

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

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# ARLIS/NY News

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## Letter from the Chair

by Lisa Ryan, LIM College

Dear all,

First, thank you for your ideas and offers of assistance this year. I have received many wonderful suggestions and my goal is to tap into the experience and expertise of our seasoned members while also engaging both new art library professionals and students.

As you may know, we have formed a Finance Committee for ARLIS/NY and will meet for the first time this week. I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of this committee:

Elizabeth Darocha Berenz (Past Treasurer, ARLIS/NY)  
Ross Day (Past Treasurer, ARLIS/NA)  
Erin Elliot (Secretary, ARLIS/NY)  
Ted Goodman (Treasurer, ARLIS/NA)  
Holly Hatheway (Vice-Chair/Chair Elect, ARLIS/NY)  
Christina Peter (Past Chair, ARLIS/NY)  
Lisa Ryan (Chair, ARLIS/NY)  
Melissa Wagner (Treasurer, ARLIS/NY)

I am also organizing a Student and Professional Development Committee for ARLIS/NY. At various stages of their careers our members need different types of support and programming for student and professional development.

I think having representatives from various groups within ARLIS/NY on the Student and Professional Development Committee will help create both immediate solutions and long term strategies for addressing the concerns of our members. These groups include those in senior positions, those who are new or fairly new to the career of art librarianship, and any members who have expressed interest in becoming more involved in ARLIS/NY.

*(continues on page 2)*

*(Letter from the Chair continued from page 1)*

I would like to thank the follow ARLIS/NY members who have offered to be a member of this committee and invite you to join this group as well:

Karyn Anonia (Student, Pratt Institute)  
Charlotte Priddle (Development Coordinator, ARLIS/NY)  
Lisa Ryan (Chair, ARLIS/NY)  
Ken Soehner (Past President, ARLIS/NA)  
Cindy Wolff (Member-at-Large for Membership, ARLIS/NY)

This issue of ARLIS/NY News celebrates the first efforts of the Student and Professional Development Committee, and I look forward to working further with you through it! ❖

## ARLIS/NY Inaugurates a Student Voices Essay Competition

by Charlotte Priddle, Fales Library, NYU

The Student Voices essay competition came from discussions among the ARLIS/NY Board about ways to get students in various local library programs more involved in the organization, and an interest in having more student-centered events. The creation of this competition, which is planned to be an annual event, is only the beginning of various efforts by the Board and other members of the organization, both local and national, to reach out to students and to hopefully encourage more networking and connection between current professionals and library students.

The competition was announced via the arlisny listserv and through contacts at the various local library school programs – Palmer, Pratt, Queens, and Rutgers. It was heartening to receive entries from students at each of the schools, and to see the quality and breadth of work submitted.

After careful reading and much discussion, members of the committee given the task of picking the best paper unanimously chose Kat Savage's entry, "The Importance of Controlled Vocabularies in Art Collections," which is printed in this issue of the newsletter. Kat is currently enrolled at Pratt, working toward an MSLIS with an Archives Certificate and a Museum Libraries Certificate. She also works full-time at Dieu Donné, a non-profit arts organization dedicated to hand papermaking in the city, where she oversees the archive and the database, among other duties.

The committee also singled out for special mention two other authors: Teresa Slobuski at Rutgers, whose paper focused on the Guggenheim's Kandinsky Digital Archive, and Ryan Evans at Pratt, who wrote "Archiving the Avant-Garde: Preserving and Disseminating Institutional Histories."

On behalf of the Board the Student Voices Committee would like to thank all the students who submitted essays to the competition, and to encourage similar participation in the following years. The Board is planning a forthcoming event that will involve a presentation by Kat on her paper, which we hope will be attended by both student and professional members of the organization. This will give us all the opportunity to meet and network with new faces and the new voices in the organization. ❖

# The Importance of Controlled Vocabularies in Art Collections

by Kat Savage, winner of the ARLIS/NY Student Voices Essay Competition

Controlled vocabularies and comprehensive cataloging are critical in providing access to collections of art objects and art images. With online databases, there is virtually no limit to providing a wide variety of access points to an image. However, many collections have not applied such comprehensive cataloging to their records. Proprietary systems used by museums and other collections may record only the artist name, title of work, date, material, and size. While this may be sufficient for identifying a work, it does not lead to the discovery of artwork. Using such points of entry as iconography, subject matter, genre type, form, and material and technique can increase end-users' ability to find the images they are seeking. Furthermore, the adherence to standards for structure, form, and content can facilitate the sharing of data.

