



ARLIS/New York News

The Newsletter of the Art Libraries Society of North America/New York Metro Chapter

Vol. 25, No. 2

ISSN 0894-3133

Summer 2004

From the Chair

By Judy Connorton

As I write, the Memorial Day weekend is upon us and I'm in a reflective state of mind. Art and architecture issues continue to be front and center in our lives. I'm thinking especially of this weekend's dedication of the finally built WW II memorial in DC. It's attracted both praise and brickbats, but however you feel about its design, it's wonderful to see the heroics of that generation so honored and to hear the heartfelt reactions of those veterans on hand to see it. I only wish my own Dad were here to enjoy the kudos.

Wonderful exhibitions are all around us here in town and I for one plan to catch up on those I've been "too busy" to see. I'll be heading out to Queens College with other members on Wednesday, June 2, for a lovely afternoon sampling the not-well-enough-known art offerings on that campus, both in the library art gallery where ARLIS/NA members' work is on display and in the campus museum. For those of you unable to join us, we'll be sharing what we find in our next issue. Thanks to Alexandra de Luise and Suzanna Simor for arranging this lovely event.

I hope too that many of you will join me at an early summer museum outing. On July 9 we will gather at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum for a private tour with Stephen Van Dyk, chief librarian of the museum's libraries. He'll guide us through the exhibition, "Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser." This is the first full-scale retrospective on the career of this pioneer industrial designer. If you miss it in NYC, you'll have to travel to the V & A in London to catch it!

Another exhibition not to miss is the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)." Many of you, of course, attended our lovely chapter event on April 28 at the museum for Fr. Justin Sinaites' presentation followed by a reception sponsored by Libro Co Italia. Hopefully you had an opportunity to tour the exhibition prior to the event. I was able to view it then, but went back again for another look with three of

my children on Mother's Day as there's so much to see. "Byzantium" runs through July 4, 2004.

Meanwhile, your board is working on another soon-to-be-announced tour/event for September. Planning is also underway for the membership business meeting at the Brooklyn Museum in October when we will have an opportunity — perhaps for the first time for some of us — to see that museum's exciting new entrance and to tour the renovated art library with Deirdre Lawrence, the museum's principal librarian and coordinator of research services.

I couldn't write this column without mentioning the marvelous efforts expended by our local chapter for the April ARLIS/NA conference here in NYC — the best attended national conference EVER! Thank you to everyone who attended and who helped in numerous ways.

Among those I want to single out is conference co-chair Ted Goodman for his unflappability and his endless cheeriness in coordinating so many varied details. His co-chair Margaret Webster seemed to be in a dozen places at once leaving nothing to chance — and always smiling. A cheer too for Liz O'Keefe, Heidi Hass, and Maria Oldal for running a super organized and super friendly hospitality table. Many conferees remarked on the friendliness and helpfulness of the volunteers at the table. Janis Ekdahl arranged a wonderful exhibits' area, while tour co-chairs Kitty Chibnik and Chris Sala put together outings of interest even to us city folks. Speaking of tours — Sherman Clarke and Emily Roth's Monday Night with New Yorkers got attendees off the beaten path and was a smash success. Ross Day, Milan Hughston, Clayton Kirking, and Daniel Starr contributed mightily on programming, development, and special events. And, of course, attendees could find helpful conference information on Jim Viskochil's well-designed website. Additionally, more members than I can name here participated in workshops and offered other events, and we thank them all!

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Inside: Conference coverage, preserving ancient manuscripts, and much, much more!

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Volume 25, Number 2, Summer 2004

ISSN 0894-3133

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The ARLIS/NY Newsletter is published quarterly by the Art Libraries Society of New York, a regional chapter of the Art Libraries Society of North America, 329 March Road, Suite 232, Box 11, Kanata, Ontario K2K 2E1, Canada.

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This publication is distributed free of charge to members of ARLIS/NY. Membership dues are \$20.00 for the calendar year.

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Copy deadline for vol.25, no. 3 (Fall 2004): September 10.

