

2015 CCO Nancy DeLaurier Presentation and Acceptance Remarks

Presentation remarks by Jan Eklund and Maureen Burns:

Margaret has informed you about the purpose of the DeLaurier Award and we have a very short time to try to relay to you the full impact of this impressive body of work, so hold on to your hats!

What exactly is CCO?

The book cover tell us concisely enough that CCO is “A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and their Images”, but flip open its cover and it is a world of wonder that brings out the metadata geek in even the most resistant.

The nomination letter writers explain CCO’s purpose better:

Trish Rose-Sandler stated that CCO provides “the tools and guidance needed to comprehensively and consistently catalog cultural heritage objects both within an institution and across institutions.”

The American Library Association quote, “Consistently following these guidelines for selecting, ordering, and formatting data used to populate metadata elements in cultural materials’ catalog records promotes good descriptive cataloging and reduces redundancy, builds a foundation of shared documentation, creates data sharing opportunities, enhances end-user access across institutional boundaries, [and] complements existing standards.” indicates its functionality as does Professor Zeng’s which shows us how CCO can be used in the classrom, “the whole CCO package (text, website, links to other resources, and continuing presentations/speeches) has been extremely useful in my teaching. With this package from CCO, I can unambiguously explain concepts and practices for describing cultural objects and their images, including the strategies and relationships associated with them.”

It is much more than a book on a shelf. Marcia Focht mentions that CCO allows her to use professional standards to measure student assignment quality, it serves as a common reference hub for class discussions, and it points students to the most appropriate vocabularies and terminologies according to their interests. The students appreciate the free online access and videos too.

Elizabeth O’Keefe at the Morgan Library stated that CCO is “The Visual Resources Association’s indispensable contribution to the documentation of art and cultural works.”

What Did It Take to Produce CCO?

Diane Zorich informed us, “As project manager for CCO during its development and distribution phases, I worked with all five editors on a near daily basis for three years. It was during this time that they outlined the contours of a data content standard, plotted a long and careful strategy for creating it, and devoted innumerable “off hours” into making it come about. At every step of the way they enlisted the aid and support of a wider cultural community, regarding its input and buy-in as critical to the process. They also considered sustainability in their planning efforts, working to ensure that CCO would have an institutional “home” – the VRA Foundation – to support and maintain the standard over time.”

Who Did This Remarkable Work?

Principally, it was these five colleagues who had the vision to develop CCO, led the charge, and insured that it was a functional and productive working group. I think we all know how difficult it can be to do this. Diane mentioned how incredibly hard the editors worked given that “each editor also held a demanding day job at a cultural or academic institution. More amazing to me was how they supported one another in the enterprise. Everyone’s unique skills were acknowledged and used to best effect. Disagreements were resolved with respectful dialogue, consensus, and a good dose of humor. . . . As I witnessed their day-to-day efforts, I felt I was the recipient of a Master Class in collegiality and collaboration.” And, while it may be a tired cliché, it did take a village --MANY individuals contributed to its development and success.

What is the Significance of CCO?

Some of us remember the dark days of cataloguing before CCO and many of the letter writers noted that it filled a VOID—there was NOTHING quite like it and the existing standards were tailored for textual material and published graphics.

Sherman Clarke stated that, “Every once in a while, a project comes along that is so important that you wonder how you got along without the results of that work. *Cataloging Cultural Objects* is one of those projects.” And you can see his extended explanation some other great quotes.

Susan Jane Williams pointed out that “Part of the genius of CCO is that it was designed to bridge what had been differing (and perhaps even divisive) practices between the museum, academic, and archival communities. . . . To conceptualize CCO as a mechanism to building common practice, with the flexibility to be paired with more than one metadata standard, was a major leap forward to next-generation information science. It has stood the test of time well and remains as vital in the world of XML and RDF and their variants.”