Art collections contain both objects and images. An art image can be a work of art, such as a drawing, or it can be an image *of* a work of art, such as a photograph.<sup>1</sup> In some cases, surrogates are all that remain of a work, especially with regard to installation art, performance art, and other works of impermanence.<sup>2</sup> A visual resource database is the searchable form of an art collection, and provides access and information about a collection. Cooperative cataloging enables wider access to art and art images, and the use of standards is essential in union catalogs.

The lack of standards in visual resource collections was recognized as a serious problem in the early 1980s. Institutions found themselves reinventing the wheel when setting out to catalog their collections. Professionals in art and image collections called for the adaptation and adoption of the MARC format. Maryly Snow wrote that MARC is a "universally recognized medium of data communication with a stable infrastructure propelled by institutional, corporate, and governmental sanction."<sup>3</sup> Adoption of MARC was not seamless; under the main entry fields for a slide, the primary creator would be the photographer, not the artist of the work shown in the slide. Ambiguity as to what was being cataloged – the image of the work, or the artwork itself – was also not clearly delineated in MARC.<sup>3</sup> It became clear that MARC would not serve collections whose primary focus did not fit neatly into the standards already established by the bibliographic community.

The Visual Resources Association (VRA) Data Standards Committee formed in 1993 to "advocate and promote the use of standard descriptive practices in visual resources collections that will facilitate the management, organization, and exchange of information."<sup>3</sup> Standards for art object metadata can be broken down into four categories: (1) data structure standards, which define metadata element sets; (2) data format standards, which are expressions of structure in machine-readable form; (3) data value standards, or controlled vocabularies; and (4) data content standards, or cataloging rules.<sup>4</sup>

The two most prominent data structure standards for art objects are the VRA Core Categories and the Getty Research Institute's Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA).  
*(continues on next page)*

*(Savage essay continued)*

As mentioned above, MARC can be adapted for use in an art catalog, but is not ideal. CDWA is extremely detailed and granular, and is best suited for the description of objects in museums, but not necessarily for surrogates.<sup>3</sup> The impetus behind the development of the VRA Core was to simplify and prescribe the essential parts of an art record. Much as the Dublin Core outlines the basic metadata needed to identify other resources, so would the VRA Core serve as a guide to the visual resources cataloger.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, VRA Core 4.0 was released. The latest version goes to great lengths to define a work as a unique entity, such as an object or event image, and the relationships of entities to each other. Relationships are of two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic relationships are whole-part associations, such as a page in a manuscript, or a panel in an altarpiece. Extrinsic relationships are entities that function independently from each other, but share an informative link. For example, a preparatory sketch has an extrinsic relationship to the painting on which it is based, and vice versa.<sup>5</sup>

Data format standards are extensions of data structure standards, and it is common to find the two intertwined. VRA Core 4.0 prescribes both data structure and its format implementation via an XML schema.<sup>3</sup> Another dual structure/format standard is CDWA Lite, developed by the Getty Research Institute and ARTStor.<sup>7</sup> CDWA Lite follows the Open Archives Initiative protocol for metadata harvesting. Harvesting enables information to be shared across union catalogs and the broader web, maintaining standards for access.<sup>4</sup> In a union catalog, the record can be linked back to the parent website of the record, where additional data may be available.<sup>4</sup> Format schemas can distinguish between indexing terms and display fields. In the public access view of a record, these display fields can convey ambiguity to users, using free text and terms like “possibly” and “probably.”<sup>6</sup> Indexing fields can be hidden from a user's view, or placed in a less noticeable position on the returned record. Data value standards include controlled vocabularies, such as indexes and thesauri, and authority files. VRA Core 4.0 recommends the Getty Research Institute vocabularies – which include the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN), the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names (GTGN), and the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) – as prime sources for data values.<sup>5</sup> The Getty defines a controlled vocabulary as “an established list of terms from which an indexer or cataloger may select when assigning descriptors or subject headings to a record representing a work.”<sup>2</sup> Controlled vocabularies can be used for both indexing and browsing, consisting of expert terminology as well as broader terms.<sup>8</sup> They are designed to control the ambiguity and vagueness of natural language.<sup>9</sup> In art collections, controlled vocabularies and authority files govern terms that populate the fields prescribed by the structure discussed above. These terms include artist names, geographic locations, materials, styles, and subject matter. All names or terms in a controlled vocabulary are equally valid as access points. Prescribing a preferred term creates standards for collections, but from a retrieval standpoint, all possible terms may be used to locate materials.<sup>10</sup> Plugging the same term into multiple categories in a database or metadata tags increases the ability for a system to retrieve the information in a search.<sup>1</sup> The best vocabularies are syndetic in structure, such as thesauri that delineate terms along a broad-to-narrow spectrum. ICONCLASS is an example of such a vocabulary.<sup>1</sup>

