment. We will observe the user behaviour by registering all their interactions with the interface. Afterwards, we will consult the users again with a questionnaire about their experiences.