

## conference reports

**32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference ARLIS/NA April 15 – 21, 2004 New York City**

### **Margaret English Fine Art Library, University of Toronto**

When I applied for the ARLIS/Ontario Chapter Conference Travel Award, I had hoped that my attendance at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual ARLIS/NA Conference in New York City would "reactivate" my participation in the Society and that my institution would also be able to reap the benefits as well. I can now truly state that these goals were both accomplished many times over, and that I enthusiastically anticipate further involvement with ARLIS/NA.

I have regularly attended the local chapter meetings and events since the early 1990s – first as a student librarian, then as a bona-fide "Art Librarian" once I was employed. This activity was / is essential for anyone in our field, as we develop professionally, network and share resources, and pass on invaluable information to the user groups of our various institutions through informed referrals. Although I have served on the executive of my local chapter, a glaring omission has been membership and attendance at the ARLIS/NA level.

### **Workshops / Sessions / Exhibitions**

#### **Friday, April 16**

##### **Workshop III**

New York Public Library,  
8:00 am – 12:00 pm  
*They Never Covered This in Library School:*

*Basic and Advanced Tools for Research in the Western Middle Ages, Part I.*

Speakers: Tom Jacoby, Deborah Brown, Dr. Colum Hourihane

##### **Workshop VII**

New York Public Library,  
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
*They Never Covered This in Library School:*

*Basic and Advanced Tools for Research in the Western Middle Ages, Part II.*

Speakers: Mary Clare Altenhofen, Suzanna Simor

I found that workshops such as the two sessions *on Basic and Advanced Tools for Research in the Western Middle Ages* that I attended provided the best type of "hard" information that I could immediately transfer to students and faculty at my institution. It has been over two decades since I studied Medieval Art at a graduate level, and many new resources have become standard reference tools. Useful handouts, bibliographies and compilations of expert-approved web resources will become the basis of future instruction sessions in my library.

I have also voiced my suggestion that the fabulous handouts of bibliographies and listings of web resources be posted on the ARLIS/NA website. Small, one-person libraries such as my own do not have the resources to maintain large up-to-date listings of online resources on our websites. I would love to be able to link to these types on online documents. I found Dr. Colum Hourihane's tour of *The Index of Christian Art* to be especially useful, as I have used it many times in the past. Now I do so with a thorough knowledge of its fascinating history, current scope, and plans for future developments.

**Welcome Cocktail Party**

Roosevelt Hotel, Terrace Suite,  
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

The dim lighting, the mass of bodies, the dull roar of the voices in the cavernous hall, the very limited selection of nibbles (it was dinnertime!) and the over-priced cocktails confirmed two facts: (a) I am getting old and (b) I may possibly be a curmudgeon-in-waiting.

We blew that pop-stand and headed for the Village. I made a pilgrimage to the record stores where I do my best online shopping for avant-garde art music and noise: *Other Music* and *Kim's Underground*. I was like a kid in a candy store.

**Saturday, April 17****Division Meeting****Academic Library Division**

3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

Chair: Deborah Ultan

My attendance at the Academic Libraries Division solidified one concern that is at the forefront of institutions similar to my own – namely the substantial cost of ARTstor. Some librarians already had strategies for getting their larger central library (as opposed to the small departmental library) to help foot the bill.

A small criticism about this meeting is that much time was spent on the governance of the Division itself. This does not seem to be an economic use of time, and much of this kind of business could be done by e-mail. There was talk about getting ideas, yet I don't recall hearing anything substantial enough to write down. I do not

enjoy meetings for the sake of meetings. My friends and I have a name for librarians that like to hold and attend meetings that accomplish next to nothing: *Bibliocrats*.

