Images
The newsletter of the VRA

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Notes from the President
Allan T. Kohl (Minneapolis College of Art & Design)
President, Visual Resources Association

Budget cuts. Hiring freezes. Layoffs. With the economy in a tailspin, aren't there more important things to be concerned about than your Association membership?

In fact, studies suggest that active participation in a professional association is even more important during turbulent times than is the case when everyone is enjoying smooth sailing through calm waters. A recent article I read on this subject listed three major benefits of active involvement in one's professional association -- especially when cutbacks loom, or when one must navigate the perils of a down job market. In the face of uncertainty, the article suggested, ask yourself: are you maximizing the value of your professional association membership?   Can you justify the cost of participation in terms of enhancing your value as an employee, in your being able to perform your job more effectively?

The first benefit mentioned by the article was in many ways the most obvious: sharing current information within a wider professional community. Many of us take for granted our ability do this on a daily basis through our postings to the VRA-L. We read through queries, and responses, to keep abreast of current trends; we seek answers from knowledgeable colleagues, or strategize about various problem-solving options when faced with a challenging situation.

A second benefit was networking, which involves much more than simply asking your fellow professionals for job leads. Networking can also include positioning yourself as a valuable team member within a current employment situation, cultivating desirable new skills, or demonstrating your abilities to contribute successfully to collaborative endeavors. Networking can grow organically out of such resume-building activities as delivering a paper at a professional conference, participating in cooperative projects that raise your institution's or employer's visibility, volunteering to serve as a committee member, publishing an article or research project, or contributing to the formulation of standards and best practices documents.

The third benefit mentioned in the article surprised me somewhat, until I thought more about it: building social connections among like-minded individuals who hold many experiences and values in common. For many of us, the VRA has become a sort of extended family, offering a safe environment within which we can vent our frustrations, communicate our good news, and even share a moment of levity with others who will appreciate an inside joke. Those among us fortunate enough to enjoy the personal means, or the institutional support, to participate in our annual conferences experience these benefits in more concentrated doses: immersing ourselves in current information by attending roundtables and sessions, or developing specific skills through workshop participation. I would ask that those who question the value of conference events which have evolved to mingle practical with social aspects -- the Members' Dinner, the Tansey Event, the VRAffle -- remember that such activities generate an important sense of camaraderie, a wellspring of shared experiences, that reinforces our group cohesion, and helps to energize each of us to face the more routine aspects of our careers, fortified with a healthy dose of optimism and equanimity.

What more can your Association do for you? You'll never find out if you don't ask. Do you have an unaddressed information need? Voice it among your peers. Do you have a suggestion for a new way to aggregate and share with others some aspect of your work, or would you like to propose a project, but aren't sure how to proceed? Discuss your idea with a member of the

Executive Board <http://www.vraweb.org/organization/exec.html> or with the Chair of an appropriate Committee <http://www.vraweb.org/organization/committees.html>.

And (to paraphrase the words of a far greater leader), Ask not only what your Association can do for you; but also what we, working together, can do to promote wider awareness of our profession, and advance the issues and goals we together deem to be important. Take a moment to re-read the Association's Mission Statement <http://www.vraweb.org/about/index.html> and remember why it was that the VRA was founded in the first place, and why it has grown and changed and endured now into its fourth decade.

It's all too easy to take your Association for granted during placid times. But it's during the tough times that we need each other all the more. During this season of anxious hope, I'm grateful for all of you who have chosen to be part of the ongoing life of this organization.

VRA Elections Results
By Allan Kohl (Minneapolis College of Art & Design)

I am pleased to announce the names of the newly elected VRA Executive Board Officers:

President-Elect, Maureen Burns (Humanities Curator, Visual Resources Collection, University of California, Irvine)

Vice President for Conference Program, Heidi Raatz (Visual Resources Librarian, Minneapolis Institute of Arts)

Secretary, Marcia Focht (Curator of Visual Resources, Department of the History of Art, Binghamton University).

These new officers will begin their terms on March 20, 2009, at the conclusion of the Annual Business Meeting during Conference 27 in Toronto.

VRA at CAA in LA 2009
By Maureen Burns (University of California, Irvine)

Please consider joining in on the exciting VRA activities being planned for the 97th College Art Association conference, http://conference.collegeart.org/2009/ at the Los Angeles Convention Center February 25-28, 2009.

