

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

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# ARLIS/NA New York News

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## Letter from the Chair

by Giana Ricci, New York University

Dear ARLIS/NA New York Chapter Members,

Welcome (or welcome back for some of you) to the ARLIS/NA New York newsletter! *ARLIS/New York News*, as the newsletter was originally titled, began publication in 1978 and ran, with some lapses, until 2012. [Volumes 1-30](#) are available to current members for download through the ARLIS/NA New York chapter website. Back by popular demand, this new entirely electronic version of the ARLIS/NA New York Chapter newsletter provides a chance to increase communication between the Executive Board and the chapter. The newsletter will also give us a chance to spotlight our members who are doing incredible work as well as provide recaps of chapter events and future opportunities for engagement.

That being said, I want to give you an update on what the Board has been working on. As you may remember, I sent a message to the chapter in January outlining the Board's current priorities which are listed below. I'm happy to report progress in all of these areas with more to come.

### **Diversity, equity, and inclusion in our nominating procedures**

Member feedback related to our nominating process for Executive Board positions led us to review our current policies, some of which are codified in the Bylaws, and examine how we can make them more equitable and transparent. Giana Ricci, (Chair), Billy Kwan (Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect), Samantha Deutch (Past Chair) and Rajene Hardeman (ARLIS/NA New York Member) have been working on a proposal for changes to the nominating committee procedures that will focus on a more equitable and transparent process for nominating members to the Board and limiting the influence that the Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect and other Executive Board members have in the nomination process.

*(continues on next page)*

(Letter from the Chair continued from page 1)

Once completed, the proposal will be discussed amongst the Board and put to a vote. If any accepted changes require a Bylaws edit, then the vote to edit the Bylaws will be put to the chapter membership.

### **Recruitment of new members to the chapter**

Ralph Baylor, (Membership Coordinator), has created specialized email templates for outreach related to renewing membership, lapsed membership, student membership applications, and non-members who attend our free and open events. The Board hopes that this systematic type of communication will encourage member commitment to the chapter and expand our networks.

Abigail Walker, (Student/Early Professional and Mentoring Liaison) and Giana Ricci (Chair), have been working with a non-profit organization called [iMentor](#), which provides formal mentorship programs for high school students who are preparing for college. iMentor focuses on first-generation students in New York City and other metropolitan areas, many of whom come from underrepresented backgrounds, and works to expose them to career opportunities and networks that will help them to succeed in college and beyond. We are working to arrange educational opportunities about librarianship for the iMentor students.

### **Programming**

Missy Brown (Programming Coordinator) organized a very successful in-person happy hour in Brooklyn on March 24, 2022. Sticking to locations with outdoor space, we plan to continue informal happy hours in-person when we can. Missy also organized an in-person tour of the exhibition *Gwendolyn Brooks: A Poet's Work in Community* at the Morgan Library and Museum on May 3, 2022. This tour was led by Nic Caldwell, Belle da Costa Greene Curatorial Fellow at the Morgan and this year's recipient of the Celine Palatsky Travel Award. Thanks for your support of the chapter, Nic!

We anticipate holding the 2022 ARLIS/NA New York mini-conference in the Fall. While we understand the value of in-person events, we expect a larger number of attendees for the mini-conference, therefore it will likely be held virtually for the safety of all attendees.

### **Member Feedback and Involvement**

The Board has greatly been enjoying the feedback we are receiving through the [anonymous feedback form](#) on the chapter's website. Keep the feedback and suggestions coming! We will soon be recruiting members for 2023 Executive Board positions. We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the current Executive Board positions and reach out to [any existing Board member](#) if you have questions. Details related to several of the Board positions can be found in our [chapter bylaws](#). In addition, if you are interested in volunteering for any of our [standing committees](#), please contact the Executive Board member who is listed as the Lead and they will get back to you. We are always looking for help with the many initiatives that the chapter has on deck.

Thank you for reading and thank you for your interest in the ARLIS/NA New York chapter. It has been a pleasure serving as Chair so far, and I look forward to everything else we will accomplish together this year.

