

Images

The newsletter of the VRA

October 2012 Vol.9 No. 5

Editor's Note

Two of our column editors have resigned, Brooke Cox (DePauw University), Upcoming Conferences and Anne Norcross (Kendal College of Art), Positions Filled. I would like to thank them both for their contributions to Images.

I received a good response to my email for volunteers to work on Images and am pleased to announce our new co-editors. Brooke Sansosti (Reed College) and Kelly Smith (Lafayette College) will be co-editors of Upcoming Conferences; Serenity Ibsen (Pacific Northwest College of Art) and Jennifer Kniesch (Dickinson College) will be co-editors of Tech Tips; and Allison Olsen (University of New Hampshire) and Alyx Rossetti (Getty Vocabulary Program) will be working on a new column, Visual Resources Emerging Professionals and Students (VREPS). And last, but certainly, not least, is another column that is new to Images, Notes from the Treasurer, written by Allan Kohl.

Memo from the President

Jolene de Verges (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Libraries)

Welcome glorious fall, when the days get shorter and the nights are cool, and all of a sudden, everyone's at school! Knowing that time is in short supply this season, I will be brief with VRA updates this month.

Mid-Year Board Meeting, August, 2012

The Executive Board gathered at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, site of our 2013 Annual Conference, with a full agenda focused on the conference and ongoing Association business. In last month's memo, I described the historic Biltmore, conveniently located in downtown Providence, a city with an almost perfect WalkScore. It bears repeating that this hotel is charming and intimate, ideally suited for fostering the collegiality and participation that is the hallmark of our annual conferences.

I'm sure you can imagine how demanding conference planning can be, with the myriad of details to work through in order to insure an annual conference that has a balance of relevant and timely presentations, relaxing social events (tailored to appeal to a wide spectrum of tastes and ages), networking opportunities, especially for new members to get acquainted, business meetings, and awards and recognitions, all condensed into 4 days. Not to worry, your Board didn't overlook the need for plentiful coffee, food and drink to be served throughout the conference to keep us going. Once the final touches are added to the conference website, the program will be announced later in October. The Board compiled a list of suggestions, made by VRA members, for Plenary and Closing speakers. I am pleased to report that the following have accepted our invitation to present during the conference: [James Elkins](#), Plenary Speaker, and [Alex MacLean](#), Closing Speaker. More details will be forthcoming.

In related business from the Mid-Year meeting, the Board voted to approve a conference budget that included funding for non-member presenters and to develop our first VRA Speakers Fund. Responding to post-conference survey comments going back several years, recommendations made in the 2009 Strategic Plan and more recently by the Education Committee, the Speakers Fund will support outside speakers who have

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Contributions to **Images** are due the 15th of the month before the issue. Please send your copy in ".doc" format and Arial font to [Marlene Gordon](#).

expertise on topics and areas relevant to the VRA membership, such as digital preservation and curation, digital humanities, digital media practices across academic and cultural environments, rights management, fair use and copyright, and visual literacy standards. These are just a few of the areas our members are already involved in, and are considered natural alignments with VRA interests. It is part of our core mission to anticipate the needs of the profession for the next several years and to expand the opportunities for our members to be informed. Thanks to the Education Committee for providing input on the policy and guidelines for the Fund. Our approach for this first experimental year is to build in a category in the conference budget that is being augmented through sponsor and partner donations.

Our goal is to formulate a sustainable structure for funding this and other important and strategic initiatives, while also balancing these expenses to keep conference costs and membership dues affordable. During the Mid-Year meeting, the Board conducted a thorough review of the financial state of the Association, noting that our investment funds are a reserve as a hedge against possible future financial economic downturns. These investments have been in an upward trend following the losses suffered during the economic crisis. The Board, in consultation with the Financial Advisory Committee, and drawing on donated professional advice, is now exploring the implications of using a drawdown on our investments to subsidize conference programming and Travel Awards. Expect to hear more in the coming months from Treasurer Kohl who is leading and advising us in this area.

There are additional highlights of the Mid-Year meeting to keep you apprised of in the weeks ahead. I will continue to report on matters related to our evolving publications, communications and outreach (PAG, the Publications Advisory Group, revised Report is expected in late October), and the latest news on the ongoing work to formalize our relationship with ARLIS/NA through regular joint conferences.

In closing, I would like to remind you to about publishing opportunities in the electronic Visual Resources Bulletin, *VRAB*, launched earlier this year. *VRAB*, like its predecessor in print, is a reflection of our professional practice and encourages contributions from VRA members and related information professionals.

Best wishes for fall enjoyments and for productive, rewarding work throughout the year.