As an affiliated society, VRA is sponsoring a session entitled "You Can Do It. We Can Help: Building Digital Image Collections Together" midday on Thursday and extending this theme into a VRA business meeting midday Saturday. John Trendler, Chair of VRA's Southern California Chapter, will be leading the latter, which provides an opportunity for VRA-SC members to gather with other VRA and CAA members to discuss strategies for building digital collections and to showcase a variety of image projects. Although only at the talk stage, the local chapters of both VRA and ARLIS/NA are considering organizing an additional fun LA event where CAA attendees can connect. So, stay tuned.

VRA members, Maureen Burns, Sheryl Frisch, and Mark Pompelia, have teamed up to line up a terrific panel of speakers for the VRA session. Margo Ballantyne and Mark Dahl will probably be the talk of the town with "accessCeramics.org: Building an Artist-Centered, Browseable Image Collection with Flickr*"* a presentation showing how a social networking tool can be used by artists to provide broad access to their work. Alka Patel will share the experiences of an art historian in the field who is actively building an extensive image collection, primarily focused on the Islamic art of South Asia, in a talk entitled, "Digital Fieldwork: The Peril and Promise of Sharing an Archive." CAA members will be informed about how a professional organization might involve its members in contributing images to a peer-reviewed image resource in Ann Whiteside's presentation, "It's the Network: How the Society of Architectural Historians is Building an Image Collaboratory." To bring it home, ARTstor's Gretchen Wagner will discuss current community efforts to encourage the broader sharing and educational use of images while also respecting copyright in "It Takes a Village: Building Collective Responses to Copyright Challenges."

So, plan to come west and warm up in February with thought-provoking presentations and lively discussions at CAA LA! Although you are encouraged to take advantage of early bird registration by December 19 to enjoy the full benefits of attending CAA sessions, extensive exhibits, and

receptions at LA's major cultural institutions, VRA members do not have to register to attend ONLY the affiliate activities.

Intellectual Property Rights News
Compiled by Jen Green (Massachusetts College of Art and Design)
Intellectual Property Rights Committee

Copyright Analysis Checklist
by Carl Johnson, Director of the Copyright Licensing Office, Brigham Young University, Provo Utah and member of the VRA-IPR committee

Summary of a presentation: Mr. Johnson recently presented this information during his talk "Getting Copyright Right" at the Utah Museum Association (UMA) conference.

Can I "use" a preexisting creative work? When facing this question, the following brief checklist may be helpful in determining if permission is needed for planned uses of preexisting creative works.

Are the preexisting works you plan to use protected by copyright?
A number of conditions allow creative works to be used without permission or the payment of usage fees including:

- The work's copyright has expired—See this underline chart for help in determining if copyright ownership/protection has expired.
- The work was explicitly donated to the public domain
- The work has been licensed for your use—through standard licensing schemes, such as Creative Commons and other licensing systems, the creator/copyright owner has licensed the pre-existing work to cover your planned use. If the preexisting works are found on a web site, check for the copyright usage information link—you may discover that your planned use may already be permitted.
- The work is non-copyrightable subject matter

Are the creative works you plan to use owned by your institution? Or Do the   employees, faculty or students of the institution own the material?
Whenever your institution or employees/students own the copyright of the creative works, obtaining a license can easily be accomplished, either by obtaining a written license or by consulting the institution's policy governing such works.

How will the material protected by copyright be used?
Whenever you contemplate your planned use of preexisting works, it is important to think in terms of how your use will affect the rights of copyright owner. If your planned use interferes with the rights of the copyright owner, avoid copyright infringement by seeking permission. Remember, the copyright owner has the exclusive right to do and to authorize others to do the following:

- Reproduce the work
- Prepare derivative works based upon the work
- Distribute copies of the work to the public
- Perform or display the work publicly.

Will your proposed use qualify as an exception (limitation on exclusive rights) which allows use of the preexisting works without seeking permission?
See more detailed information by clicking on the link for the following three exceptions.

- Fair Use—Section 107
- Reproductions by libraries…Section 108
- Classroom, exemption of certain performances and displays—Section 110 (1,2)

What additional resources are there?

- Digital Image Rights Computator, Visual Resources Association
- Documentary Filmmakers Best Practices in Fair Use, American University Center for Social Media

- Code of Best Practice in Fair Use for Online Video, American University, Center for Social Media
- Recut, Reframe, Recycle: Quoting Copyrighted Material in User-Generated Video, American University, Center for Social Media

Digital Scene and Heard
Edited by Jacquelyn Erdman (Florida Atlantic University)
Digital Initiatives Advisory Group

Image Search Engines
By Jacquelyn Erdman (Florida Atlantic University)

Searching for images outside of an image database is tricky. Images in the general web do not have metadata standards in order to search accurately by a word search and other forms of searching are still not fine tuned. Perhaps these search engines are not as good as Google, but they do offer ways to search other than by words. The following list was presented at the Internet Librarian 2008 conference in Monterey, Ca this past October.

oMoby

oMoby is a mobile phone visual search. The idea is that you can take a picture with your phone and then search the Internet for that picture. This can be useful to gain more information on an art piece that you come across or a product you might want to buy. They way this is described in the FAQ page are to "think of physical objects as hyperlinks" so that you can gather further information. Images, with information attached to the image, can be uploaded to the oMoby image server.

