

Report on Transcontinental Perspectives/ ARLIS NA Banff 2006
By Heather Saunders

I would like to thank ARLIS Ontario for providing financial assistance to attend the ARLIS NA conference. I would probably not have attended the conference had it not been for the encouragement of several ARLIS Ontario members I met at a chapter meeting. My perception was that the conference would be pertinent after I graduated, but not before. However, I found the conference to be student-friendly in many ways: the opportunity to develop a relationship with a mentor; the chance to meet potential future employers and casually seek answers to questions like, "Is having a Masters in Art History generally recommended for art librarians?"; and lastly, the prospect of presenting a paper.

In *New Voices in the Profession: Student Papers on Art & Visual Resources Librarianship*, I presented a paper on Internet art, which I had written for an archives class. It was an interesting experience to take a paper from one audience—in my case, archival and non-art world—to the ARLIS audience. I hadn't expected to expand my knowledge on the topic of Internet art while I was in Banff, but it turned out that Sarah Falls, the moderator for the session, wrote about Internet art for her Masters thesis. Because the Faculty of Information Studies at the University of Toronto does not have a course in art librarianship, it was great to see the kind of work produced by fellow speakers in programs offering a double Masters in art history and librarianship. In addition to the value of meeting the moderator and speakers, the professional development aspect of speaking cannot be understated. Everyone in library school writes essays for classes, but presenting a paper can differentiate you from your peers. Although speaking in a crowd where 'scouts' are present can be daunting, it is an opportunity not to be missed.

A workshop that I found particularly valuable was 'Online Access to Exhibition Histories: The Role of the Art Museum Library'. This three-person panel examined the value of "checklists, labels, press clippings, installation photographs, etc....hidden within registrarial offices, curatorial files, and museum archives." Because I am managing an online exhibition for White Water Gallery (North Bay, ON) this summer, funded by CHIN, I was able to glean ideas from the panel speakers. While the White Water project (which will involve online artist profiles supplemented by an eclectic mixture of archival material) will contain hundreds, rather than thousands, of items, many of the strategies mentioned are directly relevant. For example, the Morgan Library has used item level descriptions and the Brooklyn Museum has included finding aids, which caused me to conclude that archival systems are appropriate for an online exhibition history, regardless of its size. The range of materials included in the projects was astounding, from labels to case views to gift shop items. The speakers opened my mind about what could be included in the White Water project. Both the Brooklyn Museum and the National Gallery of Canada speakers mentioned a print catalogue in conjunction with the online project, which I hadn't even considered for the White Water project. On the topic of backing up material and creating wider accessibility, Deidre E. Lawrence, Principal Librarian/Coordinator of Research Services at the Brooklyn Museum, spoke about the importance of sharing images through a medium like Artstor. Previously, I had intended for the White Water project to live merely online, but this comment made me think about

providing copies on CD to places like the Art Gallery of Ontario, National Gallery of Canada, and Arttexte. Prior to this workshop, I had wondered about the value of online exhibition histories: would anyone actually use the White Water project? It was encouraging to hear Cyndie Campbell, Head, Archives, Documentation, Visual Resources at the National Gallery of Canada, talk about the positive impressions and degree of use by researchers and staff. Also, Elizabeth O'Keefe, Director of Collection Information Systems at the Pierpont Morgan Library, noted that one of the motivations for their online project was to promote the library during a lengthy period of renovations. Likewise, the White Water project is taking place during a time of reduced hours due to a lack of staff, so I was pleased to hear that an online project has the potential to fill such a void. Although the three projects that were highlighted had substantially larger budgets, staffing and collections, I was pleased to find a link to something that is immediately in my grasp--and also to feel that a summer job, though fleeting, could be a foundation for a more substantial project down the road.