Trish Rose Sandler explained what she called the “standards trifecta”: “To be successful, descriptive data standards need 3 critical components. They include guidelines on data values [provided by the Getty Vocabularies], structure [provided by the VRA Core metadata elements], and content [which is where CCO comes in].” She adds that “What is particularly notable about CCO is its flexibility. It was designed to complement and interoperate with multiple data standards. . . This explains its wide appeal and uptake across many institutions in the library, museum and archival community.”

Conclusion

With this DeLaurier award, VRA expresses its deep gratitude to these FIVE astounding colleagues, and to all of you in the audience who contributed to and continue to support the CCO effort. Thank you to the nomination letter writers for sharing their cogent and astute observations on CCO. We can’t resist just a few more quotes from them.

Susan noted that CCO shows “. . . the significant contributions and advancements possible when professional wisdom and commitment unite with deep and selfless volunteerism.”

And one more gem from Sherman, “My library eyes delight in some of the things which CCO does in such a modern way.”

How important and influential CCO has been to all of our work. And how well-deserved is this DeLaurier award.

Congratulations!

Here to accept the award on behalf of all 5 CCO editors is Patricia Harpring from the Getty Research Institute.

Award acceptance remarks by Patricia Harpring:

Thank you very much Elaine, Jan, Maureen, and Margaret, and thanks to all of the members of the VRA Awards Committee for choosing our work on *Cataloging Cultural Objects* for this year's DeLaurier Award. I express thanks for myself, as well as on behalf of the other members of the CCO editorial team who could not join us this evening: Murtha Baca, Elisa Lanzi, Ann Whiteside, and Linda McRae.

My co-editors and I are very pleased and proud that *Cataloging Cultural Objects* continues to be an authoritative resource used in the realm of cataloging works of art and images. We five editors spent many long hours hashing out issues and details and expressing the consensus of best practice in the fields of art history, museums, and visual resources collections. Of course, our work was built on a strong foundation of important precedents. I also want to recognize the work on the standards that preceded and informed CCO, including the VRA core categories, which are now an XML schema recognized and supported by the Library of Congress Standards Office; *Categories for the Description of Works of Art* (CDWA), a ground-breaking initiative led by former DeLaurier recipient Eleanor Fink; and a number of museum cataloging manuals from the United States, Canada, and France that were made available to us. We owe thanks also to the CCO project manager, Diane Zorich, without whom the manual would never have been completed; to the VRA Data Standards Committee; to the wisdom and expertise of the members of the CCO Advisory Committee: Matthew Beacom, Erin Coburn, Jan Eklund, Mary Elings, Ardys Kozbial, Liz O'Keefe, Trish Rose, and Layna White, as well to the dozens of esteemed reviewers, listed in the CCO book, who read the manuscript and offered advice. The project was strongly supported by the VRA Executive Committee of 2005, and by grants from the Getty Foundation and the Digital Library Federation. We also thank our publisher, the American Library Association.

Murtha, who sends warm greetings and many thanks to the VRA Awards Committee and to all of the VRA members present tonight, asked me to share the following anecdote with you. Recently she was having dinner with a friend who is a librarian at California State University Northridge, and who also teaches descriptive cataloging and subject cataloging at the UCLA Department of Information Studies. He was mentioning one of his favorite Dutch still-life paintings in the Getty Museum. Murtha said, "There are a lot of Dutch still-life paintings in the Getty Museum—which one do you mean?" He replied, without hesitating, "You know, the one in Chapter 6 of CCO." (He was referring to the 1772 *Vase of Flowers* by Jan van Huysum.) As you can imagine, this was a very gratifying moment for Murtha—to know that the book that all of us worked so hard to compile, and that was born and continues to be nurtured by the VRA (I'm sure that you all know that the "CCO Commons" is maintained by the VRA Foundation) is being used as a tool for teaching the catalogers and information professionals of the future.

Once again, on behalf of myself as well as Murtha, Elisa, Linda, and Ann, for all of whom the VRA has been an essential part of our professional lives, I express our heartfelt thanks.

2015 DSA Presentation Remarks by Marcia Focht and Karen Kessel:

Our time is limited, so I will simply summarize some of the highlights of Maureen's exhaustive contributions to our profession, as detailed in Karen Kessel's nominating letter to the Awards Committee.