**Sunday, April 18****Session IX**

Roosevelt Hotel, Terrace Suite,  
9:00 am – 10:00 am  
*Matters of Scale: the Nature of the Smaller Art Library*  
Speakers: Claudia Covert, Loree Bourgin, Polly McCord, Ruth Wallach

This useful session was loaded with so many pearls of wisdom that I left with an entire necklace. I took home several pages loaded with practical examples and ideas that can be applied to assessment, professional development, staffing, space planning, technology, reference & instruction and fundraising. I was also extremely entertained by the very healthy cynicism of Polly McCord. Her tales of the mob-rules mentality of team-based management and the scandalous waste of time in meetings (that produced questionable results like the naming of the *Prototype Fine Arts Libratory*) had us in tears with laughter and disbelief. Polly, Nicholson Baker and I should get together and write a book about what happens when Common Sense takes a holiday from library administration.

**Exhibition**

Whitney Museum of American Art  
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm  
*72<sup>nd</sup> Whitney Biennale 2004*

Our visit to the Whitney was preceded by a lovely walk in Central Park, where all manner of humanity had conglomerated on

one of the hottest, sunniest days of the year. We marveled at how everyone actually obeyed the signs forbidding any forays into the garden beds and beyond. In Toronto, the signs would have been tagged with graffiti and there would have been a homeless person entertaining company amongst the tulips.

Amongst the wealthiest walk-ups off Fifth Avenue, we saw a charming and unexpected site: an old-fashioned Lemonade stand run by two little boys. Okay, so the nanny and the butler were standing guard close by, but it was charming nonetheless.

The Biennial Exhibition presented a comprehensive survey of new work by over 108 artists, some emerging and some who came to prominence in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The themes of popular culture and political engagement of the 60s and 70s seemed to overlap. The highlight was the Yayoi Kusama installation, which necessitated waiting in line for some time, as only one person could view the piece at a time. Scores of twinkle lights were suspended from the ceiling of a small room that was completely clad in mirrors. The viewer stood on a small platform in the middle of the room, while the rest of the floor consisted of a reflecting pool. The effect was like being suspended in a beautiful universe of thousands and thousands of colourful stars.

**Business Meeting**

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

*Public Library Forum*

Moderators: Allen Townsend and Suzy Frechette

Shortly before the conference, there was discussion on ARLIS-L about the dismantling of the Public Libraries Division. As this is an area that is of great concern to me personally, I contributed to the discussion – intimating that the demise of the public subject specialized librarian harkens the end of civilized society. Bill Dain, supervisor of the Special Collections Division of the New York Public Library and founding member of ARLIS/NA gave us an informal history of the Division and the reasons for its demise. 15 signatures are required to create a round table, and as luck would have it, there were 15 attendees willing to sign. Therefore, the Public Librarians will continue to have some kind of a voice. We all learned a valuable lesson on the evils of apathy.

#### **Business Meeting**

4:00 pm – 4:30 pm  
*Solo Librarians Discussion Group*

This meeting conflicted with the one above, however I made it just in time to get my name on the e-mail list. Hopefully, I'll be on the receiving end of some words of wisdom from other solo librarians.

#### **Exhibit Hall**

Roosevelt Hotel – Grand Ballroom  
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

I visited each and every one of the 70 vendors and publishers. Even though my library has a very restrictive collection development policy (we only collect exhibition catalogues), it is essential to know about new products, services and publications.

A highlight was being able to personally thank antiquarian book dealer Laurence McGilvery, who had sent my Library 14 cartons of very desirable museum catalogs last year – for the price of postage. He said the magic words: “We may have more”.

#### **ARLIS/NA 32nd Annual Conference Convocation and Reception**

El Museo del Barrio  
6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Another visit to Central Park preceded this delightful evening whereby deserving librarians, students, administrators and researchers receive the collective and proverbial pat on the back for excellence in their work.

A highlight was being surprised by the announcement of the Melva Dwyer book award, *General Idea Editions: 1967-1995* by Barb Fischer and Fern Bayer. Barb had generously sent me a complimentary copy for my library, and I was so thrilled with it that I sent in a nomination.

### **Monday, April 19**

#### **Membership Meeting**

Roosevelt Hotel – Terrace Suite  
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

I missed the first part of this meeting because I was still “convalescing” in my hotel room, suffering the effects of the previous evening’s festivities. It’s not a good idea to enjoy too many manhattans in Manhattan.

