

2011 Distinguished Service Award

**Presented March 25, 2011 to
Eileen Fry, Indiana University**

The Visual Resources Association honors an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of visual resources. Nominees must have achieved a level of distinction in the field either through leadership, research, or the development and management of a particular visual resources project. Consideration is also given to those who have shown outstanding innovation, participation, or service to the profession.



Eileen Fry has long contributed her time and intellect to both the Visual Resources Association and to the Art Libraries Society of North America. She is truly deserving of the 2011 VRA Distinguished Award. She holds Masters degrees in both Library Science and Art History. She has been employed at Indiana University as the Fine Arts Image Librarian since 1975, achieving tenure in 1981, and attaining full rank in the library faculty in 2007. She has been very active as a committee member or chair in VRA since 1987, in ARLIS/NA since 1980, and in local chapters of each since 1978; she served twice as the Mid-West representative on the ARLIS/NA Executive Board. Eileen has helped to plan several conferences for both groups. She personifies the "Building Bridges" theme of this joint conference.

Highlights of her service and leadership are her involvement with the Summer Educational Institute and the VRA Data Standards Committee. Her publications and presentations on images, and various aspects of their cataloging and classroom presentation, are extensive and include contributions to two books, one the seminal *Slide Libraries* by Betty Jo Irvine. Eileen has also been active at Indiana University both with classroom teaching and by serving on local committees. One of Eileen's strengths has been her mentoring of colleagues and new professionals. She has

been particularly adept at learning new technologies and introducing these to colleagues. Her leadership, service, publications, presentations, mentoring, and innovation have helped to move the visual resources profession into the 21st century.

Presentation comments from Lynda White and Rebecca Moss

Lynda: I was asked to describe Eileen's career and must admit defeat in trying to reduce nearly 40 years of accomplishments into 6 minutes. So, please forgive the lack of depth in these remarks, though I do hope you will gain some idea of the breadth of Eileen's many accomplishments. We are here this evening to celebrate Eileen Fry of Indiana University as the recipient of the 2011 Visual Resources Association Distinguished Service Award. The timing is auspicious. Eileen is nearing retirement after a *very* full thirty-six year career at Indiana, and this conference is a joint one between two organizations to which Eileen has made many contributions. Further, Eileen personifies the "Building Bridges" theme of this conference. From her vantage point as an image professional reporting to a library, she has demonstrated the value of having both an MA and an MLS, and has demonstrated that the visual resources and library worlds can work together.

For over three decades, Eileen has contributed to the visual resources profession through *leadership* at many levels, *service* on both professional and university groups, extensive *presentations and publications*, and constant *innovation* during a time of great change in our professions. Eileen has had an enormous influence on several generations of image professionals through individual *mentoring* and through her thought-provoking conference sessions and emails.

During her career, Eileen has served in leadership positions over twenty-five times, including two stints on the ARLIS/NA Executive Board. Eileen has been deeply involved in the jointly sponsored Summer Educational Institute since its inception. This work has been an invaluable service to the visual resources community.

Among Eileen's more than sixty committee memberships, was service on the influential VRA Data Standards Committee. I can personally attest that the early versions of the VRA Core were enhanced by Eileen's careful review of the categories. Her "wait a minute, what about..." queries were insightful and led to many fruitful discussions on the Core task force. She has continued to impact image cataloging through sessions and workshops on the *Cataloging of Cultural Objects*, an outgrowth of the VRA Core effort. Eileen did not simply watch the landscape of image cataloging change, she helped to fashion that change.

Eileen's publications list includes two books: the seminal *Slide Libraries*, authored by Betty Jo Irvine but with assistance from Eileen, and the *Concordance of Ancient Site Names*, co-authored with Maryly Snow. In addition, her nine articles and reviews have appeared in *Visual Resources*, *Art Documentation*, *Library Trends*, and *Indiana Libraries*. Her thirty-four plus presentations and panels for various organizations is extraordinary. These efforts, plus many contributions to the VRA and ARLIS email lists, showcase her boundless curiosity, her enthusiasm for trying something new, and her zeal for sharing with others what she discovers.

Eileen is an “early adopter.” She was one of the first to try using computers to print labels for slides, and thereafter as a tool to catalog and digitize images. Her proclivity for innovation is described by one of her colleagues: “Eileen was one of the first people I knew who was able to use a computer... It was Eileen who began experimenting in her library and sharing what she learned with the rest of us. ... She has helped to lead us into the present state of image libraries.”

Service to her constituents at Indiana University has also been a highlight of Eileen’s career. She has led in using new technologies for teaching, and in teaching the teachers how to use the technologies. A colleague and mentor provides details: “Before Powerpoint was commonly used at many academic institutions, she worked with our Indiana University graduate students requiring them to prepare their seminars and teaching presentations in digital format ... and taught them how to use this software. With equal skill and persuasion, she also worked with our faculty as they began to shift from the analog to digital environment. Eileen has been an important leader in bridging 20th and 21st century technologies to meet the needs of visually-oriented instruction.” This is corroborated by a former faculty member who attests: “Personally, I can say that she was incredibly dedicated to helping new and adjunct faculty, and I would not have survived teaching... without her help, both with images and personally as a friend.”

The many letters supporting Eileen’s nomination consistently reveal a collection of personal characteristics that has inspired many of us in both organizations:

- her gentle but probing questioning of the status quo
- her ability to stimulate us all to think differently
- her total commitment to the profession
- her relentless service to that profession as a teacher, presenter, writer, officer, and committee member
- her abiding curiosity and reputation as a “first adopter” of technology
- her commitment to users of her facility, both faculty and students
- her commitment to her staff and colleagues as a mentor and
- her ability to build bridges between the visual resources and art library professions.

My co-nominator, Rebecca Moss, has long had a professional *and* personal relationship with Eileen. She would like to share a few thoughts from her perspective.

Rebecca: My motivation for wanting to honor Eileen with this award is a very personal one. She helped me find my way when I didn’t know what to do with my life and career. She has remained a strong influence, both personally and professionally, ever since. Eileen in action is awe-inspiring. Though her office is often full of piles of papers, leaning precariously and seemingly without organization (which drove me, the neatnik, nuts) she unfailingly put her hands on the items she needed with little hesitation.

Another impressive talent she had was the long conversations on the phone. It didn’t matter who was calling, or how involved the question was, she would take the time to get to know the callers, understand their question or request and then share all the

information she had. And this happened frequently. I learned so much just by overhearing her conversations.

My favorite part of working with Eileen was the comfortable atmosphere she created in the VRC, from the large library table where many shared lunches and parties took place, to the bookshelves stuffed with science fiction and mysteries for anyone to enjoy. I loved going to work, and once I knew not to chatter too much before she'd had her morning coffee, we got along great.

I often say that getting my MLS at IU and working with both BJ Irvine and Eileen Fry was like going to Juilliard for music, or Harvard for law. There could not have been a better education in the field of visual resources and I am thankful for this every day. One of the best lessons they shared was the importance of being part of the communities of VRA and ARLIS/NA. Thinking of yourself as a professional, with colleagues who could help you, challenge you, and share in your triumphs and frustrations has made all the difference. We are lucky to have had Eileen in our midst, leading the way, keeping us involved, sharing what interested her and helping us have fun while doing it. Thank you, Eileen.

[Link to full Convocation ceremony on Slideshare](#)