From the Chair, continued from page 1

Rounding out my conference musings, I also want to salute ARLIS/NY member Angela Giral, retiring Director of the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. She received ARLIS/NA's Distinguished Service Award for her exemplary service in our field. The presentation — accompanied by a standing ovation — took place during the convocation ceremony at El Museo del Barrio.

What a pleasure to be associated with such an enthusiastic and hard-working chapter!

I hope those of you who attended the conference had a chance to meet the newest members of this group: student winners of our Celine Palatsky award. Charming, articulate, and enthusiastic one and all, they wrote up their impressions of the conference and you'll find those reports elsewhere in this issue. We certainly welcome them to the chapter. The board is discussing how to attract even more students and recent graduates to our profession and to this chapter.

That's it for now. I wish you all a wonderful and relaxing summer!

Upcoming Chapter Tour at the Cooper-Hewitt

On Friday, July 9th, from 5pm to 8pm, ARLIS/NY members are invited to attend our summer event at the Smithsonian's Cooper-Hewitt, National Museum of Design (2 East 91st Street, at Fifth Avenue).

ARLIS members will be treated to a guided tour of the current "Shock of the Old: Christopher Dresser" exhibition by Stephen Van Dyk (Exhibition Co-Curator and Cooper-Hewitt Library Director). This is the first full-scale museum retrospective of Christopher Dresser, a pioneer industrial designer. The exhibition features over 300 major works from his diverse and extraordinary career. For more information on the exhibition: <http://ndm.si.edu/>

After the exhibition tour there will be a tour of the Doris and Henry Dreyfuss Study Center Library. The Library has over 60,000 volumes and specializes in American and European design and decorative arts with materials dating from the 15th to the 20th century.

The tour group size is limited to 50 and members are encouraged to RSVP as soon as possible.

Attendance is free of charge. Refreshments will not be provided at this event but the garden cafe in the museum is open Friday evenings.

The Dresser exhibition closes July 25th. Please join us for this excellent opportunity to see the wonderful exhibition and Library.

RSVP: By July 2nd to Erin Elliott (elliott@bgc.bard.edu).

Our Thanks!

The ARLIS/NY Board thanks the following members who have given donations to the chapter so far this year.

Roberta Blitz

Patricia Brauch

Elizabeth Broman

Ocker & Trapp Library Bindery

Elizabeth O'Keefe

Elizabeth Vajda

Stephen H. Van Dyk

Father Justin of St. Catherine's Monastery Addresses ARLIS/NY Chapter

By Heidi Hass

Over 80 members and guests of the ARLIS/NY chapter gathered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Douglas Dillon Board Room on April 28 to hear a presentation by Father Justin of Saint Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai. Judy Connorton (chair) opened the meeting by thanking the membership and particularly Ted Goodman for their work on the recently concluded and highly successful ARLIS/NA conference. She also thanked the sponsor of the meeting, Donatella Nazzi and LibroCo, and announced the next meeting at Queens College on June 2. Ken Soehner (vice chair/chair elect) spoke of the close relationship between St. Catherine's and the Met, which allowed for an unprecedented loan of over 40 items to the Met's current exhibition "Byzantium: Faith & Power, 1261-1557," and then introduced Father Justin.

Father Justin began his slide-illustrated talk with a history of the monastery and a description of its collections. Founded in the 6th century by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, the monastery is located on the site of the burning bush at the base of Mt. Sinai. The manuscript collection numbers some 3,300 items (the largest collection outside the Vatican), not including the so-called "new finds," which were discovered by workmen in 1975. The desert climate and isolation of the monastery have helped to preserve the manuscripts, and to keep the collection intact. Copying of texts has been documented from the 6th century; languages include Georgian, Slavonic, Latin and Syriac as well as Greek, and the earliest Christian texts in Arabic.

