Images
The newsletter of the VRA

visual resources association

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From the President's Keyboard

VRA Members,

As you know, the VRA Strategic Plan was officially adopted at the Houston conference just one year ago. At that time we conducted a lively Town Hall meeting to discuss the Plan and its many recommendations. It was very helpful to the Board and to the Strategic Plan Task Force to hear your comments, suggestions, and insights concerning the Plan.

The Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document that covers all aspects of our association. Various action items suggested in the Plan were divided into timeframes (short-term 1-3 years; mid-term 3-5 years; long-term 5-8 years) and assigned to committees. Today, we should all feel a sense of accomplishment because many of the short-term action items have been achieved or are well-underway just one short year later. I've listed a few of these accomplishments below. But these are just three examples of many. Later in the spring, I will send out a comprehensive list of SP accomplishments. Here are some highlights:

Did you know that developing an e-newsletter and appointing an e-newsletter editor was a short-term action item? Welcome to Image Stuff and editors Corey Schultz and Kristin Solias. The April issue, which you're reading right now, is our second info-packed issue. Although Image Stuff appears in the members-only section of the Web site, back issues will periodically be posted in the public area so the larger community can enjoy this publication. It will also help "spread the word" on the benefits of joining VRA.

One Strategic Plan Task Force recommendation was to hire a part-time member-director to handle some association services such as membership. Jenni Rodda is currently serving her fourth quarter of a one-year contract as Membership Services Coordinator. She is streamlining the membership process, improving services, and researching new database systems. She is currently finishing the Sourcebook 2004, updating member info to ready it for printing. Next year we hope to migrate our membership data to a new, more efficient system, further streamlining the work of the MSC.

Another short-term action item was to establish a Publications Advisory Group to oversee all publications of the Association. Chris Hilker, in a new Board position of Public Relations and Communications Officer, is the chair of the new Publications Program Group (PPG) and oversees all Association publications. Chris has her hands full as she centralizes some of the publications, and works with our editors and web administrators on others. There are many important aspects of our publishing program, from the Bulletin, the Web site, Image Stuff and the new Digital Scene, to the Sourcebook and the Conference Program, and the stationery and Association mailings. She has her work cut out for her!

These are just a few examples of the Strategic Plan implementation. Each action item helps to advance our Association. To oversee this work, the Board uses a draft of the short term action items and their current status (accomplished/ongoing/need to address). We regularly discuss the Plan and our immediate goals during our weekly online Board discussions.

Thanks for checking out The President's Keyboard. Have a wonderful day!

Kathe

Nominations Sought for 2004 VRA Executive Board Elections
Three key positions on the Executive Board - President Elect, Vice-President for Programs (#1), and Secretary - come vacant at the 2005 annual conference. The Nominating Committee, chaired by Carolyn Lucarelli, Pennsylvania State University, is actively seeking nominations for these positions. Running for office is an excellent way to serve the Visual Resources Association, get to know more of your colleagues in the field, and give yourself an opportunity to grow professionally. If you are interested in serving on the Executive Board please feel free to contact any previous officers; they would be happy to share their experiences and reflections of their time in office. The Committee encourages members to place themselves, or other qualified individuals, in consideration for nomination by contacting the Chair.

For the first year the President Elect performs such duties as the President may assign until taking over the office as President. The President serves as the executive officer of the organization, oversees and coordinates the activities of the other officers and the committees, convenes the Executive Board meetings, and represents the organization. The first Vice President's duties are shared with the second-elected Vice President and divided by year of term: conference program planning the first year and conference arrangements the second. The Secretary is in charge of conference pre-registration, keeps minutes of all VRA meetings and handles other official paperwork for the organization.

For more detailed information please consult Articles III, IV, and V of the VRA Bylaws, which can be found on the VRA website (direct URL: http://vraweb.org/bylaws.html). If you have further questions please feel free to contact: Carolyn Lucarelli, Chair, VRA 2004 Nominating Committee, Department of Art History, The Pennsylvania State University, 209 Arts Building, University Park, PA 16802, phone: 814-865-2062, e-mail: cjl8@psu.edu.

Conference Chuckles
Jonathan Cartledge, Massachusetts College of Art

Slides & Digital Image Sets
Archivision Digital Archive (www.archivision.com)

Samantha Pawley, University of Toronto

We just licensed the full digital image archive from Archivision and are really thrilled with it. The collection reflects owner Scott Gilchrist's background in Architecture (B.A. in Architecture and M.A. in Architecture History). He also began the Visual Resources Centre in the Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Design, University of Toronto, in the early 1990s, building and organizing the collection in the early days of computerization, so he knows just what VR Curators are going through and the kind of things we need and want. All of his 100,000+ slides are headed towards his digital collection. The images are beautiful, but moreover, the entire content of the Archivision collection is relevant to those seeking to build or augment architecture or design collections.