Maureen worked as visual resources curator for 22 years, first at California State University, Long Beach, and then at the J. Paul Getty Museum and at the University of California, Irvine. At the same time she earned her doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership. Since the VR facility at Irvine closed, she has continued her association with the VR profession, reinventing herself through independent consulting work, as sales representative for Archivision's digital research library, and as the systems administrator and a guest editor for the online *Journal for Learning through the Arts*.

Maureen served as our Association's President-Elect, President, and Past-president, and has also served on the VRA Finance, Nominating, Education, and Awards Committees, as well as the International Task Force. Maureen was on the Board of Directors of the VRA Foundation, worked with the Summer Educational Institute, and is currently the copy editor for the *VRA Bulletin*.

While at UC-Irvine she organized the other curators in the UC system to pool their resources and build a digital image consortium together: LUCI, the Library of University of California Images, and then worked with the California Digital Library to help build the image project into a collaborative, cross-campus collection for classroom instruction. She also used her organizing talents to help establish a local VRA chapter in Southern California.

In conference presentations, and in articles published in the *VRA Bulletin* and other national publications, Maureen has addressed some of the most pressing concerns brought about by changes in technology in the field of visual resources. She headed the task force that authored "Advocating for Visual Resource Management in Educational and Cultural Institutions" (the VRA White Paper published in 2009). Now she is serving on another task force addressing the issues associated with the dismantling of slide collections.

Amazing right? But somehow, this well-rounded individual also finds time for her interests in California native plants, Celtic music, hiking, snow skiing, and playing cutthroat scrabble!

As Karen said, "words such as energetic, enthusiastic, fun, kind, warm, encouraging, friend, mentor, and funny keep appearing in descriptions of Maureen; but beyond the warm and fuzzy adjectives, the writers also acknowledge her intelligence, her talent for building partnerships, inspiring people to do more and see in new ways; her inclusiveness, and her involvement in multifaceted activities." In the many supporting letters, a few themes stand out.

When I served on the Board with her as Secretary, and longtime roomie, I observed her incredible work ethic and positive attitude. She was sensitive to those who served the organization, valuing everyone's contributions large or small, including all voices and opinions, even when they disagreed with her.

Brian Shelburne described her boundless energy and enthusiasm as being "like a hummingbird on speed." Elisa Lanzi, who served on the Foundation Board while Maureen was President, describes her as a "systems thinker", who makes essential partnerships between VRA and our sister communities.

Jackie Spafford, fellow UC colleague at Santa Barbara, wrote, “We all admired her ...desire to kick start new projects, and to get us involved with larger image sharing collaboration... it would certainly not be the same, or ever have happened at all, if it weren’t for Maureen.”

Susan Jane Williams spoke appreciatively of Maureen’s high academic standards, observing that, “The many conference sessions she has organized have been marked not only by their liveliness and engagement but by bringing in assessment techniques and metrics from the education field. Susan added that Maureen is an advocate for those who face change and transition: “I am sure there are scores of VRA members, like myself, who can testify to what it means to receive her sisterly support in critical times.”

The warmth of her personality, and her love of fun and play are infectious. Lively, funny, smart – As Joe Romano stated, we are most fortunate to have her as an ambassador for the VRA.

Let me conclude with Jan Eklund’s words, “[Maureen’s] leadership and remarkable ability to inspire collaboration is born out of her tireless energy and personal commitment to education, the arts, and public service. *Best of all*, she does all of this with a relentlessly positive attitude and a wonderful sense of humor, which makes her a joy to work with.” In that spirit of joy, but also with profound gratitude, I am proud to present to you the recipient of the 2015 Visual Resources Association’s Distinguished Service Award: Dr. Maureen Burns.

Burns Response upon Receiving the VRA Distinguished Service Award

Thank you is so inadequate. I’m absolutely thrilled to receive this award from VRA and am overwhelmed. Many of you know that I’m a woman of too many words, but I can’t tell you how hard it is to know what to say at this moment.

