

Report on the 36th Annual ARLIS/NA Conference Denver, Colorado, May 1-5, 2008 by Alison Pattern

With the support of the ARLIS Ontario chapter, I had the opportunity to attend the ARLIS/NA conference in Denver, Colorado in May 2008. I will not forget the experience of meeting and learning from knowledgeable art librarians.

For me, the conference began with a photographic conservation workshop facilitated by librarian Laura Harris and collections manager Lucy von Brachel, both from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This workshop provided a hands-on opportunity. The participants were allowed to touch and view examples of historical photographic prints. Seeing examples of different photographic images, under a 30x loop, made the slight differences between each print apparent. It was a great introduction to the conference.

Following this workshop was a never-ending array of sessions. The subjects span from buying rare books on eBay to the deep blue repository at the University of Michigan. Every session provided knowledgeable facilitators and fascinating subjects, which demonstrated the breadth of the art librarian field. Only when I was on my plane back to Darot (followed by a long shuttle ride to London) did I really see the full scope of what I learnt.

Reflecting now on the conference, I can see the importance of topics that I have learnt about during my studies. The one that remains prevalent with me is digitization, and digital preservation. It seems that many institutions are researching and developing ways to make their collections more accessible to on-line users. The most popular means of doing so is digitization. However, with digitization come questions of electronic preservation. During the conference, and in my studies, it has become clear that these are important questions in not only the art librarianship field, but for all fields that fall into the library and archives field. I have been left questioning where the future of librarianship is heading. This topic is something I have become very interested in, and have begun researching through the Preservation and Conservation course, which is offered at the University of Western Ontario.

The opportunity to attend the ARLIS/NA conference is a rewarding experience for any Information and Library Science student. I was able to connect with other students (mostly from the United States). It was important for me to meet these individuals, and share our collective scholarly experience. Next year we will be able to share another experience as we search for jobs. The collegial atmosphere allows us to share with one another, and help each other. I know that this networking will be essential when I begin my job search.

The amount of knowledge that I acquired cannot be surmised in few short paragraphs. I would like to thank the members of the ARLIS/NA Ontario chapter, for providing me with the funding to attend. It was such a valuable experience, which truly reinforced my decision to pursue a librarianship as a career. Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you.

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