Father Justin went on to describe the digitization project that he manages. The goal is high-resolution digital images of all of the manuscripts, including their bindings. Beginning in 1986 with a feasibility study that projected the undertaking would take only 22 months, the project has since dropped a microfilm component to concentrate exclusively on digital preservation. Conservators describe each manuscript, which is then photographed in its entirety using a Sinar camera, and a custom-made cradle. The conservation form is the only data compiled at present; scholarly information will be addressed at a later date. The recently formed St. Catherine's Foundation has assisted with this project as well as renovation and upcoming construction projects designed to preserve and make accessible the monastery's riches. In the words of Archbishop Damianos, the monks should not "hide their light under a bushel."



Members enjoy the reception at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Including: Suzanna Simor, Kay Badalamenti, Tom and Trudy Jacoby, Barbara Reed, Ken Soehner, Christina Peter, Debbie Kempe, Judy Connorton, Cindy Wolff, Evalyn Stone, Sherman Clarke, Daniel Starr, Inge Reist, Zimra Panitz, Heidi Hass, AnnaMaria Poma-Swank, Milan Hughston, Clayton Kirking, John Maier, Sharon Chickanzeff, and Greta Earnest.

Photos by Claudia Hill.

Local Correspondents: ARLIS/NA in NY

This year, the New York chapter was able to offer its annual Celine Palatsky Memorial Travel Award to five students, covering the cost of their conference registration fees. Four of them reflect on their experiences for us.

Henry W. Baker

Distributed to five, as the commute was not hard,
Was the Celine Palatsky Memorial Travel Award.
Lucky to win, my photo was taken,
A drink in my hand was stirred but not shaken.
New York, the city, hosted ARLIS this year,
“Library Heaven,” I heard many cheer.

Greetings and cocktails on the Terrace Suite floor,
Librarians, art professionals, and trade persons galore.
Like many a conference: you are whom you know,
My inexperience to the field was beginning to show.
Several Saints introduced me to much honored guests,
Soon I was handing out cards like the rest.

Too poor for the workshops (I heard they were great),
I started my conference on Saturday at eight.
Vast sessions to choose from, delightful to see,
Exhibits, yoga, meetings ... and coffee for free!

Margaret and Ted planned a magnificent show,
Commencing with JSTOR, OCLC, Getty, Wilson, and Grove.
Many experts presented with much to convey,
I scrambled to three or four sessions a day.

Great minds were sanctioned to mingle and share,
Their illustrious knowledge mixed with specialties quite rare.
What things did I learn? Well, I did get this tip:
“There is no money in Art Librarianship!”

An abundance of choices, countless issues to absorb,
Erudition and insight struck a responsive chord.
ARLIS bestowed upon us a forum – this vision and fact,
Impressive enough for Christo and Jeanne-Claude to next wrap.

Thanks to ARLIS/NY for this brilliant opportunity.

Billy Parrott

The 32nd Annual ARLIS Conference was a wonderful experience. My background in retail bookselling (10 years) and in fine arts (BFA, MFA) has afforded me the opportunity to attend similar events in the past such as the American Booksellers Association annual conference and the College Art Association annual conference. ARLIS though provides an outlet for me to explore my interests in art, books, and libraries and the annual conference was an excellent opportunity to meet other individuals with similar interests.

Highpoints of the conference for me were the presentations “Librarians as Art and Architecture Historians” and “Instructing Diverse Learners: Information Literacy Competency in the Arts.” The presentations I attended raised many thought provoking issues and ideas. I look forward to entering “libraryland” upon the completion of my MLS this summer and addressing and implementing these many diverse ideas.

I would like to thank my volunteer mentors from Ohio, New York, and Massachusetts. I would also like to thank the three ladies who stopped me as I accidentally entered the ladies restroom while looking for the stairwell (they managed to repress their laughter, and for that I am grateful), and everyone else from ARLIS who made my first conference a memorable and educational experience.

Many thanks!

Jessica Cline

As a first-time attendee to the ARLIS conference, I am appreciative for the welcome and gracious attention from the ARLIS/NY Chapter, the mentor program, and each of the librarians I met. I enjoyed hearing profiles of various libraries, such as Susan Leonard’s discussion of the library at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College during the New Art Roundtable. I also found it intriguing that many of the sessions provided examples of the cross-disciplinary nature of the field. For instance, at the discussion “Integrating Intellectual Access to Library, Museum, and Archival Material” the panelists explained models of metadata integration for library materials and museum objects.