All the best,

Giana Ricci



# The ARLIS/NA NY Tour of the Easton Foundation

by Rachel Garbade, Student Member

On the snowy afternoon of Thursday, January 20th, Chapter members gathered inside the Easton Foundation, quietly tucked away in two, now conjoined, unassuming townhouses in Chelsea. Before beginning the tour of Louise Bourgeois' home, we were given a brief introduction by director Maggie Wright and archivist Sewon Kang in the foundation's foyer. We were told of the fate that Bourgeois', much larger, Brooklyn studio met, as it was razed to make room for the Barclay's Center. Then, Wright shared the story of Bourgeois' neighbor, costume designer William Ivey Long, who sold his abode to Bourgeois in her last years of life in 2010, which has since been connected to the townhouse containing her home and studio. Once gaudily coated in the finest gilding, the space is now minimally installed with a number of Bourgeois' drawings and paintings and expertly renovated. We did not know it then, but this building, which houses the foundation's offices, the artist's archives, and an exhibition space, would stand in stark aesthetic contrast to Bourgeois' living quarters just next door.

As we descended into the basement, we were greeted by one of the early artist's "personages," a slender, life-size totem. We learned Bourgeois would carry it around, anthropomorphically animating its appendages. There was also a vitrine of archival documents and photographs that created a timeline of the artist's life. Finally, in the backyard, a hulking spider, now delicately sprinkled in the day's snow flurries, stood as a sort of memorial to both the artist's mother as well as the artist, somehow both predatory and protective.

Next, we were taken through a portal, freshly cut between the two townhouses, into the home and world of Louise Bourgeois. As we ducked our heads past a spiral staircase, we were transported back in time, seeing everything as it stood on May 31, 2010, upon her death, in the basement studio. On a large table, unfinished artworks lay among paint brushes and tools, a printing press, and scraps of her mother's clothing, once destined to become finished artworks but now suspended in a poetic purgatory.

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The author is joined by other chapter members in the backyard of the Easton Foundation. Rachel is 2<sup>nd</sup> from the right.



One of Bourgeois' Spider sculptures on view during the tour

More photos of this and other ARLIS/NA NY events can be found on our [Instagram](#) profile.

Please take a look and follow us!

*(The ARLIS/NA NY Tour of the Easton Foundation continued from page 3)*

Making our way upstairs, on creaking stair treads, this townhouse contrasted with the office's pristine spaces. Wright suggested that the artist and her husband, art historian Robert Goldwater, likely never re-painted the walls after they moved in in 1962; their total energy was put, instead, into their art and writing. Amidst peeling paint and stacks (and stacks) of books, the artist's residence emerged. In one room was her salon, where she socialized and held interviews, amidst her life's ephemera, pinned to the wall. Photographs were piled on top of newspaper clippings. Exhibition announcements covered drawings. It looked like an archivist's nightmare, until we learned that each item was, in fact, a facsimile of its original, which were safely stored in climate-controlled storage.

Throughout the rest of the house, we learned other pieces of the artist's biography. Upstairs, there were two beds, one of which the artist never returned to after Goldwater died. Surrounding the other, shelves of rare books and flat files bursting with artwork, which gave clues into the artist's brief history of owning a bookstore, called Erasmus, from 1956–59. Next door, a black furry coat spilled into the hallway, the same one the artist wore in the now iconic portrait taken by Robert Mapplethorpe. Between the salon and front office, the mere suggestion of a kitchen gave information about her feminism; early on, she had the stove removed, evidence of her distaste for traditional gender roles surrounding homemaking. In the office, we saw phone numbers scribbled across the walls. One number was for the artist's assistant of thirty years, Jerry Gorovoy, who is now President of The Easton Foundation.