Oskope visual search

The Oskope visual search allows you to browse websites that are a part of the Oskope database. You can use keywords or click on the random images that appear on the screen. There are a number of ways to view the search results depending upon how you scan for information. You can have them pile up, like dropping photographs on the floor. If you are someone how likes images to appear in a more orderly way, you have view a grid, list or a stack of photos. If you are searching for newer images, you can use the display based on the date the photos were uploaded. Any items that are selected can be saved into a folder, and with registration you can keep your saved images. The purpose of this type of search is not necessarily to find a specific image, but to have the ability to browse through many images quickly (because of how they appear rather than have you scroll through pages of results) to find interesting new items.

Photosynth

Photosynth was developed by Microsoft Live Labs. This product is very exciting because it is a collaborative effort to recreate the physical space within a digital realm through compiling photographs, in 3D. The way this product works is that anyone can upload images into the database. Let's say you took some pictures of the Eiffel Tower. The database then analyses the photograph and finds photographs that are similar and then using your photograph to fill in the scene, like taking lots of photographs and then gluing them into a big panorama, by sticking the images together. The more photos added, the more expansive the 3D image model. This product was inspired by research into photo tourism.

Searchme

Searchme uses text to search for web pages, images, video, and music. Rather than offer a list of results, it allows you to flip through a copy of the web pages/photos that it finds and circles how often the word appears on the web page. If the large images are not your cup of tea, there is a Searchme lite edition which offers the results with the image of the web page/photo and the metadata attached to that item in a list form.

Idée Labs

Idée Labs has a number of visual search engines. Their model is to search the Internet for

images using images. At this time it only searches their own stock photos (nearly 3 million from Alamy).

BYO Image Search Lab

BYO Image Search stands for "bring your own images". The concept of this image search is to either upload a JPG, GIF or PNG image, or point to a URL of an image and this search engine will try to find similar images. For fun I pointed to a URL with an Arabian horse positioned in the center of a grass field. The results all had the same color scheme of the green pasture, but the rest of the content came back with bicycles, people, ducks, flowers, and tomb stones. Many of the results did have a similar layout as the horse photograph, but some did confuse me as to why they showed up, like a pair of animated avatars that were not even close to the brown color of the horse.

TinEye

TinEye is currently in a beta testing mode and therefore requires a login. As with their other product, you can either upload an image or type in a URL. Using the same Arabian horse picture, I was able to locate the exact photo (one with text across it and one without) on a number of different websites. I then found another horse photograph and again was successful in finding nearly exact duplicates. The images that were retrieved from the search may have some modifications (such as cropping), but they obviously came from the same source.

What is nice about this search is that you get the exact image back, not images that sort of look like your image. This can be useful if you have copyrighted materials that you fear have been replicated online. This search might not every copy of a picture, but it does retrieve many.

PixID

PixID is a search engine meant for "editorial image monitoring for the news and entertainment photo industry". You have to request a demo in order to view this product, but I suspect it is very similar to TinEye.

Piximilar

The purpose of Piximilar is to find visually similar images such as by color, texture, and layout. Such a search can find trends in color and texture as well as give a variety of similar objects to choose from. The Lab has a number of interactive demos for you to test the product by searching for a specific color in the Multicolr Search Lab or by using tags to find similar images in the Visual Search Lab. The Multicolr search can also be used with different products like Flickr.

Please contact Jacquelyn Erdman with any questions or suggestions for future columns. For more information on the activities of the Digital Initiatives Advisory Group (DIAG) see http://www.vraweb.org/diag/index.htm.

Tech Tips
By Alex Nichols (Michigan State University)

Non-Destructive Image Editing, Part 1: Layers

When you make almost any kind of adjustment to an image in Photoshop (or another similar image editor), you are changing (or "destroying") the original image data. In many cases, the original appearance of the image cannot be perfectly recovered by simply performing an equal but opposite operation on the image, because some of the subtle differentiation between tones or colors has been lost in the act of the first operation.