The conference gave me a sense of the variety of experiences handled by art librarians, and the fascinating projects, from ArtSTOR to Digital Emblem Books, that are moving art libraries into the digital age. I am very grateful to ARLIS/NY and the Celine Palatsky Travel Award for the opportunity to attend this conference. It provided an inspiring and educational introduction to the art librarianship community.

Shalimar Abigail O. Fojas

My first evening at the ARLIS/NA conference brought back some uncomfortable memories of middle school winter semi-formals. Well, a very *particular* semi-formal where I wore a pink floral dress that my mother had assured me was the height of fashion. After my best friend fled for cover in the girl's locker room, I was left alone to watch my classmates strutting around in dark slinky velvet numbers. I stood awkwardly against the bleachers, trying to hide the bow on the back of my dress (yes, a *bow!*), thereby doing a very convincing impression of a wallflower. Needless to say, I felt far too self-conscious to make small talk.

More than fifteen years later, I found myself standing awkwardly alone in the middle of a large gathering. I camped out next to a table laden with several varieties of cheese, struggling to resist the urge to duck under a low-hanging potted palm for cover. Librarians would come to the table, scoop up some nibbles and walk away. Everyone seemed to know everyone else, as peals of recognition reverberated throughout the room. I cradled my drink gingerly, silently... remembering what the bartender had said as he filled my glass three-quarters full with vodka. I must have cocked an eyebrow in surprise and he responded with: "It's a conference for librarians, right? You'll need it." Indeed. So, I took a gulp of my drink, coughed, and accosted the next librarian who reached for the crackers.

A clumsy conversation ensued. Large university library. Commercial art gallery. Collection development librarian. Library school student. Modern art. Medieval manuscripts. Hmm... Really? Oh, yes, how interesting... And it continued like that for a nervous few minutes until I finally hit on something. It turns out that said librarian was an expert on Marcel Duchamp and was trying to expand the library's collection to include him and other Dadaists. It just so happened that my gallery represents the artist who illustrated a biography of Duchamp. The library did not have this book and the librarian had been looking for it for quite some time. We had several extra copies and could certainly request more from the artist in Paris. And so there it was. I had made my first professional contact at the conference!

It continued like that for the rest of the night. I ran into members of ARLIS/NY, who I had met less than an hour before at the First Time Attendees meeting. They introduced me to other librarians, who eased me into conversations with their colleagues. Over the course of the evening, I spoke to the authors of two articles that I had recently read, ran into a former supervisor, chatted with a librarian from Finland about design journals, and was even complimented by a librarian from St. Petersburg on my not completely inept Russian. Actually, the entire conference unfolded in much the same way. Whether listening in on a session, touring the vendor booths, or attending a reception, my initial unease would melt away because the other attendees were so open and friendly.

Being a first-time ARLIS/NA attendee was rather like going to a foreign country, being temporarily bewildered by the language and customs of the inhabitants, and then... discovering that it feels a lot like home. As the name of their professional organization suggests, art librarians speak a unique language made up of many acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations. They use these terms with great facility, but are not reluctant to explain their expansions to uninitiated students like myself. All in all, the conference was a very positive experience, reinforcing my desire to enter a profession filled with such passionate and welcoming practitioners.

And art librarians are, indeed, *very* passionate. While listening in on heated debates over cataloguing principles or open-minded discussions about bringing diversity to the field (both in terms of people and collections), I was impressed by the intensity of the librarians' drive to meet the challenges of their chosen profession. This seriousness of purpose would sometimes lead to a palpable despair that art librarians would not be able keep pace with changing technologies or approaches to the study of art. Actually, I think this stems from an idealistic desire to not simply keep up, but also to foresee the future of the field and even to pre-empt problems before they arise.