He has expanded his digital collection from a mere 5000 images (we started out with this collection two years ago) to 16,000 over the past 18 months and he has placed the entire collection into EmbARK Cataloguer and fully catalogued each image. This is really the best thing about it. Originally, the data was raw...and I just didn't have the time to work with it, as we were also simultaneously digitizing our own slides and I only had time to deal with images that had full catalogue records already completed. To digitize AND catalogue within the time deadline given by our faculty just wasn't feasible. So, in discussions with Scott I told him about this difficulty and how much more helpful to users the images would be if they came with integrated data...and he listened! I recommended my beloved database program, EmbARK by Gallery Systems (www.gallerysystems.com), enthusiastically and facilitated contact between the two companies. Since then, Scott hired a new staff member with a background in art history who has enriched and expanded and checked this data over the past year and has helped with all those pesky authority files. His metadata (36 fields) is all VRA Core based, and easily customizable to other user's own systems. The 36 fields includes unique metadata such as "Major Design Aspects", and additionally, there are 14 choice lists, including a style/choice list which includes all major architectural styles AND all major art styles based on the AAT. They also provide links to other web sites with more images and data and biographical information on the creator and extensive background information on each object. We have EmbARK Cataloguer and EmbARK Web Kiosk (our online searchable database) and in one day migrated the data and images successfully from his database into ours, mapping to our custom data fields, but also incorporating many of his fields which contain valuable information that we didn't have. The Archivision database comes also as an Excel spreadsheet, which makes it easy for anyone with any type of database program to import it. The data is extensive and the images are diverse and of superior quality. I've been digitizing our own collection for two years, and the Photoshop editing of these old slides is the most time-consuming aspect of the project; in this time period, I've been able to put approximately 7500 images and related catalogue data from our collection online, but now with this new acquisition, of all new images, already cleaned, sized, and catalogued, I've put the almost 14,000 new images and records online in one week. So that's been pretty incredible, and quite the lifesaver when dealing with requests, pressures, and demands from the faculty and students for instant digitization of everything.

This is a great collection for those who are just in the beginning phases of digitization, or even those, like us, who are in the midst and need a high quality supply of images and related data. Archivision's collaboration with Gallery Systems enables the use of EmbARK and they come as one for those in need of a database program, or as a stand-alone collection for those who already have a database. And unlike most image suppliers, this collection's focus is on architecture and design, which fits our needs perfectly. Moreover, the owner, Scott Gilchrist, is really attuned to his users and extremely willing to help us meet our needs.
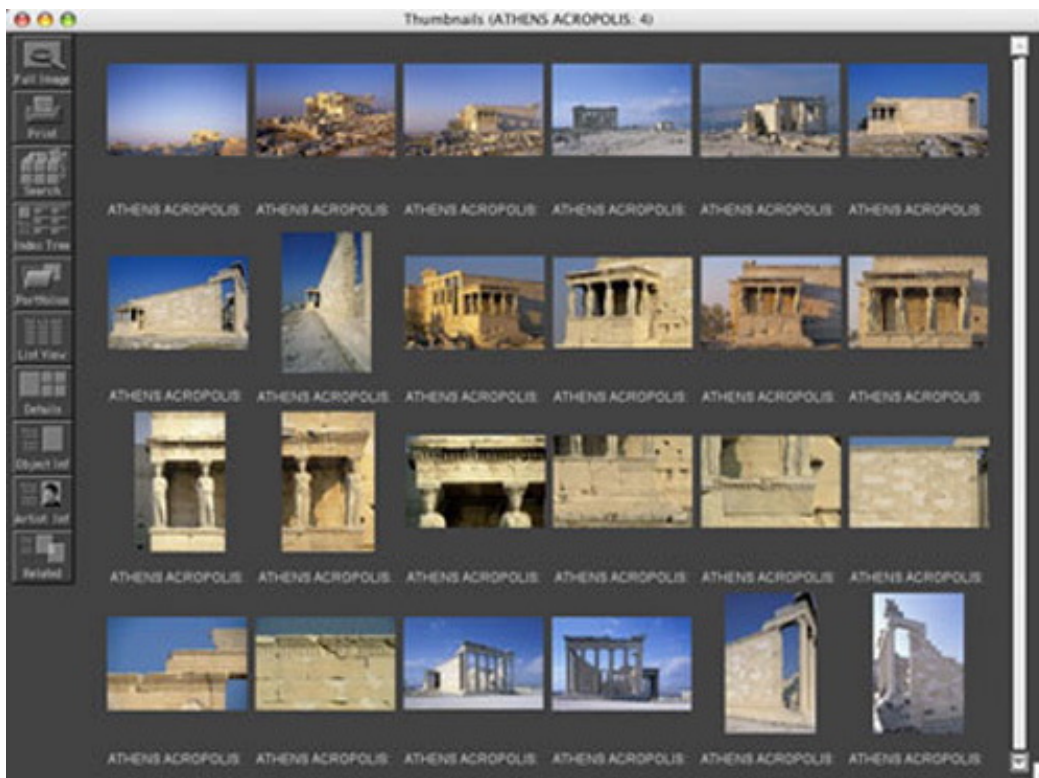
For more screen shots of the collection, please go to www.archivision.com/embark.html