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*(Savage essay continued)*

A wide range of subject matter can be described by a hierarchical controlled vocabulary like ICONCLASS. The specific phrase “Herakles searching for Hylas” automatically has a number of associated keywords, including “mythology,” “Greek legend,” “hero,” “searching,” “sailing,” “Mysia,” et cetera.<sup>10</sup>

Data content standards, such as the VRA’s Cataloging Cultural Objects (CCO), guide a cataloger in the arrangement of the values found in controlled vocabularies into standards for syntax, style, and form.<sup>3</sup> CCO is a manual for the complete process of cataloging objects, designed to facilitate access. Each of these four standards for data – structure, format, value, and content – all work together to streamline end-user access to information. Use of these standards is integral to the cataloging, arrangement, and discovery of art objects.

There are a number of entry points that must be considered when cataloging works of art, the most prominent of which is subject matter. Describing subject matter and context is key to increasing access to works of art.<sup>11</sup> Subjects for visual documents can be content identifiers, geographic terms, and abstract concepts.<sup>12</sup> The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris suggests the following guidelines in determining the depth of subject analysis a cataloger should undertake: index anything clearly depicted, anything that is unclearly depicted but is still informative, and do not index parts if the indexed whole implies the parts.<sup>1</sup> The art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) broke art subject matter down into three levels. The first level is the preiconographic description of what is depicted in the work, followed by an identification and interpretation of the iconography.<sup>6</sup> Another approach to art subject matter analysis is determining *of-ness* and *about-ness*. The former describes the people, events, and activities shown in the work, while the latter describes abstract concepts and iconographies of a work.<sup>1</sup>

A cataloger must distinguish between a work type and the subject matter. For example, a landscape painting in the traditional sense would be identified as a “landscape” both in the Subject field and the Work-Type field in CDWA (both *of-ness* and *about-ness*). However, a painting that contains a landscape but is dominated by figurative or narrative imagery would not be classified as a landscape.<sup>1</sup> Instead, the landscape element could provide an access point in the description of the content and subject matter.

Standard vocabularies for subject headings include AAT, ICONCLASS, Library of Congress Thesaurus for Graphic Materials, and the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). While terms from these thesauri help to provide access, free text can communicate nuance and ambiguity about a work. Free text descriptions should follow style guidelines for grammar, and incorporate controlled terms.<sup>8</sup> When selecting a vocabulary, the intended use of a collection should indicate the level of detail needed. If the collection is to be used by art historians for scholarly studies, a more granular vocabulary like AAT might be in order, while a collection serving a general population of undergraduate students may be well-served by LCSH. The vocabulary should also be easy to understand, active in scholarly communities, and should have continued viability across collections. The level of professional and institutional support should indicate whether or not a vocabulary

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*(Savage essay continued)*

will endure over the course of many years.<sup>13</sup> For example, the Index of Christian Art has a focus on Western work until 1400 AD, limiting its use.<sup>13</sup> However, by taking terms and names from published authorities like LCSH, and adding additional variants, a local collection can build collection-specific thesauri and indexes. Data format schemas can record the source of the authority of each term.<sup>10</sup>