When the issue of possibly creating some type of fee-based schedule for using ARLIS-L to non-members was tabled, I felt compelled to let others know that long-time lurkers (like myself)

eventually become long-time members. A few people applauded approvingly, unaware that their polite clapping echoed like thunderclaps in my skull (see above).

#### **Session XXI**

Roosevelt Hotel – Terrace Suite,  
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm  
*The Tall Office Building Reconsidered: the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Skyscraper*

Speakers: Sarah Bradford Landau, Mattias Altwicker, Nina Rappaport; Alexander D. Garvin.

As a former architecture librarian and an inhabitant of a fairly large city with several important towers currently under construction, I was compelled to attend this thoughtful session. There were a few technical difficulties with the projecting of images, and I must say that I took some delight in knowing that “it can happen to the best of us”.

The most compelling aspect of this session was the talk by Alexander Garvin, **former** Vice President for Planning, Design and Development, Lower Manhattan Development Corporation. On discussing the continuous conflicts in the overall vision of the World Trade Center site he was not able to conceal his frustration. He should also get together with Polly McCord.

#### **Plenary Session**

Roosevelt Hotel – Terrace Suite,  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm  
*Christo and Jeanne-Claude: Two Works in Progress: The Gates, Projects for Central Park, New York City and Over the River, Project for the Arkansas River, Colorado*

Kudos to all individuals who organized this event. I was

completely charmed by these two artists, and I have new respect for their work. I was astounded by Christo's ability to foresee the views of their projects in his renderings and collages. I cannot think of any other artist(s) demonstrating such outstanding ethics with regard to the financing and dissemination of their work. Plus, I am seriously considering a Spring 2005 trip to New York in order to view *The Gates* when it is realized.

### Chapter Meeting

Promenade Suite  
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm  
*ARLIS/NA Canadian Members*

This was a fairly dry meeting, consisting mostly of Chapter governance. See comments for the Academic Division. Mind you, anything would seem to be somewhat dull if it had the misfortune following right after Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

I am looking very forward to the 2006 conference in Banff, and have committed myself to assist in any way possible.

A couple of my colleagues have suggested that I initiate some kind of session on Sound Art, and the wheels are already in motion.

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## Karen McKenzie Art Gallery of Ontario

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With the largest local chapter and a cultural mecca to fall back on, ARLIS/NA conferences held in New York City are in a class all their own. This year's

conference didn't disappoint, and organizers proudly announced that it was the highest-attended conference, ever. The variety, topicality and calibre of conference workshops and sessions were outstanding; the only downside, as always, was choosing among sessions scheduled against each other. Networking opportunities are pretty much unparalleled at a New York conference: everybody who's anybody in the world of art information, vendors and practitioners alike, is on hand. I shared a conference hotel room, cozy, though lacking in chairs, with this year's other grant recipient, Margaret English. We networked non-stop when not sleeping or watching HBO, and I'm pleased to report that we solved, brilliantly, all the problems of our respective institutions.

### Conference diary

#### Thursday, April 15

**Pearson Airport.** Terminal 1 (cavernous, empty, bright daylight, confused travelers) from whence Air Canada's international flights depart. This is a mistake. Flights to/from USA are "trans-border," not international. Shuttle bus to Terminal 2 (cramped warren, temporary walls and detours, hordes of travelers irritated with Air Canada). Meet conference roommate in departure lounge, and things start to look up. Numerous near misses and verbal pyrotechnics during cab ride from LaGuardia Airport to conference hotel. Wander the (startlingly clean) streets of Midtown until hotel room ready. Discover that Americans, unlike Canadians, haven't taken to debit cards and no one is equipped to accept them. Thank god for credit cards and ATM machines.

#### Friday, April 16

**Workshop: They never covered this in library school: basic and advanced tools for research in the western Middle Ages.** Ongoing series of workshops taught by subject specialist librarians and experts from the field. This day, eight hours of medieval art and architecture, in a new NYPL electronic classroom. Speakers covered the late antique and early Christian period, late antique and Byzantine, early medieval, and late medieval. Dr. Colum Hourihane, Director, Index of Christian Art, Princeton, discoursed on digitization and online developments at the Index. Speaker-provided handouts alone were worth the price of admission. Following up post-conference on my suggestion that the 2005 Houston workshop focus on tribal arts.