Notes from the Treasurer

Allan Kohl (Minneapolis College of Art and Design)

Now that the announcement of Milwaukee as host city for the 2014 Conference has been made, some of you may be asking: why *Milwaukee*, of all places? Didn't we just recently hold a conference in flyover country? So some background information as to how this decision was made may help to explain the complex, multi-faceted process by which a host city and a hotel property are selected.

In choosing host cities, the Board attempts to strike a balance in which, while acknowledging that a majority of our members are based in the eastern United States, we rotate conference locations among different geographic regions, including the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, Texas & Southwest, California, and Northwest. From the founding of the Association through 2001, we always met in conjunction with College Art Association in the host city of their choice. CAA typically meets in high-priced "Category A" cities (based on population, travel connections, hotel options, costs, and cultural attractions) such as New York City, Boston, and Los Angeles that many of our members cannot easily afford. When we began meeting on our own, VRA chose less expensive "Category B" cities such as Baltimore, Kansas City and San Diego. We could further reduce costs by holding conferences in "Category B-" cities; examples of these include Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Louisville, Memphis, Providence, Richmond, or Milwaukee.

When meeting on our own, the VRA has opted for mid-March to early April as its calendar "window," splitting the difference between CAA in February and ARLIS/NA in April/early May (while some of our attendees also participate in one or both of these other conferences, over 70% attend only VRA). We avoid Easter weekend at either end of our conference, and also try (not always successfully) to avoid Palm Sunday and Passover as well. Trying to mesh the conference with spring break is futile, as there is no

consistency among schools.

The planning cycle for the annual conference extends over a minimum of two years (and, for a joint conference with another organization such as ARLIS/NA, up to four years), during which time economic conditions can change dramatically. During the annual Executive Board meetings held this past spring in Albuquerque, the Board refined a "short list" of candidate cities for the 2014 Conference. We then asked our Destination Consultant, Tom Costello, to contact hotels in the targeted cities and ask them to provide "Request for Proposal" (RFP) responses indicating their ability to work within our schedule objectives, and outlining their requirements for room block occupancy, room rates, and the catering obligations they would expect us to assume. 32 hotels, located in the 11 cities on our list, submitted proposals for our consideration.

Unlike real estate sales (in which location is supposed to be everything), we have to consider many additional factors when selecting a conference hotel. Chief among these are: hotel availability on dates within our calendar "window;" number of rooms available for our "room block;" the room rates our members will pay; adequate meeting facilities; technical infrastructure; and proximity of the hotel to restaurants and cultural attractions in our host city.

The following information may help explain how our contracts with the conference hotels benefit both the Association and individual conference attendees. The Association gets a guaranteed number of rooms over an agreed-upon sequence of dates at a locked-in rate; the hotel gives up its flexibility to raise rates in exchange for an occupancy commitment. This is our "room block," and we are expected to meet ("pick-up") at least 80-85% of our commitment over the course of the four conference days. The hotel also anticipates income from its catering operations, known as "F&B" (Food and Beverage services). Our hotel contract typically includes an "F&B minimum," which covers a combination of catered events per our specifications. In recent years we have met our F&B minimum by including in the overall conference budget the cost of the meals served at the Opening Reception, the Awards Banquet (or Luncheon), the New Members Breakfast, the continental breakfast provided during the Annual Business Meeting, and sponsored coffee breaks.

The payback is that most contracts give the Association free use of major conference facilities as long as we meet our "room block pick-up" and "F&B minimum." This means that rentals and set-up fees are waived for our use of the large ballroom for "all-conference" events; session halls; 5-6 meeting rooms for committees, chapters, and special interest and affinity groups (Birds of a Feather flocks, etc.); a secure room for registration supplies and equipment; and the networked registration area. However, if a significant number of attendees choose to stay at cheaper hotels nearby, or if we were to "skip the fancy dinner," we might not meet our room block or F&B obligations. If this were to happen, the Association could be on the hook for thousands of dollars in facility rental and set-up charges. So it's a delicate balancing act all around, every year, for the VRA as an organization – just as it is for each member trying to decide whether s/he can afford to attend the annual conference.

For 2014, unfortunately, it was immediately apparent that we had to rule out our top location choice (New Orleans) because its hotel room rates were simply too high for our membership to afford (upwards of \$239 per night). Nashville was our second choice, but the only hotel available during our calendar range, and at an affordable room rate, was located at the airport rather than downtown. One after another, the other cities on the list also had to be eliminated for not meeting our criteria of availability, affordability, or location. But like a dark horse that emerges through the pack once the favorites begin to falter, Milwaukee kept rising to the top in all three factors.