Cataloging works of art involves awareness and application of the available standards. CDWA advises that the indexing of key elements for access “should be a conscious activity performed by knowledgeable catalogers who consider the retrieval implications of their indexing terms.”<sup>14</sup> By systematically reading a work, a cataloger can identify the component elements and efficiently catalog a work of art.<sup>15</sup> Reading a work typically begins with the central or most prominent aspect, and radiates outward in an orderly manner. Subject matter can be broken down into primary, secondary, and tertiary subjects. In order to determine the subject matter, the best cataloger in most circumstances will be one with a broad, general knowledge of most subjects. Specialists may produce records that miss the forest for the trees, focusing on details that fall under their specific scholarly concentration. On the other hand, this may be the best cataloger for a small, focused collection.<sup>15</sup> A knowledgeable cataloger will be able to include indexing terms that reflect all possible interpretations of the subject matter.<sup>6</sup> If a cataloger is faced with a subject with which they are unfamiliar, but lack the resources to do the research, cataloging should proceed on broad terms. Meaning and interpretation should not be surmised without supporting documentation. Analysis of the work can extend from subject matter down to the way the media was applied, how the support was constructed, any alterations that have occurred, and the history or provenance of the work.<sup>16</sup>

Describing materials and techniques pose both considerable problems and potential for access. Materials are substances of which the work is composed, including the media and the support. Techniques describe the instruments, processes, and methods employed in the creation of a work of art. Each aspect of the materials and techniques can be separated into separate fields at the discretion of the cataloging institution; however, CCO recommends combining all material and technique descriptors into a single field for ease of display and access.<sup>8</sup> Describing the materials of an art object is best accomplished through direct physical examination, supported by laboratory analysis and research.<sup>8</sup> If a collection has a great deal of similar objects, there is a need for a more specific vocabulary to describe the works. For example, a collection of works on paper may want to distinguish the different types of paper used – “Rives BFK,” “handmade abaca,” “mould made mulberry,” and so on. Collections with a wide variety of different objects might be best served by the umbrella term “paper” to describe a support for a work on paper.<sup>8</sup> However, if the information is known, it should most certainly be recorded.

Exhaustiveness in cataloging works of art is another concern; in works with multiple techniques, should all techniques be listed, the primary technique only, or should the term “various processes” be employed?<sup>8</sup> Again, erring on the side of more detail, or at least more specific detail, as opposed to rolling information into a vague ball (“work on paper”) is preferable. The medium description for a 1989 work in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) *(continues on next page)*

*(Savage essay continued)*

by Felix Gonzalez-Torres is simply “paint on wall.” While this is accurate, it does not fully convey the work, which is comprised of text painted high on a wall in a horizontal line.<sup>11</sup> A free-text description of the work may be in order, supplemented by access points from a controlled vocabulary. Such access points, drawn from the AAT, might be “installation,” “words,” “Conceptual,” and “mural paintings.” Guidelines should be set up by the institution for maintaining consistency and clarifying procedures when faced with limited or unavailable information about a work.<sup>8</sup>

While every institution would undoubtedly like to catalog at the highest possible degree of detail, the realities of funding and human resources must be considered when undertaking a project. Visual resource collections suffer from shortages of time, funding, and technical support.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, there is a real need for human catalogers with an understanding of the local needs of a collection as well as the objects contained within it. This is essential for improving end-user access.<sup>10</sup> It is important to expend the human resources during initial cataloging to create detailed records that provide the greatest amount of access. In the past, cataloging projects have glossed over initial cataloging, with the belief that these records could be expanded at a later date. In reality, records are rarely revisited.<sup>15</sup>

Catalogers can make use of controlled vocabularies and authority files to work more efficiently. A thesaurus guides a cataloger to include a variety of terms, negating the need to brainstorm each time he or she sets out to describe an item.<sup>8</sup> A flexible information system should be able to accommodate variant terms, common misspellings, case sensitivity, plurality, compound names, accents, and punctuation. In addition, if a cataloger records a narrow term, the system should automatically include the broader terms in the structured thesaurus linked to the system. If this is not the case, the work record will have to include such terms in the work record to improve access. The human effort that would go into incorporating such detail into records is highly impractical; it is advisable when seeking an information system to select one that makes use of human-developed thesauri and authority records.<sup>8</sup>