As I moved through the narrow and carefully cluttered spaces of Louise Bourgeois' townhouse, I got a unique view of the artist's sensibility that you cannot usually glean in white-box gallery spaces. By entering her home, I learned that she was an artist who placed artmaking at the center of her universe. The traumas of her childhood, webs of her social life, and her eschewing of society's expectations all contributed to her genius, physically manifested in a prolific artistic output, now internationally recognized. This visit to The Easton Foundation has encouraged me to look beyond the narratives that museums and galleries present of artists, and to also interrogate primary sources, however gritty (and full of furniture) they may be. Because the foundation is not currently open to the public for tours, I was especially grateful to have had this opportunity, uniquely arranged by ARLIS/NA's New York Chapter. ♡

## ARLIS/NA NY Land Acknowledgments

by Matthew Garklavs, Pratt Institute

For over a year, the ARLIS/NA New York Executive Board has made Land Acknowledgements a fixture for its business meetings. In addition to mentioning that many of our institutions sit on unceded Indigenous land (specifically Lenapehoking the homeland of the Munsee Lenape and Canarsie peoples), Board members take turns sharing something new we learned about this group and their culture.

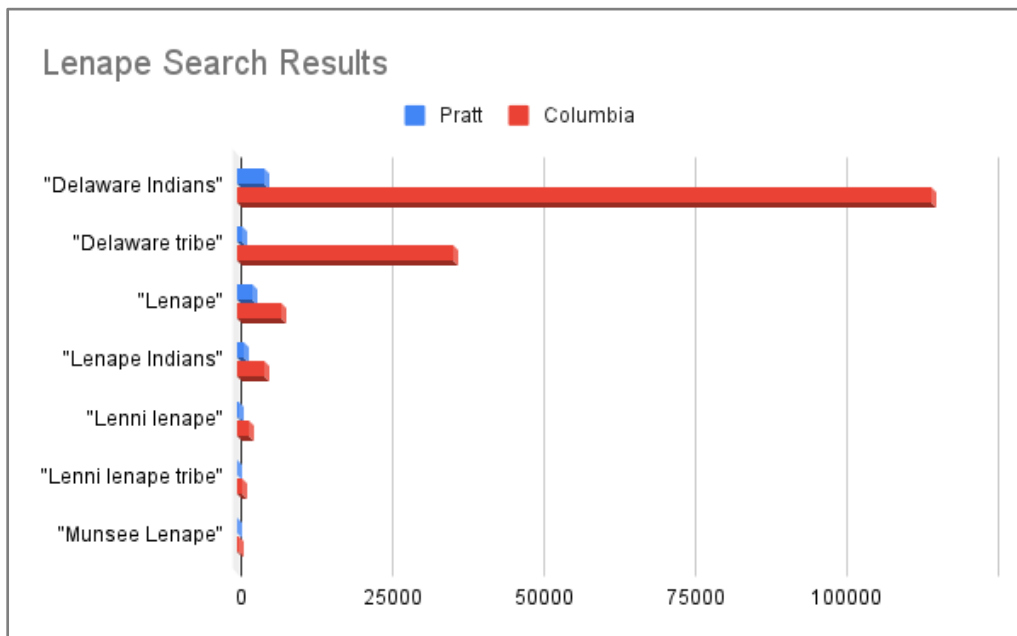
For instance, at one meeting someone talked about [the "Lenapehoking" exhibition at the Greenpoint Public Library](#). Another time, a board member discussed a work entitled "[Mespat](#)" by video artist Alan Michelson, a member of the Mohawk tribe, that documents the Newtown Creek superfund site.

At our last meeting, I focused on the challenges of finding sources on the Lenape people in the collections of Pratt Institute Libraries where I work. Here's a few takeaways from doing some preliminary research:

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(ARLIS/NA NY Land Acknowledgments continued from page 4)

Searching with the terms “Delaware” in Pratt’s discovery layer (the name given to the Lenape people by white settlers) or other harmful language like “Indians” yields much higher results than using the appropriate/correct terminology. To be sure, these problems aren’t unique to the Pratt Institute. I performed similar searches in Columbia’s discovery layer, Clio, and saw the same pattern across the board. Here’s a chart with the data I gathered:



[The Library of Congress](#)



**SOURCE OF HEADINGS:** Library of Congress Catalog  
**INFORMATION FOR:** Lenape Indians

*Please note: Broader Terms are not currently available*

Select a Link Below to Continue...