Daily Dilemmas
VRA Intellectual Property Rights Committee - Cross-Collection Property Rights, submitted by Maryly Snow

A lecturer at my institution last year has since moved across the country to teach at another institution. She recently found three images on SPIRO, my institutionís online image database that had been indexed with the term "feng shui". The lecturer wanted to "buy" these three digital images, at a size suitable for projection.

Two of the images came from books. The full source citation, including page number, was included with the online record. The third image was a cartoon from the New Yorker. A different professor had ripped the page out of the magazine, rather than bringing us the entire issue, so we were unable to date the cartoon.

I contacted the Visual Resources Curator at the lecturer's new institution to see whether they would make two of the slides and digital scans for her. Of course they would.

Somehow, the lecturer kept emailing me, in spite of my efforts to re-direct her request to her new VR curator. This made me remember: ah yes, we never could get her to do things the way we thought they ought to be done. Finally, after three emails between the VR curator and myself, and three additional emails between the lecturer and myself, I emailed the lecturer the three digital images, along with a note advising her that she would have to work with her local VR curator from now on.

My actions conveniently solved the problem, provided the lecturer with the images she needed, and ended the flurry of emails. But I wonder, did this action have any untoward intellectual property implications?

How would you handle the above situations? Daily Dilemmas wants to know! Email your responses to darcovic@uic.edu. A summary of responses received will appear in the next issue of Image Stuff. If you have a "Daily Dilemma" of your own for inclusion in a subsequent issue of Image Stuff, please submit it to darcovic@uic.edu

Daily Descriptive Dilemmas
Dilemma submitted by Jan Eklund, UC Berkeley

The object below was described in the catalog entry as an Anonymous German 16th-century "Coconut cup in the form of a Fool's Head." Housed in the Basel Historisches Museum (1892.183), it's basically a coconut shell with silver and gilt-edge ornamentation. There is an inscription that reads "DER LVST ZVM STARKEN TRANCK VND WIN / MACHT DAS ICH NIT KAN WIZIG SIN."

[image unavailable in publically-accessible issues of Image Stuff]

It was taken from a catalog by Paul Vandenbroek called *Beeld van de Andere, Vertoog over het Zelf* (Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen, 5 September - 8 November, 1987). The text of the catalog is in Dutch so I wasn't able to go much further than this since I don't read Dutch.

I've already made my decisions in order to get this slide cataloged and labeled but I'm interested in how others might deal with it. I'm particularly interested in answers to the following two questions:

1. What object type(s) terms would you assign this object?
2. How or where would you classify it?

Got an answer? Email Jan at jeklund@berkely.edu and put "DDD" in the subject field. Jan will compile the answers for the next issue.

Digital Classroom: Safe Harbor or Danger Zone
VRA-sponsored session at the College Art Association Conference

The VRA-sponsored session at the CAA Conference, took place on Thursday, February 19, 2004, in Seattle and was moderated by Ben Kessler. Thanks go to Barbara Rockenbach of ARTstor for transcribing the proceedings, which, summarized here by the editors, will be published in the VRA Bulletin.

Ben Kessler, University of Chicago
The transition to the digital classroom will likely be tracked on several parallel, although not necessarily synchronized, paths. One path will be the development of projection hardware. Another path will be the development of presentation software. The most important path has been and will be the development of content. It is easy to take for granted the liberality offered by a traditional slide library and not consider the momentous effort involved in accumulating such holdings.

Max Marmor, Director of Collection Development, ARTstor
Marmor presented three theses about the digital classroom with the understanding that ARTstor's mission is to help with all three:

1. For the digital classroom to be a safe harbor, the digital library itself must be a safe harbor. The walls between the digital classroom and the digital library are porous. ARTstor aims to create a safe haven on the internet for building and using digital image libraries by:bringing all stakeholders to the table (archives, libraries, museums, photo archives, publishers, slide libraries); helping develop shared understandings where they do not exist today; enabling fair use
2. To teach successfully with digital images you need the right images and lots of them. ARTstor hopes to provide: Lots of useful images (500,000 images in initial collection); services that will facilitate mixing our images with your personal and institutional archives.
3. To teach successfully with digital images you need the right tools.