Information systems used for cataloging and indexing information are often different than systems used for public access, or have a back-end that is not visible to the user. When using controlled vocabulary and following data structure standards, it becomes extremely simple to export the data from the back-end to create a public access catalog, labels for display, and other published materials. Compliance with other standards makes it easy to share data in union catalogs that use other data format schemas. Metadata crosswalks that identify equivalent fields can be referred to when sharing data.<sup>6</sup>

All the energy that is spent on cataloging and determining access points is necessary to provide users with the ability to find the information they need. In the case of image retrieval, this becomes an act of translation from visual data to textual data.<sup>17</sup> A certain degree of difficulty occurs with synonyms, non-standard terms, and outdated terms. Data harvested from museums with proprietary language and descriptors will not provide consistent access to users.<sup>12</sup> ARTstor is striving to meet some of the challenges of getting the heterogeneous data provided by its contributors under control. The database has already applied the Getty’s *(continues on next page)*

*(Savage essay continued)*

Union List of Artist Names, and intends to implement other controlled vocabularies across other fields, including repository names, geographical locations, and styles and periods.<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that ARTstor is not changing the data provided by its contributors, but rather adding values from controlled vocabularies to the existing metadata.<sup>18</sup>

Controlled vocabularies, guidelines, and constructed checklists can help alleviate cataloging human error.<sup>1</sup> An authority file, which contains records for people, places, things, and concepts that are used repeatedly throughout a catalog, is linked to all records using data from it. If a catalog using the outdated terms “serigraph” or “silkscreen” wanted to update their database, the preferred term can be changed to “screenprint” in an authority file. With just this one change, all instances of the nonpreferred terms would be accurately updated in the catalog. The information system using the thesaurus can guide a user to the preferred term (“Did you mean...?”) or return results for all related terms across a catalog. The thesaurus provides the machine with the relationship information to return the best possible range of results. A system using a vocabulary with a syndetic structure can assist the user to expand or narrow their searches.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the groundwork has been laid for controlled vocabularies and data standards. The Getty Research Institute and the Visual Resources Association are at the forefront of developing such standards. It is now up to cataloging institutions to create high quality data that conforms to standards so that this data can be shared. There is no dispute that metadata is integral to the discovery of resources, be they published books, manuscripts, media, or art objects. Art collections must include subject access across the range of aspects that these objects possess. Iconography, form, material, and other descriptors are viable points of access. Higher quality metadata that incorporates controlled vocabulary is more flexible, easily shared, and facilitates the discovery of a wide range of resources across scholarly and general communities. ❖

#### Notes

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(Savage essay notes continued)

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- 15 Hourihane, C. (2002). It begins with the cataloguer: Subject access to images and the cataloguer's perspective. In *Introduction to art image access: Issues, tools, standards, strategies* (40-58). Los Angeles: the Getty Research Institute. Savage 12
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- 18 ARTstor. (2008). Descriptive data. Retrieved November 23, 2009, from <http://www.artstor.org/our-organization/o-html/standards-data.shtml> ❖

## Editor's Note

by Karyn Hinkle, Bard Graduate Center

We hope you enjoyed reading about Lisa's idea for a Student and Professional Development Committee for ARLIS/NY; Charlotte's idea for a local Student Voices essay competition, which was one of the Board's most enjoyed activities this year; and especially Kat's winning essay on controlled vocabulary. It's been fun to put together a bit of a student-themed issue for this volume of the News. Please accept our apologies for the footnote numbering in Kat's essay; it proved possible to print the essay only as received.

One more student-related item for our theme issue follows, and next time we will return to our regularly-scheduled program of ARLIS/NY events description and other news. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you'd like to be published in ARLIS/NY News. We accept submissions on all ARLIS/NY events and any other topics of interest to our membership, and I look forward to receiving them! ❖

## Career Advisement Program for Students Considering a Career in Art Libraries

Minutes by Karyn Anonia and Bronwen Bitetti

ARLIS/NY and the Pratt Institute's School of Information and Library Science (SILS) held a "Career Advisement Program for Students Considering a Career in Art Libraries" on February 5th, 2010.