For example, if you try brightening your image using the middle ("gamma") slider in levels, you end up compressing the different tones that lie between middle gray and white (you are shifting the values of some of the middle tones to match the values of some of the brighter tones, ending up with less variety, and therefore less subtlety in the transitions from dark to light). If you later decided you want to reverse the effect by moving the same levels slider in the opposite direction, the image will indeed darken back to its original average brightness, but you will again be compressing tones and permanently losing more of the subtle variation between tones. If you

compound this effect through many different adjustments, the end result can be a more or less "posterized" image (try the "posterize" filter in Photoshop for an exaggerated look at the effect I'm talking about).

This is where "non-destructive" editing can be helpful. Non-destructive editing involves editing the image in such a way that the original data is always maintained, all adjustments are performed on the original data, and all adjustments are perfectly changeable and undo-able (even out of order, or after saving, closing, and re-opening). Thus, the maximum possible subtleties of the tonal ramps are retained when the editing process is complete, no matter how many changes are made (even over multiple editing sessions by multiple people).

One common approach to non-destructive editing is the use of layers, layer masks, and adjustment layers. In this method, rather than simply selecting "Levels" from the Image>Adjustments menu, you would create a levels adjustment layer (either from the Layers menu or the button in the layers palette). The manner of manipulating the levels is the same, but the original image is maintained as the background layer, with the levels adjustment in a layer resting above it. As long as you leave the layers intact, you can always go back and change your original levels adjustment, and it will always be reapplied to the original image. You could additionally stack many other types of adjustment layers on top of your levels layer, or even between the levels layer and the original data. All changes trickle down the stack to affect the original image data at the bottom, without ever permanently altering it.

There a few advantages to this approach other than just maximizing your image quality. The extreme "undo-ing" and "redo-ing" capabilities that this system represents can streamline a multi-person image editing workflow, especially if inexperienced student employees are involved. If the employee makes a mistake, it can much more easily be corrected later, without having to redo the editing from scratch, and still maintaining maximum quality. It also makes the editing process that the employee performed totally transparent to the supervisor, which can be a big help in initial training, or in further developing their skills.

There are a few downsides to this approach as well. For one thing, the editing process can be more complicated and confusing, because the stacking sequence of the adjustment layers can affect the outcome (not just the chronological sequence), and local changes (those made to just one area of the image) need to be made with layer masks (more time-consuming and more complicated than a conventional workflow). Another potential pitfall is compatibility. Photoshop files full of adjustment layers (or even tif files full of adjustment layers) won't necessarily open correctly (or at all) in other image viewers or editors (or perhaps even much older or future versions of Photoshop). For this reason, maintaining the layers in the image should be seen as a short term goal. Once the image is edited and checked, it should be flattened into a conventional tif file for long-term archiving (both a flattened and un-flattened version could be saved, if you really want to be safe, but in many cases I would consider this overkill).

An additional option for non-destructive editing will be discussed in a future "Images" article.

Books, Articles and More
Compiled by Elizabeth Darocha Berenz (ARTstor)

Agnew, Grace. Digital Rights Management: A Librarian's Guide to Technology and Practice. Oxford: Chandos Press, 2008.

This book provides an overview of the current landscape in digital rights management (DRM), including: an overview concepts, technologies and issues facing libraries, including copyright, user privacy, authentication and authorization and trusted systems. It discusses the role and implications of DRM for existing library services, such as integrated library management systems, electronic reserves, commercial database licenses, digital asset management systems and digital library repositories as well as emerging issues such as micro-licensing and seamless integration of licensed and open access resources. It also discusses the impact that DRM 'trusted system' technologies, already in use in complementary areas, such as course management systems and web-based digital media distribution, may have on libraries. The book discusses strategies for implementing DRM in libraries and archives for safe-guarding intellectual property and information users in the web environment. It is a practical guide that places DRM within the context of the services and practices of the library and offers guidance on all aspects of resource management and user safeguards. An understandable overview of the technologies and standards involved in digital rights management. An overview of the DRM landscape beyond libraries, with an emphasis on how this landscape impacts libraries and shapes DRM generally. In particular, the e-learning and digital media distribution arenas are embracing DRM, with significant potential impact for

libraries. Includes an emphasis not just on digital books and still images, but digital video and audio, where the need for DRM is more compelling.
Adapted from the Digital Copyright list, September 8, 2008

Johnson, Larry, Rachel Smith, Rachel Varon, Peter Samis, and Holly Witchey. "Into the Breach: How Creative Philanthropy Can Reverse the Eroding Landscape of Arts Education."

Benson, Richard. The Printed Picture. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008.

Positions Filled
Compiled by Anne Norcross (Kendall College of Art & Design)

Northwestern University
Nicole Finzer will be the Visual Resources Librarian in the Digital Collections at Northwestern University beginning January 2, 2009. Nicole continues in her position as the Visual Resources Specialist at Bryn Mawr College until December 19, 2008.