So we began to give Cream City (or Brew City, if you prefer) a closer look. Let's see: easy driving distance from Chicago. Hub airport for a discount carrier (AirTran Airlines), offering competitively-priced direct flights from dozens of major markets: "good lift." Historic hotels with charm and character, something our conference attendees have said they prefer, uh-huh. Lots of good restaurant options, reasonably priced. All of the candidate hotels located within walking distance of a major art museum (housed in a photogenic Santiago Calatrava building). The choice became clearer with each factor we considered.

In the final assessment, this and every decision we make requires a compromise, in

which we sacrifice some of our preferences, and give up a degree of flexibility, in order to keep costs at a reasonable level (just as some of us individually do when we book that inconvenient red-eye flight in order to get a lower price).

So let's summarize the positives: a surprisingly interesting destination, affordable rooms for our members, affordable hotel catering obligations for the Association, and a location in the downtown core within easy walking distance of dining and cultural attractions. In the end, Milwaukee won, hands down.

Tech Tips

Compiled by Serenity Ibsen (Pacific Northwest College of Art) and Jennifer Kniesch (Dickinson College)

A Few Free and Fee Based DAMS

Institutions seeking free or open-source solutions for digital asset management have a number of options to explore. Depending on the institution's IT expertise and support, they may find that hosting and customizing their own digital asset management system (DAMS) is the best solution.

The library at Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) was seeking a DAMS solution that engaged students in the process of digital documentation and description of artworks. In the end, we decided to build something here at PNCA that was infinitely customizable. Mimi, our institutional repository, has a custom search appliance and custom metadata schema in order to suit the diverse needs of our stakeholders. Mimi archives content from Homeroom -- our course management system -- that is uploaded and described by our students. The drawback to this system is that there are widely varying levels of metadata quality and quantity, and the files included do not always comply with best practices in digital documentation. However, the Mimi-Homeroom relationship allows for automated archiving wherein we obtain material we might not otherwise have access to, such as final projects in studio courses. At this time, Mimi does not have a public media viewer or exhibit creator application in which users can curate content.

Omeka is a free, open-source DAMS that runs on the LAMP stack -- Linux, Apache, MySQL, and PHP and can store all types of files. Omeka offers a number of plugins including CSV import, Docs Viewer, LCSH, and Dublin Core Extended. The Dropbox plugin enables users to upload files in batches and the CSV Import plugin allows for batch importing of metadata. For those institutions without their own servers, Omeka offers hosting via Omeka.net with a variety of plans to suit hosting needs.

James Madison University (JMU) created a free, open-source solution called Madison Digital Image Database (MDID). MDID is a locally hosted database and offers storage for any media type, interoperability with Blackboard and other web applications, customizable front-ends, and a companion application, MediaViewer that presents slideshows. This DAMS allows user-created records and collection-level user permissions.

Another free and open-source DAMS is DSpace, a ready-to-use "out of the box" solution that is also customizable. DSpace allows for batch imports as well as web submissions. Its default metadata schema is Dublin Core, however it is customizable for different schemas including MARC21, and locally created custom schemas. DSpace has Registered Service Providers who are committed to the design and development of the DSpace platform.

For those opposed to the open access DAMS solutions, there are fee-based versions that provide similar outcomes to open access solutions. EmbARK's Gallery Systems, ARTstor's Shared Shelf and LUNA Imaging, for instance all offer paid subscriptions with hosting or out of the box customizations, including plug-ins and add-ons, besides providing ease of installation, and customer service.

ARTstor's Shared Shelf provides a customizable schema (VRA Core 4.0 or DC) that integrates with the already acquired Digital Collection that the institution already carries. It can be customized to be shared among other institutions (consortium based) known as Shared Shelf Commons.¹ The cost of this service varies on the classification of the institution and the number of images that will be hosted on their server, which they call

assets.² Benefits of this service would include not duplicating images already hosted on ARTstor's Digital Collection, customer service and using their server, instead of your institutions.

Luna Imaging, which formed in 1993, has multiple DAMS solutions and began with support from companies that embodied themselves as heritage and image based institutions. They offer a variety of services that include hosting, consortium, and your own site license. Some of the features they offer for the end user are zooming, exporting to PowerPoint, crosswalks with Flickr, and can be displayed on mobile devices.³ They also offer search optimization, OAI-PMH compliancy, RSS feeds, and authorization options that include LDAP, Open LDAP and Shibboleth. ⁴ Luna Imaging also provides a free service called Image Alliance, which is intended as a DAMS for educational use only, with limitations of up to 20GB storage.

