

Association News

2009 VRA Annual Conference

Nancy DeLaurier Award: Loy Zimmerman

It was 1999 in Los Angeles at the Getty Institute and the surroundings were opulent. A slim figure, hitherto unknown to me, stepped up to the microphone to deliver the Development Committee report. Addressing the audience was a silver-haired gentleman dressed in black who mysteriously managed to simultaneously appear distinguished *and* “way cool.” His presence, manner, and voice exuded calm and his low key delivery demanded attention. Little did I realize that several years later we would work together on the formation of the Visual Resources Association Foundation.

This evening Loy Zimmerman is the recipient of the 2009 Nancy DeLaurier Achievement Award for project management. Playing a key role in the establishment of the Foundation, Loy’s contributions as project manager, both in laying the groundwork and in implementation, were intrinsic to its success.

As Macie Hall put it, “Loy has been involved with the VRA Foundation from the beginning, when it was merely a twinkle in the eyes of the VRA Board. In 2001, the VRA Ad Hoc Financial Planning Committee recommended that the VRA Board look into obtaining a 501(c)(3) tax status. Loy Zimmerman was a member of that committee.” Even earlier, in 2000, “Loy had the foresight to recommend that VRA apply for a 501(c)(3) status when he was a member the Financial Advisory committee.” Appointed as a member of the Ad Hoc Tax Status Advisory Committee in 2005, he went on to serve as Chair of the VRA Foundation Task Force and of both the Interim and First Foundation Boards.

With his appointment as Chair of the Task Force Loy assumed responsibility for all aspects of the group’s mission. Meeting at the Baltimore Conference, members Kathe Albrecht, Margo Ballantyne, Elisa Lanzi and Ann Thomas began work under his able leadership. Launching an avalanche of emails, Loy began management of the project. In lengthy emails and in conference calls with the attorneys Loy began to determine the principal segments of the operation. Following incorporation in July 2007, the focus shifted to the preparation of the application to the Internal Revenue Service.

Task Force Members Comment on the Process

Kathe Albrecht summarizes the process:

“From its inception, the Foundation Task Force was chaired by Loy Zimmerman, and I observed his strong leadership abilities as he steered the group skillfully and diplomatically, conducting productive and well-organized meetings, dealing with outside legal counsel, and tackling the myriad details involved in establishing such a highly-regulated new enterprise. This intensive work culminated in the completion of a book-length IRS submission, with lengthy and detailed forms, extensive supporting documentation, historical narrative materials on the VRA as an organization, and a statement explaining the reasons for establishing a (c)(3).”

Margo Ballantyne describes the IRS Application Form and relates an example of Loy’s persistence and thoughtfulness in formulating the Bylaws:

“The IRS Application form #1023 (for non-profit status) is as daunting a form as you will ever see. Populated with EIN applications, proof of Certificates of Incorporation, Proof of Filings, etc. it also requires histories, narratives, budgets and bylaws. With the aid of legal Counsel, Loy was the point person for interpreting all the requirements, for delegating research and writing to task force members, and for collecting the data to meet the deadlines for an intimidating list of documents. One of the testiest and most trying sections of the 1023 application was the creation of the Foundation Bylaws. Guided by other non-profit bylaws examples and the strict guidelines set forth by the IRS, the committee began to vet ideas concerning the make-up of the Foundation Board officers, term length and rotation. Every conceivable combination was explored. Each idea contained an element that would not work. No one could untangle it. Finally, as was often the case with Loy, he took the problem home with him and worked out the solution over the weekend. It was not the only solution imaginable, but it was the perfect one for VRA.”

Elisa Lanzi characterizes the nature of the conference calls with the lawyers:

“I have the deepest appreciation and respect for Loy’s accomplished working methods and incredible commitment to our VRA mission. Loy and I spent many hours on conference calls with lawyers and advisors during the creation of the Foundation. His thoughtful manner and considerate deliberation during the process was invaluable.”

Macie Hall credits the swift approval by the IRS to the thoroughness of the documentation:

“Under his astute leadership, the VRA Foundation Task Force jumped the many hurdles of creating the documentation for incorporation of the VRA Foundation...and the herculean task of preparing the application to the IRS for 501(c)(3) tax status. In just over a year from the time the task force began work, the Foundation was incorporated and just two months later, the IRS approved the tax status application. I am certain that the surprisingly rapid turnaround was due to the tremendous amount of work that the VRA Foundation Task Force, under Loy’s leadership, put into the application preparation, presenting to the IRS a thoroughly researched, clear and unchallengeable document.”

Ann on the finale:

“Loy calmly presided over the entire process until receipt of the IRS approval notification in early September – a day on which his pleasure bubbled over in the triumphant “Break Out the Champagne” memo.”

From the Letters of Support

Importance of the Foundation, Comments by Former Presidents

Elisa Lanzi

“Loy’s accomplishment in bringing the Foundation to life is a major milestone for VRA, moving us forward into the 21st century.”

Macie Hall

“The existence of the Foundation will allow the VRA to further its goals of supporting research and education in the field of image management and providing leadership on important issues for digital information management. Initially, it will allow for the continuance and growth of SEI and CCO, two projects which will need grant and donor funding to sustain.”