The University of Chicago
The position of Image Cataloger in the Visual Resources Collection at The University of Chicago has been filled by Amanda Rybin. As a part of this position, Amanda will be cataloging new images for the collection, which includes processing requests from faculty and researching images for collection development. Prior to her position in Chicago, Amanda was Digitization Coordinator for the Semyon Fridlyand Archive at the University of Denver while working part-time at the University of Denver's Visual Media Center. She also worked as a Research Fellow for the Library Research Service at the Colorado State Library and received her BA in Art History and Creative Writing, as well as her MLIS from the University of Denver.

Upcoming Conferences
Submitted by Marlene Gordon (University of Michigan-Dearborn)

Electronic Visualisation and the Arts (EVA)
July 6-8, 2009
London
The call for papers is now open:
http://www.eva-conferences.com/eva_london/2009/offer_a_paper

DIGITAL DIRECTIONS: Fundamentals of Creating and Managing Digital Collections
The Northeast Document Conservation Center Presents:
Co-sponsored by Balboa Art Conservation Center - www.bacc.org
MAY 27-29, 2009, San Diego, California

Topics include collaboration, planning a digital project, selection for digitization, scanning basics, image capture, metadata, sustainability and digital preservation, outsourcing and vendor relations, essentials of delivery systems, copyright and rights management, and funding strategies. For more information, visit www.nedcc.org.

Chapter News
Compiled by Trudy Levy (Image Integration)

Upstate NY Chapter
Submitted by Jeanne Keefe (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute)

On October 23rd & 24th, the Upstate NY Chapter of VRA and the Western NY Chapter of ARLIS hosted a mini-conference & meeting at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in conjunction with the opening of Rensselaer's new Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) designed by Nicholas Grimshaw and Partners. The meeting was organized by Jeanne Keefe (VRA) and Fran Scott (ARLIS) and sponsored by the Rensselaer Research Libraries, Archivision, Western NY ARLIS, Upstate NY and New England VRA. It was attended by over 45 members of these chapters plus members from the ARLIS/NE chapter, as well as several LIS students from the University at Albany and Simmons College in Boston.

The event included several arts related presentations; *Electronic Arts @ Rensselaer* by Mary Anne Staniszewski, Associate Professor and Acting Head of the Arts Department , and *The Body in the Archives* by Michael Oatman, Artist and Associate Professor in the School of Architecture

and *Accurate Spacial Audio Reproduction of Music Performances for Archival and Telecommunication Purposes* by Jonas Braasch, Assistant Professor, School of Architecture's Program of Architectural Acoustics. The library related presentations included; *The Rensselaer Library's Digital Collections* presentations by Jeanne Keefe, Visual Resources Librarian, Tammy Gobert, Automation Archivist and Judith Frangos, Media Librarian. Introduction by Frances Scott, Librarian/Architecture, Experimental Media and the Arts; moderated by Kathryn Dunn, Technology & Metadata Librarian.

Chapter business meetings were held the first day of the program and the day concluded a with *Welcome* from Mark Mistur, Acting Dean of the School of Architecture, followed by a catered dinner in the School's Greene Gallery. During dessert and coffee, the showing of a short film entitled *Sittin on a Million*, produced by two graduates of Rensselaer's Electronic Media, Arts, and Communication (EMAC) program. The highlight of the second day was a guided tour of the newly opened EMPAC building which was recently covered in an article in the NY Times.

For more photographs of the events and attendees, or more information on this joint VRA/ARLIS 4-chapter meeting, visit the meeting website.

Great Lakes and Midwest Chapter
Submitted by Jodie Double (University of Minnesota)

The Great Lakes and Midwest Chapter had a great joint meeting in Chicago at the Chicago Art Institute (AIC) on November 14th. In the morning, Cory Prahl from the Minneapolis College of Art & Design, presented a Photoshop training session. Over lunch, the chapters held their business meetings. During the afternoon, there was a great Stump the Prez session with Allan Kohl. There was free time to tour the AIC and then tour the Fashion Institute. In the evening, attendees gathered for a dinner at The Gage, a restaurant in a Louis Sullivan designed building. Both chapters have decided to hold another joint meeting next year.

The Pacific Rim Chapter
Submitted by Jane Fisher (The Evergreen State College)

The Pacific Rim Chapter folks have elected Jeanette Mills to be the new Chair for the upcoming 2009-20011 cycle. She begins her term in January. She has been the Pacific Rim Chapter chair in the past, and will do a great job!