

I am very grateful to the ARLIS/SE chapter—and to award committee members Sarah Carter and Amy Lindell in particular—for the Professional Development Travel Award that enabled me to attend the Art Librarians Society of North America annual conference, held this year in Indianapolis, Indiana.

For me and eleven other lucky participants, the conference began on Friday with an all-day letterpress workshop at Indiana University-Bloomington, taught by Paul Brown of the Fine Arts graphic design faculty. You can follow a slideshow of our book arts adventure and take a look at the ‘chap books’ we produced by visiting my Flickr site at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ksefore/sets/72157617755620301/>. In addition to being great fun, the workshop was a wonderful opportunity to interact informally and share interests with art librarians from different types of institution and at different points in their careers, from all corners of the country.

Thanks to the workshop and to sharing hotel accommodations with two librarians I was meeting for the first time, there were plenty of newly familiar faces at the welcome party Friday evening at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, just two blocks from the conference hotel and White River Park. The museum’s extraordinary collections range from Olmec artifacts to modern sculpture and photography to contemporary painting and craft, with a particular strength in native costume. We were fortunate to have all the galleries open for browsing throughout a very enjoyable evening. I spent part of my school years in Indianapolis, at a time when the city was not prospering, so was pleasantly surprised by the new urban vitality generated by the siting of new civic amenities in the heart of downtown.

Once the conference began in earnest on Saturday morning, the schedule was packed. Jim Neal, Vice President for Information Services and University Librarian at Columbia University, gave a brilliant and provocative plenary address on “Progressive Change: Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century Art Library.” Using the 2009 Horizon Report (<http://wp.nmc.org/horizon2009/>) as a springboard, he recounted fifteen contextual trends driving today’s libraries toward the revolutionary tipping point that will precipitate the paradigm shift into a progressive future:

- Ubiquitous computing and all-digital content
- Customization and personalization of information environments
- Web 2.0: social networking and collective intelligence
- Widely distributed collaboration
- Constant partial attention
- Permanent mutability (perpetual ‘beta development’ state)
- Ubiquitous authorship, spawning writing revolutions
- Self-service/ATM expectations
- Openness: the rhetoric and reality of sharing and collaboration
- Digital preservation, sustainability and integrity
- The repository movement, driving a need for version control
- The new majority learner
- Increasing pressure for accountability and assessment
- The entrepreneurial imperative driving resource attraction

He called upon attendees to acknowledge and adapt to the changing role of the library in this new information environment and cited building the digital library as our primary responsibility moving forward. He also urged librarians to build new organizational models by “moving from ‘*kumbaya*’ to radical collaboration,” to put a greater emphasis upon giving library users what they want when and how they want it, and to proactively rethink the library as both space and identity in order to successfully market it and ensure successful outcomes for students and researchers.

After the plenary, I took a turn through the exhibitors’ hall and joined others in a lively discussion around Carmen Orth-Alfie’s poster presentation on the legal landscape of visual resource copyright. Next was a quick lunch with my ARLIS/SE colleagues and benefactors before heading off to serve as recorder for the Academic Libraries Division meeting. The discussion there ranged from program proposals for next year’s meeting in Boston to a surprisingly extensive exchange on how librarians in a variety of library settings think about and treat book dust jackets.

In the afternoon session “The Evolving Art Librarian: Convergence of our Traditional Roles,” four speakers discussed the results of a survey of art librarians working in academic, public, and museum settings, as well as librarians new to the field. Of particular interest to me was Cathy Carpenter’s description of four trends drawn from the data from academic librarians:

1. The increasing irrelevance of subject expertise (a point which did not generate enough discussion, in my opinion; I’d be happy to discuss it further with anyone who’s interested)
2. A dearth of training for new technological and functional realities, despite an increasing need for it (and quite apart from the dearth of practical training for new librarians, generally)
3. A push to break out of traditional “communication silos” (Most librarians are especially excited about 2.0 communication technologies)
4. Increasingly fluid collections in terms of format and access, such that copyright considerations are more challenging and important than ever

Laurel Bliss, speaking for art and design school librarians, likewise cited a major disconnect between tradition-bound library school education and on-the-job reality.

In the final session I attended on Saturday (“If You Sit There, Will They Come? The Changing Reference Landscape”), five speakers from museum, design school, and academic libraries described how technology and patron expectations have driven a rethink of reference services at their institutions. There were four points on which all speakers appeared to agree:

1. When it comes to patrons, tech savvy does not mean information savvy.
2. In designing programs, assume that everyone needs help, even if they don’t know it themselves.
3. Outreach (in the form of creative programming) is critical.
4. Outreach means marketing. Let people know what you can do for them!