Kathe Albrecht

“An educational Foundation can receive grants, establish educational and research projects, accept tax-deductible contributions from individuals, and otherwise strengthen the parent organization as it increases its sphere of influence in the larger community.”

Working with Loy

Macie Hall

“On a personal level, I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with someone like Loy, who has the ability to deal so capably with such a range of issues—financial, legal and political. The fact that Loy is also always calm and reasonable, even in the face of pressure, with a remarkable sense of humor to boot, made the experience of working with him one of the real pleasures of my term on the Board.”

“Working with Loy is a wonderful experience. He can always be counted on to do what he promises, when he promises.”

Elisa Lanzi “As our first Foundation president, Loy has set a high bar for the next in line. He is a model of civility and sets the tone for our board deliberations.”

Jeanne Keefe

“Loy has had a seemingly quiet, low key and long affiliation with the Visual Resources Association. It is typical of Loy, as he is so soft spoken and unassuming, that you often forget that he is always there, always involved, and always working so hard in what always seems to appear a sort of behind-the-scenes manner. When all the time, he has really been quite out front, involved and responsible for serving VRA in so many different capacities.”

“...don’t let Loy’s calm and soft-spoken demeanor lead you to assume he is reserved or dispassionate. Loy has over the many years unselfishly given of his time, energy and expert advice to his fellow VRA members to help them succeed at their own professional endeavors and he has been a role model for many in our organization.”

Trudy Jacoby

“I know few people who have the intelligence, energy, organization, and good humor that Loy displays. Loy is one of the people that I know will always accomplish what he has said he will do.”

“His self-effacing style and ability to build consensus can make others unaware of the extraordinary character of his leadership.”

“Loy is a true professional and an example for all of us. He does it all while being witty and kind.”

Margo Ballantyne

“He is quietly dogged after solutions. He always came up with one. Loy Zimmerman’s talents, dedication and leadership guided us through the long and complicated process of creating the VRA Foundation. We couldn’t have done it without him.”

Kathe Albrecht

“Loy’s diplomatic and reassuring manner, quiet intellect, and his dedication to the cause of expanding our organization in this new and exciting way, made the development of the Foundation possible. A less steady hand at the helm would certainly have prevented the Foundation from getting underway so smoothly. Loy’s stalwart approach to the issues and his determination to see this project succeed were fundamental factors in the creation of the VRA Foundation.” Thank you, Loy, from all of us for your guidance and perseverance. Hardest congratulations.

Ann Thomas
Union College

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Nancy DeLaurier Award Recipient Remarks: Loy Zimmerman

My sincere thanks to the members of the Awards Committee and the Executive Board for granting me this award and especially thanks to Ann Thomas and all those who put forward the nomination and wrote such kind letters of recommendation. This is truly an honor.

It's more than a little sobering, though, to realize that my name will now appear on the VRA web site in the company of many of the giants of our field. And to be honest it's more than a little embarrassing, too. Because the achievement for which I am being honored is actually not mine alone, or even primarily, but the achievement of my many collaborators. So, tonight I accept the Delaurier Award on behalf of all those talented, hard working colleagues who were really responsible for bringing the VRA Foundation into being, and who deserve to be acknowledged here.

The story of the Foundation's creation goes back a number of years, but the first significant step was taken in March of 2005 when the Executive Board charged the ad hoc Tax Status Advisory Committee to "explore the feasibility of establishing a 501(c)(3) organization as a component of the Visual Resources Association, for the purpose of furthering the significant and growing educational and research efforts of the Association." That committee was chaired by Elisa Lanzi and included Margo Ballantyne, Leigh Gates, Macie Hall, and myself. Following the committee's positive report, in January 2006 the Executive Board created and charged the VRA Foundation Task Force with overseeing the establishment of the envisioned 501(c)(3) organization. Its members were Kathe Hicks Albrecht, Margo Ballantyne, Elisa Lanzi, and Ann Thomas. As task force chair I can vouch for their exceptionally effective work as a result of which by September 2007 the VRA Foundation had been both incorporated and received its IRS designation as a 501(c)(3) public charity. Following that the members of the Task Force plus Macie Hall and Allan Kohl organized themselves into a provisional Board of Directors pending the election of a new Board in accordance with Foundation bylaws in March of 2008. Both the provisional board and that first official board (with Emy Nelson Decker and Jeanne Keefe replacing Macie and Allan) have since been working hard to put in place the necessary operational infrastructure.

The Foundation is still new and still just getting its feet firmly planted on ground, but I believe that it has great potential for, in the words of VRA's mission statement, "furthering research and education in the field of image management within the educational, cultural heritage, and commercial environments." That's because it's IRS-designated 501(c)(3) public charity status positions the Foundation to more effectively raise funds in pursuit of the VRA's research and educational objectives. Not only are donations to 501(c)(3) corporations tax-deductible, but both private and public funding agencies generally make grants only to public charities. In addition, the Foundation has also received IRS permission to make its own grants. So, in time, the Foundation will itself be able to fund small projects in the visual resources field as well as seek agency funding for larger-scale projects.

In closing, then, I'd like to say how especially pleased I am tonight that VRA has chosen the creation of the VRA Foundation as an achievement worthy of the Delaurier Award. Thank you all again.

Nancy DeLaurier Award recipient Loy Zimmerman and VRA President Allan Kohl



Nancy DeLaurier Award recipient Loy Zimmerman