Dana Leibsohn, Associate Professor, Smith College
Before proceeding to the main body of her presentation, Leibsohn cited a few issues that consistently emerge in any discussion of digital images:

1. Access matters. There will always be the haves and have nots in the academic

environment.

2. The system is only as good as its weakest link. Cooperation among different entities on campus is imperative for success.
3. Faculty do not want to become techies, yet in some sense Art History faculty have always been technologically literate with the use of slides and slide projectors. These skills can be transferred.
4. There will always be adventurous and less adventurous faculty. The trick is to find out who is adventurous in what areas.

Leibsohn then cited more specifically all of the things that would be hard to give up if she had to switch back to analog teaching:

1. She likes the fact that the students have the same tools as the professor. She believes this parity allows students to more thoroughly investigate images. The ability for students to view all the images they saw in class plus additional ones is better than the old slide model.
2. She likes how digital images work with and for users. They are no longer passive images. Digital images can be zoomed in on and annotations can be attached to explain the images. Annotations can also be shared between students and faculty.
3. Digital images allow for more than simple side-by-side comparisons. Multiple images can be one screen at once to help students contextualize the images.
4. Digital images challenge authority in the classroom. A different relationship between student and teacher emerges as students have the same tools for scholarly work as the teacher. The students are more interactive in class because they can ask for images or details of images that the professor may not have anticipated.
5. Digital images allow for collaboration among peers in the United States and abroad. Leibsohn is working on a collaborative web project called Vistas Galeria with colleagues at Fordham and in Mexico. The site is completely bilingual and cross-cultural. These collaborators are able to engage in a dialogue much more easily; they are able to share both information and interpretive projects because of the network access to digital images.

John Ott, James Madison University
(reading a paper prepared by Kathryn Monger, James Madison University)
Ott began with a history of the Madison Digital Image Database (MDID) software development and use at James Madison University. MDID was developed at JMU in the late 1990s as an instructional tool for the art and art history students and faculty. The software was developed at the Center for Instructional Technology. In 1997 the project began with an internal grant. The first version of MDID was implemented in 1998. By 2001 MDID was shared among other institutions as a free download. At this point, three years later, there are 205 users on the MDID listserv.

MDID 2 is now in development and should be released in spring 2004. The new version will improve on its web interface and its functionality as a stand-alone viewer. It will continue to include the slideshow builder, image viewer, catalog editor, and administrative tools. Also available is the split screen viewer that allows for side-by-side comparisons, notes, and zoom capability. The new features of this implementation will include cross-collection searching, the ability to integrate personal image collections, data exchange through XML, a drag and drop sorter, advanced annotation capabilities, and a more sophisticated assignment of user privileges.

Chapter News
About fifteen folks from the Greater New York area collected at the Porta Terra bar in Portland. It would be more accurate to call it a "gathering" than a "meeting" since there was no agenda. We gossiped, drank and chatted about any number of issues, professional and otherwise, from 4:30 to about 5:45 when we adjourned in order to attend the Wednesday night reception. For more information about the Greater New York chapter, please visit arthistory.rutgers.edu/VRANYC/index.html.

The New England chapter will meet Friday, May 21 in New London, CT. Our host for this afternoon meeting and workshop will be Mark Braunstein of Connecticut College. Mark will give us tips on working with Photoshop, and we'll discuss planning for digitization. For more information about the New England chapter, please contact Kristin Solias (kristin.solias@umb.edu).

The spring meeting of the VRA Northern California chapter will be held in Santa Cruz on Friday, May 14. Trudy Levy (Image Integration) and Howard Brainen (TwoCat Digital) will be presenting a

shorter version of the fantastic "Managing a Digitization Project" workshop that they offered during the national conference in Portland. All VRA members are welcome to attend. For more information about the NoCal chapter, please visit www.stanford.edu/group/vranc/VRANC_index.html.

The Upstate NY Chapter met at Portland. We are happy to announce three new officers: Chairperson Marcia Focht, Binghamton University; Treasurer Jeanne Keefe, RPI; and Secretary David Seiler, Skidmore College. For more information about the Upstate NY chapter, please visit vrc.binghamton.edu/vrc/Upstate.htm.

If you would like more information on any of the other regional chapters, please contact the appropriate chapter chairperson. A list of the chapters and contact information is posted on the VRA web site (www.vraweb.org/chapters.html).