How did I get here? I can honestly say that when I was in grade school I didn’t tell anyone that I wanted to be a “visual resources curator.” My mother found one of my early self-portraits. I’m dressed in a black habit with a note saying “I want to be a nun,” but even 12 years of Catholic school couldn’t make that work. College studies helped me discover my affinity for ancient history, art history, and archaeology.

As I searched for career paths, serendipity landed me in California State University Long Beach’s Slide Library and that was the beginning of the end. I discovered work that allowed me to exercise my organizational skills, love of the arts, and hands-on photography, while immersing myself in the glorious world of images--their organization, description, and now digital access. CSU is where I first heard of the Visual Resources Association and the Chair gave me a whopping \$100 worth of travel funds to go Austin for basic training in 1988. And now, here tonight, CSU comes back around. Thank you, Karen Kessel. I know how much hard work it takes to put something like this together and so appreciate your extended efforts and thoughtfulness. I’m also exceedingly grateful to all the letter writers, the VRA Awards Committee, and the VRA Board for supporting this nomination.

There are many challenges to finding one’s way in the world and I feel that I’ve had the great good fortune to land in visual resources. Isn’t it wonderful that the field has progressed and is viable enough to be taught in library schools and to attract budding information professionals? This organization means the world to me.

To my mind, visual resources is about the people, the clientele we provide image services to and this professional network that is our lifeblood. The VRA conference is the source of our annual rejuvenation. I attribute much of my professional growth to this event and to you VRA colleagues who are such a remarkable support system. There are too many people that I should and would like to acknowledge by name, but there is not enough time and I don't want to try your patience or leave anyone out. But, I hope you will indulge me with a few general and specific thanks.

After two decades of working together and doing some fascinating cooperative work, I can vouch for the fact that my remarkable colleagues in the University of California Visual Resources Group are as responsible as I am for our successes.

Then there is the Board. When you work on the VRA Board with weekly communication and lots of teamwork, you grow to appreciate and get very attached to the people who come through in such a big way for this organization. The incredible colleagues I had the good fortune to serve with all made me look so good.

I'm also grateful to Scott Gilchrist for providing me with the wonderful opportunity to handle sales for Archivision and to learn about the business side of visual resources. And, thanks to everyone who has supported my adventure of starting a consulting business, allowing me to continue to work in this field, without an institutional affiliation.

The main person who suggested consulting is my perpetual inspiration, Brad Lancaster. We have been together for 40 years and he is attending his first VRA conference tonight. Brad is my go-to guy; reality check; moral, educational, professional, emotional, and financial supporter, without whom I would NOT have had the opportunity to do the work that I have done for VRA. As I approach the 30-year mark of working in visual resources, you can imagine how many earfuls this man has endured over the years about things he only pretended to care about, because I care so much!

Although this award singles out one person, I think you can tell from the nomination presentation that I rarely work alone. I truly believe that so much more can be accomplished when a functional network of people apply themselves to projects, especially when an enthusiastic group works together--like we have just seen demonstrated in such a big way with CCO. There are so many people working behind the scenes to help VRA thrive and progress, many of whom are unsung heroes doing invaluable work for this volunteer organization—thank you. That said, I feel deeply privileged to be joining the noble ranks of the previous award recipients, giants upon whose shoulders I am now standing.

For those of you newer to the field of visual resources, I hope you know how welcome you are, that you feel empowered to participate, and can see the opportunities this field provides for, not only professional development, but building deep friendships. I recall all of my first tentative steps along the way: summarizing a session and having it published in the *VRA Bulletin*, presenting on my first panel, working up the courage to ask VRA all stars to be on panels of my own design (many of whom wrote letters for this nomination), and embarking on committee work, etc. Know that you can do all this and more!

VRA has been everything to my professional life—it has been a privilege and still is a blast working, learning, playing, and laughing with you.

In conclusion, just because I'm now distinguished, doesn't mean I'm done! There is still plenty of work that needs to be accomplished. It has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience to play a leadership role in the VRA. Thank you all for being here to share this incredibly special honor with me.