[Authority Record](#)

See: [Delaware Indians](#)

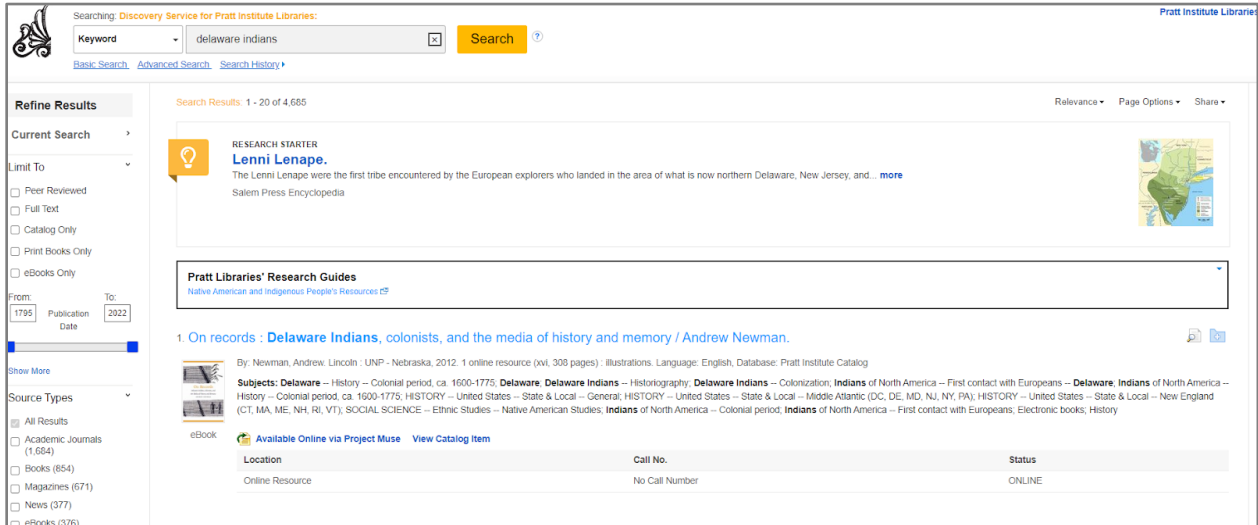
The same problem applied to the metadata in these sources. Particularly with the Library of Congresses’ controlled subject vocabulary, which still refers to Lenape peoples as “Delaware Indians”. To be sure, this is part of a broader issues with indigenous tribes and subject headings.

Screenshot from the Library of Congress Authorities Database

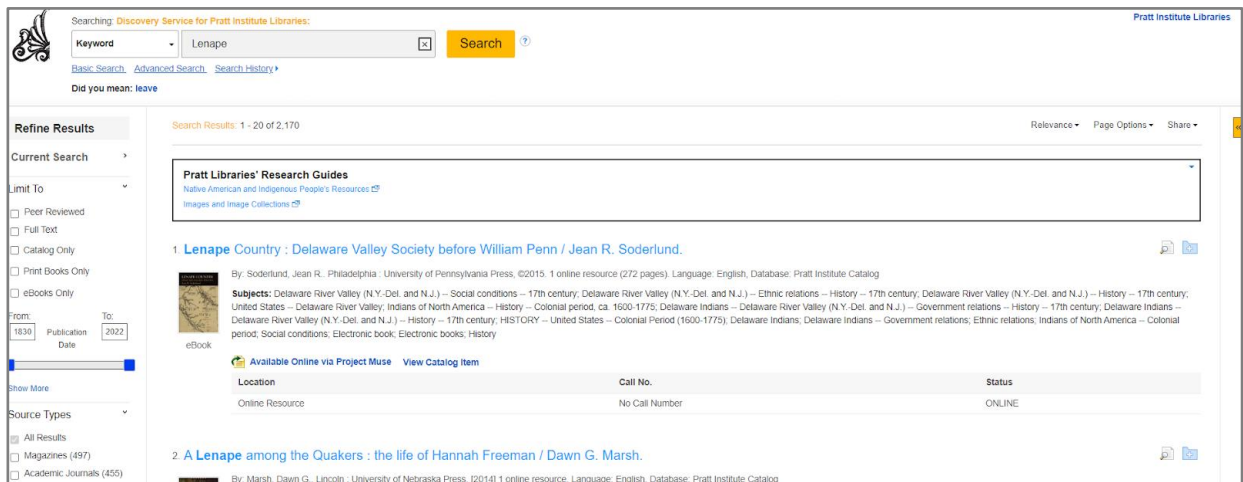


(ARLIS/NA NY Land Acknowledgments continued from page 5)