#### Welcome cocktail party.

Cavernous room, scrappy hors-d'oeuvres and over-priced drinks but the first chance to see who's attending the conference, and to set up lunch or coffee meetings before everyone's schedules are jam-packed. Two winning examples of the invaluable connections one makes: Margaret Shaw, Librarian, National Gallery of Australia, a generous adviser for the last year and a half on literature and electronic resources in traditional Aboriginal art, and Trudy Jacoby, Director of Slides and Photographs, Princeton University, an invaluable source for the latest information on images and image technology in an academic research library setting, and for insights into

ARTstor, successor to AMICO, and its activities.

## Saturday, April 17

### Hell's Kitchen flea market.

Familiar New York grunge. Early morning adventure with flea market guru and fearless leader, Ms. English. Vintage buttons, toys, glass, clothing, furniture, and myriad other wares.

### Session: Integrating intellectual access to library, museum, and archival materials.

News from the intellectual content convergence front; of particular interest to museum librarians faced daily with institutional barriers to coherent intellectual access across all collections. Of four presentations, two very different implementations were most interesting: Liz O'Keefe's history and explanation of the Pierpont Morgan Library's magnificent, multi-collection union catalogue, 'Corsair'; and Diana Folsom's account of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's virtual integration of its library and collections databases, using Mweb, and accessible at the aptly-named page, <http://collectionsonline.lacma.org>

**Division meetings.** The Museum Library Division meeting was dominated by a dissection of several competing online auction price database services, the relative merits of their coverage, access problems and perceived price gouging. Discussion of a session idea for 2005 – art libraries versus their own museums: co-operation, conflict or independence.

**Free evening.** Drinks with other art librarians in lobby bar; all the

people one didn't manage to talk with in the crush of the Welcome Party, turn up here sooner or later. Dinner at a Chelsea restaurant with colleagues from Princeton U. and Simon Fraser U.

**Exhibit Hall.** Ballroom and anteroom, 70 plus booksellers, publishers, system and service vendors. Great venue for news of the latest enhancements to indexing services and for bending the ears of vendors whose prices are shooting up like the spring tulips and daffodils in Mayor Bloomberg's sidewalk flower tubs. Repeat visits throughout the conference are the only way to see everything. Tables full of shiny new books and antiquarian goodies, fridge magnets, pencils, mouse pads and Worldwide Books' much sought after canvas carry-all. Digital image and library system demo's. Artist books. And, at the end of the Exhibits on Monday, cash-and-carry books discounted to rock-bottom prices for those devoted enough to travel home with the extra weight. (The AGO library scored five heavy bargains.)

## Sunday, April 18

**Session: New York parks and gardens.** Illustrated papers on a few of New York's finest parks and gardens, and the archival documentation used to build, preserve, and restore them. Presenters included a historian from the U.S. National Park Service, an academic historian of landscape design, a New York Parks and Recreation deputy commissioner, and the librarian of the beautiful and historic Bronx Botanical Garden. Especially intriguing was the first presentation, which outlined the development of North American

highway design from its humble beginnings in the Bronx River Pathway (horse-drawn barges), the prototype for the modern freeway (barges with horse power).

Independent visit to **American Craft Museum.** Fine and folk craft of the twentieth century, in a magnificent new building, adjacent to MoMA, with a three-story stairway-atrium and the tallest interior museum wall in New York.

**Convocation, Museo del Barrio.** ARLIS/NA's annual Oscars night, lacking only the red carpet, Joan Rivers and Billy Crystal. It was great to have the winners of this year's Melva Dwyer book award, Barbara Fischer and Fern Bayer (with General Idea present in spirit), on hand to receive their citations. The freewheeling post-ceremony reception surely convinced them that ARLIS/NA is a most prestigious organization, and their award an honour. Museum galleries, installed with modernist Latin American works selected from MoMA's core collection, were kept open late for attendees.

