I am deeply honored to stand here as a recipient of VRA's Distinguished Service Award. It has been humbling to look back at previous recipients, all having achieved a higher level of distinction in this field than me, through research, leadership, and service to the profession.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, I want to give a big shoutout to the VRA Executive Board, who over the past few months has been harried, harassed, and besieged. The challenges have been daunting. Despite them, you have delivered a wonderfully thought-provoking and stimulating conference program. Thank you!

In preparing my remarks, I recalled the past distinguished recipients' focus on the impact of VRA to their career. In my case, I must say, humbly, that eight minutes is not enough time to list all the rewards which far far outweigh the contributions you just heard.

But here goes. Like many of us, the primary motivation for joining a professional organization is the networking benefits, essential for advancing and staying abreast of new ideas in the field. BUT I have come to see that the personal friendships with so many of my delightful, creative and energetic (oh my, energetic!) colleagues--**this is what I value above all about my membership in VRA**. What an honor it has been to join you these many years in the ongoing work to pursue excellence and impact, and elevate the stature of our profession. To you my gifted colleagues--educators, scholars, artists, leaders—you have long been a vibrant source of inspiration for me to flourish in this profession. Your wisdom and imagination have guided me to this day. Thank you.

How fortunate for me that after years of being an itinerant art historian in the 80's and early 90's, I landed in library school in the mid 1990's at a time of rapid change and transformation of the digital information landscape. Bold innovative ideas in information science and digital imaging technologies were promising an exciting new era of possibilities. **Despite being completely clueless**, luck and timing worked in my favor. I bounced around in "term" (as in short term!) positions, that were testbeds for digital innovation during those heady days of experimentation. I landed in VR environments at the very bleeding edge of the transition from slides to digital. In other words, **the trenches**. Compared to traditional libraries at that time, t**he VRA existed at the edge of innovation**. VRA Core had just been released; CCO, ArtStor, and other initiatives were the new frontier. The library degree I had just completed concentrated heavily on traditional MARC cataloging. I needed to expand my notion of metadata. And that's exactly when I found VRA. Immediately, I began to rely on the collective expertise. The listserv, I always thought, should have been called "the lifeline."

I consider all of my professional employment in libraries, visual resources departments, museums and archives as one long learning curve. Libraries and museums are my passion; their contents are limitless and immeasurable. These environments are where I put my skills and knowledge towards connecting people and ideas by creating access to cultural heritage resources. Don't we all feel we are helping unleash human potential? *Maybe not every day!* But I have no doubt that the work we do truly matters. We nurture the intellectual, creative, and entrepreneurial lives of those who find and use our resources for teaching and learning. And, I am humbled to be part of an organization so committed to advancing inclusion and diversity in our VRA community and the communities that we serve.

Lately, as you heard, my career took a turn towards a more traditional library role, and towards Texas. (Howdy!) I serve as the director of a visual and performing arts library. The position has given me a chance to expand my understanding of collections and services which support the performing arts. Music, dance, theater, film have been added to my areas of focus. And, in my current role, I manage an extensive collection of 16 and 35mm moving images—yes FILM!

In closing, I want to tell you about a recent experience that reminded me of our roles as information and cultural heritage professionals, and how what we do defies conventional measurement. Two years ago, I assisted in curating an installation work in the gallery in my library, featuring a local artist, Allyson Packer. The inspiration and framework for the installation was the text by the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges, *The Library of Babel*, in which Borges imagines his library, and perhaps all libraries, as labyrinthian, limitless and periodic. The installation was called *Sounding*. The name comes from the term used to describe the method for measuring the depth of a body of water. The measured depth is not constant; rather the measurement is relative to a particular time and place. The artist adopted the indefinite quality of water to meditate on the immeasurable condition of libraries. She conceived of libraries as bodies of water with "clearly defined spaces, which also possess a kind of impalpable depth." Humans who physically occupy library spaces encounter the immeasurable body of knowledge, each performing his or her own "sounding.

In our profession, we contribute to the limitless depth of knowledge, and as we strive to build diverse, accessible, and inclusive collections, the libraries and repositories we are responsible for are always subject to new "soundings."

Thank you VRA colleagues for honoring me with the Distinguished Service Award this evening. It is truly a meaningful award for me, especially coming from a bold organization that has accomplished so much in its relatively short existence.

Jolene de Verges

Baltimore, MD

March 31, 2022