Looking for sources on the Lenape people revealed some clear cases of algorithmic bias. In Pratt's current discovery layer (EDS), this was noticeable by the appearance of "Research Starters" for selected searches. Oddly enough, an entry for "Lenni Lenape" appears when searching for "Delaware Tribe" or "Delaware Indians", but not for "Lenape." Here are a few screenshots that illustrate this behavior:



Screenshot of a search for "delaware indians"



Screenshot of a search for "lenape"

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(ARLIS/NA NY Land Acknowledgments continued from page 6)

None of this information should come as a huge surprise, but that doesn't make it any less embarrassing (especially if they appear in the middle of a research appointment or instruction session). That said, there are some proactive steps we can take to address these issues:

- Continue “decolonizing” your library collections and update your Collection Development policies to make these commitments more official.
- Keep up the pressure on LOC to update and revise their subject headings. [Here's a form for making suggestions.](#)
- Adopt an institutional policy for empowering users to bring these issues to light. [Here's an example of the one Pratt](#) recently rolled out.
- Work with vendors to improve their search engines to detect these deficiencies. I recommend reading this terrific blog post on [Algorithmic Bias in Discovery Layers](#) from Matthew Reidsma, a librarian from Grand Valley State University.
- Create dedicated libguides to redirect users to helpful resources and educate users on these issues (these show up when users search in discovery layers as illustrated in the screenshot above). [Here's a good one](#) from Rowan University that inspired this post.
- Unfortunately, there are no simple solutions to these problems, but educating patrons about these patterns can help people evaluate and understand why they occur. I recommend checking out [Project Information Literacy](#) to learn more about this pedagogy. ☹️

## NYAAL Institution Spotlight

by Ashley Hinshaw, New York Academy of Art Library

New York Academy of Art Library serves a small community of students, faculty, and alumni. We offer a Master of Fine Arts Program, Certificate of Fine Arts, Continuing Studies courses, and a summer residency program for undergraduates. A full enrollment year consists only of approximately 110 students, fostering a small, tight-knit community.

I've been at the Academy since January, 2021, but over the last year, my focus has been recentering the library as a space for community and defining an unofficial center for the school after COVID closures. Being a one-person library comes with challenge we are overly familiar with at this point: the not-so-delicate balance of library services and support alongside administrative responsibilities.

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2022 MFA Graduate, Annie Legnini (@legnini.art), with skull reference

(NYAAL Institution Spotlight continued from page 7)

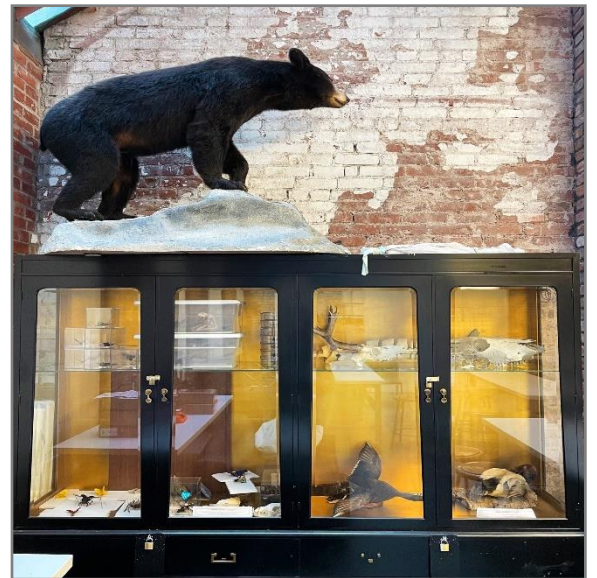
I've placed my finger on the scale of library services, as it allows me to create a strong relationship with the students, and truthfully, this is where I find the most joy in my position.