## Monday, April 19

**Session: FRBR and the changing landscape of art cataloging.** Outside, the temperature soars to 85° F; inside, another eye-opening session on the convergence of intellectual content in electronic collections catalogues. Sessions like these are the reason why attendance at ARLIS/NA conferences is a must. FRBR (Functional requirements for bibliographic records), a 1998 IFLA report that has "turned the

cataloging world upside down" in the last 5 years and will have "the most far-reaching impact on cataloging since AACR" was launched 50 years ago. Major implications for the integration of library, archival, visual image, and museum object records. Handouts especially useful for the FRBR neophyte. Most interesting speaker: Günter Waibel on RLG's project, RedLightGreen, which uses FRBR to integrate its material culture and library databases into a new RLG union catalogue.

**Membership meeting.** Society business for policy wonks. Well-deserved standing ovation for outgoing members of Executive Board; sympathetic applause for incoming members. Illustrated introductions to the sites of the 2005 conference, Houston, and the 2006 conference, Banff.

**Session: What you'd like to know about licensing agreements but are afraid to ask.**

As promised, timely tips and handy handouts from experienced practitioners on negotiating favourable (i.e. broadest access at lowest cost) contracts with e-journal providers. Although the AGO library hasn't tackled e-journals, it's only a matter of time.

**Plenary session: Christo and Jeanne-Claude presenting two works in progress.**

Two thoroughly entertaining old troupers from the international art world, celebrity speakers of a kind possible only at a New York conference. Illustrated presentation by Christo of two works in progress, with dramatic interjections from a very red-headed Jeanne-Claude on their career-long refusal to accept

government or corporate funding: "The Gates," a project for Central Park slated for a February 2005 unveiling, and "Over the River," a project for the Arkansas River, Colorado, with a seemingly tortuous decade of preparation and more to come. Followed by a half hour of good-natured Q&A in which they revealed nothing important.

**Chapter meetings: Canadian members.** Summer camp reunion for Canadian art librarians. The best chance for a critical mass from across the country to get together and compare notes. Outgoing Canadian Representative on ARLIS/NA's Executive Board, Irene Puchalski, received a standing ovation for her hard work over two years.

**Monday night in New York City.**

A conference innovation by local chapter members, visit to a member's home and an insider's introduction to one of New York's many neighbourhoods. A balmy evening with rooftop drinks in the Lower East Side, dinner at a small restaurant in nearby 'little India.' No Midtown beautification brigade.

**Tuesday, April 20**

Independent visit to **International Center for Photography**. In the main floor galleries, Klutsis and Kulagina, work by husband and wife, Stalinist era photographers; downstairs, a gripping installation of large colour images of the human toll of the Iraq war, by a loosely-affiliated group of young photographers (including a Canadian). And the AGO library scored again, though not at rock-bottom prices, with a purchase from the ICP shop of books on contemporary photography from out of the way publishers.

**Session: The Image Down Under; Collaborative Ventures in the Visual Arts, Architecture and Music in Australia and New Zealand.** Particularly interesting: Catherine Hammond, Research Librarian, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, speaking on the negotiation of Indigenous permissions for the online display of portraits. Ancestral images, whatever their nature, are considered sacred by Maori tribes; descendants look upon the museum as a custodian, not an owner. Thus, copyright in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> c. Maori portraits painted by European artists was given to descendants of the sitters, with individual permissions sought to mount the images online, and the museum's web site including cultural sensitivity statements.

**LaGuardia Airport.** Arrived with plenty of time to spare. Lucked into a seat on an earlier flight, and friendly, joke-cracking Air Canada ground crew (locals, no doubt). WCI benefits for back-breakingly heavy suitcase filled with books? Pulled over by Canada Customs, doubtful that a \$200 declaration covered only 5 books; they need to visit an art library.

**Fall 2004**

**Meeting**

**October 29**

**Agnes**

**Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University**

**Includes Tours of**

- Art exhibit "Century of Mannerism".
- Stauffer Library's new Art Collection
- renovated W.D. Jordan Special Collections & Music Library

