Association News
2007 Nancy DeLaurier Award: Susan Jane Williams

I am writing to nominate Susan Jane Williams for the 2007 VRA Nancy Delaurier Award in the strongest possible terms. In the twelve years I have been in the profession, few people have contributed to the development of the field with the kind of depth and consistency that Susan has. I would further note, that Susan's recent activities associated with the development of the VireoCat cataloging utility, have raised her service to the profession, to say nothing of the larger context of information science, to an unprecedented level.

The genesis of Susan's VireoCat project was the FileMaker Pro cataloging utility she developed while she was employed at Yale University. Susan developed that cataloging utility single-handedly and then went on to make it freely available to any and all who were interested. Many visual resource facilities used this opportunity to make their initial forays into the world if database managed operations, and Susan generously offered unlimited support to all comers.

In 2004 Susan undertook a major revision of her FileMaker cataloging utility, with the goal of making it standards based, and with XML import/export functionality. The result, currently VireoCat version 2, has turned out to be not so much a revision of its ancestor, but rather a complete rebuild in the form of a true relational database. VireoCat 2 is, as far as I know, the only cataloging and collection management utility that is designed specifically for use in the visual resources environment that fully implements VRA Core 4.0, is compliant with CCO guidelines, and features the functionality to both import and export descriptive metadata in XML format.

But, what distinguishes Susan's development of VireoCat, beyond the undeniable value of the utility itself, and Susan's real commitment to the value of good image metadata and the holy grail of sharing that metadata amongst many collections, is the fact that she undertook the work of her own volition, on her own time, and at considerable personal expense, and has, again, made her work freely available to anyone who cares to download it, without even the suggestion that she might be remunerated in any way by anyone.

Please give Susan serious consideration for this award. I give Susan direct credit for much of my personal success in our profession; I can think of no one else of whom I would say that. I believe Susan's gift of VireoCat to the profession has the potential to place many others in my position in this regard.

Mark Olsen, University of Kansas

It is a pleasure and an honor to have the opportunity to say a few words about Susan Jane Williams, VireoCat, and the rightness of recognizing Susan's contribution to visual resources by giving her the Nancy Delaurier Award tonight.

I had intended to mention the Nancy Delaurier/Kansas City connection so when somebody beat me to it I felt a bit like my thunder had been stolen. But I remember when Alan Kohl received the Nancy Delaurier Award he made a remark to the effect that in this group, thunder is not stolen, but rather shared around to make all the bigger bang. So, in that spirit, I'd like to say the following.

It makes me especially proud to play a part in giving a Nancy Delaurier Award here, just a few blocks from the UMKC campus where Nancy made her historic contributions to the profession. I'm sure we agree that the proximity and the history does burnish the award a bit.

Although Susan is being recognized tonight specifically for her contribution of the VireoCat utility to the visual resources community, it wouldn't be right to leave it at that. Whether or not one is a VireoCat user, I would be surprised if there is a VR curator here who does not have Susan to thank for something.

Picasso is supposed to have said "I reach into my pockets and I find Cezanne"; I reach into my pockets and I find Susan Jane Williams! Susan's contributions to my professional success have been such that if the administrators at the University of Kansas knew the whole story, Susan would probably be getting royalties.

So much of the counsel and expertise that Susan has shared freely with all of us over the years have been of a day-to-day nature: dots-per-inch, alternate creators, bits-per-pixel...

Some of it, maybe not so day-to-day: cost-per-image, outsourcing, consortium building... These ongoing, day-to-day contributions that Susan offers aren't easy to draw a boundary around or quantify.

But now, with VireoCat Susan has done something that has a clear shape, and boundaries, and has an easily recognizable value to the profession that no one could miss.

VireoCat is a free-for-the-downloading, VRA Core and CCO compliant visual resources cataloging and workflow management utility. It is an outgrowth of a similar utility Susan developed a few years ago in an academic setting.

The "o" in VieroCat stands for "open" in the sense of "open source development." And while thus far that may be at least nominally true of VireoCat, and while some people have been nominally identified as VireoCat "development partners," the truth of the matter is that we have VireoCat because of Susan's personal effort, and nothing more.

Until I started to think about what I might say tonight it hadn't occurred to me to wonder why Susan might have gone to

the trouble of creating VireoCat ... particularly at her own expense.
But I think it demonstrates an unusual commitment to, and a democratic expression of, excellence in the profession we share. Thank you, Susan!
Mark Olsen, University of Kansas

2007 VRA Annual Conference
2007 VRA Nancy DeLaurier Award: Williams Remarks

Thank you so much! The Nancy DeLaurier award means so much to me, because I guess you all know I like to write. (Picture smiley emoticon here!) Even though the award has been expanded in recent years to include areas of endeavor other than writing, I like to think that it is still appropriate to my work with VireoCat in terms of what I hope is logical sequencing, organization, and flow—that was certainly my goal, and I thought of the task as "writing" a database.

I'd like to thank all the folks who took the time to nominate me and write letters of support. I'd also like to thank the VireoCat user group, and especially Mark Olson, who serves as our listserv manager; Gretchen Witthuhn and Megan Mackin, who have hosted and designed the Web site; Carey Weber and Jay Rozgonyi from Fairfield University, who contributed some layouts and scripting; Darren Clarke who has done scripting and XSLT work; and Eileen Fry, Ann Woodward, and others who have given feedback. And what the award has given me immediately is an opportunity to thank you all—the VRA membership—for your support and friendship over the years. You really have made being in visual resources rewarding, because I know that anything I contribute, I get returned three-fold in terms of community and caring.

Thank You Very Much!

[Remarks are roughly reconstructed. Williams became noticeably verklempt at the end of her short remarks, and this combined with the complementary celebratory libations from well-wishers resulted in her leaving her notes at the dinner table.]

Susan Jane Williams
Independent Cataloging and Consulting Services