Panelists included Ken Soehner, Chief Librarian at Watson Library, the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Amy Lucker, Head Librarian at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts, Acting Director of Technical Services at New York University, and President of ARLIS/NA; Tula Giannini, Dean of the School of Information and Library Science, Pratt Institute; Lisa Ryan, Archivist at LIM College and Chair of ARLIS/NY; and Sandra Brooke, Librarian at Princeton University's Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology.

The panel was moderated by Karyn Anonia, an MSLIS student at Pratt Institute. Bronwen Bitetti recorded the minutes:

### Opening Remarks, Karyn Anonia (KA):

- [the Career Advisement] Program [for Students Considering a Career in Art Libraries was] conceived as a way to encourage student involvement in the professional organization (ARLIS) and as an open forum to address students' concerns about the changing landscape of the field of art librarianship
- [A list of current library students'] concerns, collected from a survey of students considering the field, includes:
  - is art librarianship a viable career option?
  - how has the rise of digital technologies impacted the structure of art libraries and the global community?

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(Career Advisement minutes continued)

- what are the new, necessary skill-sets in this digital age?
- is an advanced degree in art history necessary? mandatory?
- is the MLS necessary? Are “paraprofessionals” without an MLS degrees (but with a subject specific degree) more or less qualified to be art librarians?
- is the MLS curriculum addressing the changing landscape of the field?
- is there adequate mentoring and advising in internships and academic programs?

**Ken Soehner (KS):**

- recognizes the event as an opportunity to advise, counsel and support students and incoming professionals
- the bad news: contraction in the field of art museum libraries and likely in academic libraries as well
- feels this is not a cyclical trend; art libraries are finding ways to do their work more efficiently with a smaller staff and, in some cases, using what is left over to develop their collections
- interested in pragmatic strategies to enable you to work in an art library environment
- most importantly, one *must have library experience* : non-negotiable
- there is a new culture of internships where they are widely available and easy to access; this can be problematic in that there are good and bad internships
  - urges students to consult with professionals (those in attendance notwithstanding) about what they know about the institutions and their [internship] programs
- also important *not to over-specialize* : strive to be a "deep generalist"
  - the most valuable employees bring a wide range of skills and are comfortable doing many things; broader set of experiences
  - reach beyond your areas of inclination
  - being single-minded sometimes speaks more to your weaknesses than your strengths
  - network : build bridges, not fences

**Amy Lucker (AL):**

- most important skill is *flexibility*
- wants to focus on the importance of networking and professional development aspect
- it is true that attending conferences and joining associations cost money, which is difficult for students, but one must look at it as an investment because jobs are often gained through the connections one might make at an ARLIS meeting
  - encourages students to get involved; go beyond simply attending, volunteer to chair a committee – it doesn't matter if you've never done it before
  - excellent resume builder
- if you are already affiliated with an institution, explore the option of funding toward your attendance; you are essentially contracting with that institution to represent them at the professional event

**Lisa Ryan (LR):**

- relatively recent grad of Pratt (2006) and met many of her most important professional connections/mentors/employers both through her internships and through ARLIS

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(Career Advisement minutes continued)

- would like to work with schools in developing "recognition credit" for internships, in which students earn credit for their work, but do not have to pay for the credits
- recommends casting a wide net in terms of classes
- she remembers her interns and would try to hire from the pool of her past interns if given the chance

**Sandy Brooke (SB):**

- comes from a varied background; didn't initially set out to be an art librarian; took an advanced degree in Art History, worked for the Bibliography of the History of Art, trained docents, did curatorial work, finally got an MLS and did acquisitions and collection development for a liberal arts college
- emphasizes that the skills necessary to be an art librarian are broad because on one hand, you might have materials in your collection that are hundreds of years old and need conservation and on the other hand, you will need to be able to deal with digital image repositories and digitization projects
- skills that are extremely important:
  - subject knowledge and technological skills are both important
  - writing and speaking well
  - technology
  - language skills: the literature of art history is multi-lingual and you must be able to negotiate those materials
- an MLS will open doors, but it will NOT clinch the job
- you must have a demonstrated, *deep engagement* with the subject matter if not a second MA in art history
- encourages hard work on cover letters:
  - you must address the job description
  - you must match your skill set to the job description
  - you must address *what makes you different*
- when going into an interview:
  - you must be professional and polished
  - you must be able to answer *what interests you about this job?* and *do you have any questions for us?* you need to be able to nail these questions and [your questions] should not be about salary, benefits, or vacation
  - she often asks: *have you had any great art experiences recently?* [a great answer to this one] will indicate your engagement

**Tula Giannini (TG)**

- as an academic program director, thinks deeply about skills necessary for professionals entering the field
- Pratt has a dual-degree program with SILS and [the History of Art Department], a certificate in Museum Libraries, and an Archives certificate
- as opposed to KS, senses an *expansion* in the information profession; information is central to human endeavor and experience and information professionals are in demand
- stresses that you must be *entrepreneurial*: create the job and the future (be positive!)