I was particularly impressed by the ambitious and truly innovative outreach program instituted by Louis Adrean at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The highlights of the Sunday session on academic liaison relationships (“Working Together, Working Better: Liaison Relationships for Art, Architecture, and Visual Resources”) were presentations by Leanne Hindmarch, Architecture and Environmental Design Librarian at CalPoly, and Annette Haines, Art & Design Field Librarian at the University of Michigan. CalPoly has instituted a “college librarian” liaison model, in which librarians advocate for the departments they represents, bringing the needs of faculty and students to the library rather than representing the library to the departments. Leanne described how this model makes engaging faculty in active and effective collaboration all the more critical—and challenging. Her advice? “Be realistic, always follow up, leave for tomorrow battles you can’t win today, and have confidence”—a very earnest and candid approach best summed up as “Endeavor to persevere.” At the University of Michigan, Annette is a “field librarian” (“a branch librarian without a branch”), ‘embedded’ in the School of Art and Design. Because her office is in the School, she is able to actively participate in School activities and thus respond to information, resource, and instructional needs based on a deep understanding of its day-to-day culture. I appreciated certain similarities between her situation and my own at Clemson, where the visual arts and architecture library is the lone branch library on campus and located in the same building as the arts and architecture departments, classrooms, and studios.

Copyright is one of my areas of particular interest, so I made a point of attending the Sunday afternoon session, “Image Copyright in a Digital World,” in which Madelyn Wessel, Special Advisor/Liaison to the University of Virginia General Counsel, described recent developments pertaining to the fair use of images for academic purposes. I came away with notes on new cases to look up and follow. Carmen Orth-Alfie’s poster presentation received due recognition in the session, and I’m looking forward to her online summary. I also attended and enjoyed the “New Voices in the Profession, 2009” session, admiring the breadth of interests and initiative among librarians as new to the profession as I am. Thanks to Sarah Falls for making this an ongoing feature of ARLIS/NA meetings. At day’s end I relaxed, wine glass in hand, at the Circle City Celebration at the Indianapolis Museum of Art and overindulged in the gift shop.

The last panel session I attended on Monday was “Integrating Resources through Collaborative Convergence,” in which four academic librarians described successful initiatives to integrate new technologies into their information access, development, and literacy programs. These initiatives included using Flickr groups, TinEye, Cooliris, PicLens, and Blist to identify and facilitate sharing of image collections (with an eye toward developing permanently shareable resources); employing Twitter, Facebook, RSS, Zotero, IM, and Google Docs to make library resources more visible and to enable collaboration; and even incorporating GIS and other technologies into library catalogs to enhance the display of information. The ensuing discussion was as lively as the presentations, and brought out the limitations and potential pitfalls of over-investing in here-today-gone-tomorrow technologies.

Looking back at my overall conference experience, I have to count my efforts to participate in the Conference Networking program as a mixed success. Tom Caswell and I had arranged to

connect upon my arrival in Indianapolis around dinnertime on Thursday, but a flight cancellation had me dragging into the hotel around 11 p.m.—late enough to wake up the roommates I had not yet met—and the remainder of the conference schedule was too packed to afford more than fleeting exchanges. Tom and I eventually achieved a conversation on the bus ride back to the hotel from the Circle City reception, and he has graciously offered to continue to advise and assist me, for which I am grateful.

I also failed to connect with the Collection Development Special Interest Group, despite every effort and intention. I very much want to enlist similarly interested librarians in the group in a survey project examining current policies, practices and best strategies in resource and materials selection among art librarians, with the aim of identifying opportunities for collaborative projects.

The Avery/IBA/Getty User Group meeting on Sunday and the Monday ARTstor User Group meetings were especially useful to me and I'm glad I caught them. As most of you know by now, the Getty Research Institute is terminating its support of both the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals and the Bibliography of the History of Art (recently renamed the International Bibliography of Art, hence IBA) this year. Ted Goodman of Columbia University reassured those present of his institution's continuing commitment to the Avery Index, albeit with a staff of only two fulltime and two half-time indexers. He also described the ongoing project to incorporate old *Architectural Record* card file records into the Index, and responded to questions from the floor about potential new features and database capabilities.

Reassurances about the future of the recently re-designated International Bibliography of Art were less convincing, given that an ongoing institutional sponsor has yet to be identified. More information will emerge after a meeting of the Getty Board of Trustees in May.

On the whole, ARLIS/NA 2009 was an extraordinary, not-to-be-missed learning opportunity. I was able to achieve most of the goals I had set for myself: to listen and learn from the experience of others regarding faculty liaison strategies and resource selection and development practices; to take in new ideas and fresh perspectives on visual literacy instruction and other topics vital to my own practice; to make new professional and intellectual connections; and to update my knowledge of copyright issues. As for my final goal of taking advantage of opportunities to contribute my time, energy, talents, and knowledge, volunteering to serve as recorder for the Academic Libraries Division enabled me to connect in a useful capacity with that group, and I was also the successful candidate (read "sole nominee") for the position of vice-moderator of the Architecture Section, so am looking forward to supporting the Boston meeting and beyond.

Once again, I thank the ARLIS/SE chapter members and the Professional Development Travel Award selection committee for providing the means for this extraordinary experience.

Respectfully submitted,

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