For this reason, the Plenary Session with Christo and Jean-Claude should have been very comforting for all those attending. It certainly cheered me up—and not only because they were such a witty and engaging pair. For, despite all the anxiety I witnessed during the conference over digital images and electronic resources, and how to provide access to users while operating under constrained budgets, here were two artists giving an old-fashioned slide lecture. As the house lights went down (and up, and down, and up...), the whirl of the carousel fan and the steady rhythm of the rotating slides felt comfortingly familiar. Here was evidence that in the greater scheme of things, art librarians were doing a pretty good job of anticipating, after all. Sometimes, in striving to be cutting-edge, we lose sight of the fact that the rear guard deserves just as much attention as their more advanced peers. No computer screens, pixels, links, or electronic databases. Simply two artists presenting their work using a white screen and 35 mm color slides. And we were all enchanted.

As I sat in the darkened hall—not very far from where my cheese table outpost had been a few nights before—I listened to the presentation along with former strangers who were now colleagues. The questions they posed at the end were informed and insightful, prompting intriguing responses from both artists. On the whole, the art librarians who attended the conference are an impressive group. I look forward to learning more from their collective knowledge in future ARLIS gatherings, as they share it with such ease and enthusiasm. This cooperative spirit even extends to the ARLIS-L listserv, which I joined shortly after the end of the conference. Samuel Johnson might have been describing the members of ARLIS/NA when he said: "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it." Art librarians seem more than willing to share both types of knowledge, which was very encouraging for neophyte wallflowers like myself!



Billy Parrott, Shalimar Fojas, Jessica Cline, and Henry Baker.



New and less-new members, at the New Members orientation. Photos by Suz Massen.

Member News

Deborah Kempe, Chief of Collections Management & Access at the Frick Art Reference Library, was elected to a three-year term as NACO representative to the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) Policy Committee, a program of the Library of Congress. The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) is an international effort aimed at expanding timely access to materials in libraries' collections. The program seeks to increase the timely availability of unique records created and maintained under mutually acceptable standards; to facilitate the cost-effective creation and use of these records; and to provide leadership in the information community. The PCC supports the creation and dissemination of bibliographic and authority records, including names, subjects, and series. NACO is the name authority component of the PCC. The sole representative of an art library, she joins seven other rotating representatives from large U.S. university libraries and from the British Museum to meet yearly at the Library of Congress.

Heather Topcik has been appointed Chief Librarian at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts. Heather has worked at the BGC as Reference Librarian for the past three years.

Janis Ekdahl, who has been serving as interim Chief, will continue on a limited, part-time basis until the staff roster is again complete.



ARLIS/NYers in action at the conference Hospitality Desk.

Photo by Maria Oldal.

Discussion Groups Joint Meeting

By Suz Massen

On May 18, 2004, two ARLIS/NY affiliated professional discussion groups joined forces by holding a joint meeting at the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture. The Electronic Resources Discussion Group and the Collection Development Discussion Group recognize that they have shared interests. Anna Maria Poma-Swank, Associate Museum Librarian of the Cloisters, for the Collection Development Discussion Group, and Cynthia Wolff, Collections Management Librarian of the Museum of Modern Art, for the Electronic Resources Discussion Group, worked together to create an agenda for the meeting that addressed concerns of both groups.

The meeting started with a discussion of the use of electronic resources to save space by superseding print resources held in a particular collection. The discussion continued with a look at how the costs of print and electronic resources compare and how to handle redundancy in print and electronic collections. Consortial agreements were discussed as a way of keeping the cost of electronic resources collections down. The meeting was wrapped up with a discussion of the state of electronic resources for art research and how they differ from electronic resources available in other disciplines.

There were over twenty attendees at the meeting. The reaction from attendees was positive and tentative plans for future joint meetings were made. This meeting may be used as encouragement for other professional discussion groups that have similar interests to hold joint meetings that bring colleagues of different backgrounds together to discuss common issues.

If you wish to receive meeting minutes, please email Cynthia Wolff at Cynthia_Wolff@moma.org.

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Heidi Hass, incarnation of the Lord of Hospitality, at the ARLIS/NA Annual Conference in April.

Photo by Maria Oldal.