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(Career Advisement minutes continued)

### Student Questions:

- Pratt student: Internships are not designed for students; [it is] difficult to work without pay; difficult to find time; sometimes [interns are] doing work that is menial, with little supervision.
  - TG: you must remember that going in to these positions you are not a professional, you are there to show your abilities and hopefully, make the connections that might get you a job someday.
  - AL: worked full-time in a library as she did her MLS. Her internship was her job. She sought exposure to every process/project she could in the library.
  - AL: If you end up in a bad position or are somehow unsatisfied, are you allowed to lodge complaints? (to your Dean?)
  - TG: As an intern, you are really there to analyze the environment; if you are in a bad environment, you've still gained something by learning what about it was bad and thinking about how it might be improved
  - Heidi Hass, Morgan Library and Secretary of ARLIS/NA: Creating a good internship is hard work; schools, employers and students need to talk to each other more about expectations.
  - KS: Agrees with the criticism in part; internships pose an ethical challenge; when considering an internship, one must ask what the opportunities are there and ask professionals what they know about them.
- Palmer student: Internships can be difficult to obtain for people who are working full-time day jobs.
  - KS, AL: Ask about Saturday and evening hours; many institutions operate then.
  - AL: Employers now are not distinguishing between paid/unpaid internships when looking at resumes; it is the experience that matters.
  - SB: Build good references; make sure you have professionals who can speak well about you and your work.
- Another student question: We've spoken about opportunities in the greater NY area, but what about opportunities elsewhere?
  - AL: there will be less competition for jobs in strange places (the Midwest, Dubai, Canada) and you may be able to get hired for a position that you would not be competitive/experienced enough for in New York.
  - KS: Agrees with TG that opportunities *are* expanding while *traditional* library and museum jobs are contracting; encourages students to think about a range of possibilities (collection management, web design, e-pubs).
  - TG: Digital management and digital curation; special collections everywhere are moving into the digital world.
- Another student question: How important is this second MA?
  - a second degree is helpful for academic libraries; necessary for tenure (often institutions will help you obtain the degree).
  - in museum libraries it is not as required.

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(Career Advisement minutes continued)

- Another student question: Are the certificates helpful? Should they be on your resume?
  - You should put them on your resume; ultimately, experience will trump the certificate in weighing candidates' qualifications.
  - KS: Institutions are looking for *competency* and *commitment*.
  - AL: When your certificates involve a practicum, explain that work in your cover letter.
  - SB: Back up your experience with your special efforts and initiatives (i.e. Rare Books School, papers published).
- Another student question: Should previous experience (such as a first career) be noted on your resume?
  - You should state, briefly, that experience and save the extra room for more in-depth discussion of your relevant experience.
  - SB: Temper selling yourself with a modicum of modesty.
  - TG: Sell yourself as a person of the global information environment.
  - KS: Remember that "alternative" employers don't necessary know what an MLS is – you must explain and contextualize your skills for them.

-end of minutes-

Ed. note: We'll look forward to continuing these and other questions and their meaning for ARLIS/NY members through the Student and Professional Development Committee and beyond. Stay tuned! ❖

## Reach ARLIS/NY members through ARLIS/NY News

Contact board member Charlotte Priddle, ARLIS/NY Development Coordinator ([cpriddle@nyss.org](mailto:cpriddle@nyss.org)), if you'd like to place a newsletter ad with us.

## See your byline in ARLIS/NY News

Contact news editor Karyn Hinkle ([hinkle@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:hinkle@bgc.bard.edu)) to submit a photo, write up a program, suggest a topic, or request an article assignment. Your pieces are welcomed!