Coming into an institution which solely focuses on the *practice* of fine arts means I have a substantial number of students with minimal writing and research experience and a healthy amount of skepticism regarding both. They're nervous I'm going to take away their style or shove them into a dreaded and boring "academia" box (but we know this is not an Art Librarian's style.) So, when designing and implementing my writing services it was important to me that I meet the students where they felt the most comfortable, which meant I spent a significant amount of time building trust individually, with one-on-one writing appointments. I quickly saw the fruits of that labor, as students spread word that the new librarian was friendly and available to discuss any writing assignment as needed. Mission accomplished! I've been able to build on this trust and shift towards time-efficient services in group environments. I design and offer assignment specific writing workshops, research instruction, and "write-ins" where students can simply do their work in a supportive, co-working environment.

I have also leveraged collection development practices to remind students the library is their space, their collection. Informal conversations in the library have provided an incredible amount of insight into what they are interested in and currently exploring. Being the sole library employee, it is feasible to purchase recommendations and requests quickly, creating an immediate impact with students who feel they are being heard. One way we promote this collection is the Library Instagram page which is student run, Librarian facilitated. Students and student workers select items from the collection to photograph, write about, and promote to their fellow students.

This spring, the Instagram page also hosted a naming contest for a new addition to the Anatomy and Specimen Collection: a taxidermy coyote, which was dubbed "Kyle with a C." This brings me to our Anatomy and Specimen collection. With our institution's focus on figurative and representational art, we emphasize the importance of working from life, whenever possible. Made up of skeletons (human and animal), taxidermy (animal only), pinned insects, cadaver casts, wet specimen, and all manner of oddities, the students and instructors use these as reference and added interest in creating a dynamic mise-en-scène to work from. These objects are allowed to circulate within the building, to classrooms and students' personal studios. Our curriculum hinges on a holistic understanding of the structure of the body and the students and their work benefit from extended time and engagement with the collection.

Looking to the future, I hope to expand on the instructional offerings available from the Library focused on research methods and scholarly writing while continuing to grow our presence within the school. I feel I have built a solid relationship with the student population and am ready to shift focus to larger goals for the library, including further supporting the community at New York Academy of Art and helping them to achieve their scholarly goals in addition to the incredible artistic practice developed here. ☺



Part of the anatomy and specimen collection used for reference



# Note from the Editor

by Allison Grillo, Herrick Feinstein LLP

I joined ARLIS/NA NY to meet art librarians and to learn more about art librarianship in New York, which technically isn't my current field. I'm a law librarian with a special focus on our art department. We have around 130 attorneys at the firm and only 2 librarians, so I'm necessarily broad in my functionality. For the art team I primarily provide research and reference. The majority of their cases involve restitution of stolen or looted art (many times from the Nazi regime) as well as the rightful ownership and return of cultural property.

When I accepted the ARLIS/NA NY Board position of News Editor in 2021, I was intrigued by the opportunity to launch a revival of the newsletter, which had sunset in 2012 transitioning into a blog. It sounded like a fun project generally, and more specifically from a librarian perspective it raised questions about the collection and dissemination of information.

We had the listserv as a way to share among members and non-members alike. But since the newsletter's and blog's retirement, we haven't had a way to reach members internally about all the fun and fascinating chapter developments, events, and stories from our community. Recent changes have also necessitated a shift away from the listserv towards the Humanities Commons network. There we will continue to host member and non-member announcements traditional to the listserv messages (job postings, events, free materials, etc). The revitalized newsletter contains information unique from Humanities Commons and is a true benefit to ARLIS/NA NY chapter members.

We're excited to share this with you, and I hope you enjoy the first issue. Please reach out to me with any thoughts, comments, or questions. If you have an idea for the fall issue or are interested in writing a piece, I would love to hear from you. I can be reached at [allison.grillo@gmail.com](mailto:allison.grillo@gmail.com). ☺