EmbARK Gallery Systems, like LUNA Imaging, have a variety of ways you can configure your DAMS. EmbARK has a Web Kiosk that provides a zoomify feature for images. EmbARK configures data formats such as CDWA Lite with Web Kiosk XML templates ⁵ and offer two cataloguing tools for collections management—EmbARK with Web Kiosk and The Museum System. Their TMS 2010 software is geared towards content and highlighting specific events, artifacts, or collections, while using a powerful cataloguing tool. ⁶

All the open-source and fee-based DAMS options offer controlled vocabularies in either LCSH, DC, VRA Core 3.0 or 4.0, or custom fields that would greatly help with maintaining a high level of user-generated metadata. The danger, however, is in too strict vocabularies when they do not allow for changing media types. Especially when dealing with media in the field of fine art, design, and craft, controlled vocabularies may inhibit good cataloging because they are too narrow. There are a number of other DAMS options that are free and open-source and fee subscription based that are similar to those discussed above including CONTENTdm, Fedora Commons and IntraLibrary. The DAMS we chose to discuss were based on smooth end-user interfaces, number of possible customizations (including plugins and add-ons), and the ease of installation.

Resources:

- ARTstor's Shared Shelf -- <http://www.artstor.org/shared-shelf/s-html/shared-shelf-home.shtml>
 - DSpace -- <http://www.dspace.org/>
 - EmbARK -- <http://www.gallerysystems.com/>
 - Fedora Commons -- <http://fedora-commons.org/>
 - IntraLibrary -- <http://www.intrallect.com/>
 - LUNA Imaging -- <http://www.luna-imaging.com/>
 - MDID -- <http://sites.jmu.edu/mdidhelp/>
 - Omeka -- <http://omeka.org/>
1. ARTstor's Shared Shelf, Overview, <http://www.artstor.org/shared-shelf/s-html/shared-shelf-home.shtml>, September 18, 2012
 2. ARTstor's Shared Shelf, Fees for Shared Shelf, <http://www.artstor.org/subscribe/s-html/fee-ss.shtml>, September 18, 2012
 3. LUNA Imaging, Features, <http://www.lunaimaging.com/luna/features.html>, September 18, 2012
 4. *ibid*
 5. EmbARK Gallery Systems, Web Kiosk, <http://www.gallerysystems.com/web-kiosk>, September 18, 2012
 6. EmbARK Gallery Systems, The Museum System, <http://www.gallerysystems.com/tms>, September 18, 2012

Visual Resources Emerging Professionals and Students (VREPS)

By Allison Olsen (University of New Hampshire)
and Alyx Rossetti (Getty Vocabulary Program)

Our Favorite Job Resources

Welcome to the new Visual Resources Emerging Professionals and Students (VREPS)

column! As emerging professionals ourselves, we are hoping to join the conversation by highlighting issues that may be of interest to the VRA's newer members and by communicating these issues to the broader community.

As we all know, one of the most pressing issues facing students and emerging professionals in any field is the ever intimidating and anxiety inducing "job hunt." In this introductory column, we will briefly describe some of the strategies and resources that have been most helpful to us.

The VREPS Blog

In addition to being a resource for internship and job postings, the VREPS blog provides links to many interesting and helpful resources for those preparing to enter a currently struggling job market. A July post titled "What specific skills should a Digital Asset Management professional have today?" provides a link to a terrific article by Henrik de Gyor highlighting a number of important personal and professional skills for VREPS to cultivate. An April post describes Stephen X. Flynn's Open Cover Letters project, a website that makes real, successful cover letters used by hired librarians and archivists available online. This is a very valuable resource, as drafting a cover letter can be one of the most frustrating and challenging parts of the application process. To make the most of these positive examples, or to submit your own successful cover letter to the site, visit www.opencoverletters.com.

Listservs

Although the sheer volume of email generated by these lists can be frustrating for some, the value of subscribing to listservs far outweighs the few minutes it takes to delete emails that are not relevant to your situation. Finding out about the lists offered by your library school and the professional associations you belong to is a great first step in the job hunting process. Subscribing to listservs will not only expose you to a number of job postings, it will also help you to stay informed of current issues within the profession (which may be discussed in an interview) and to familiarize yourself with the names and positions of other members of the community (many of whom may have profiles on LinkedIn.)

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is like Facebook for the professional world! It is useful for finding jobs, networking, recruiting, creating an online presence, and finding job-hunting support through group discussions. LinkedIn is a great way to do background research on a company, allowing you to identify both current employees and those previously hired into open positions. It also allows you to cement new contacts made at conferences, workshops, or other gatherings, prolonging discussions and ensuring that you stay in touch. When job hunting, we found the group discussion boards incredibly helpful for job application and interview advice as well as emotional support. Groups that we recommend are: the Visual Resources Association, INALJ (I need a Library Job), Librarians in the Job Market, Job Skills for Future Library Careers, the Special Libraries Association, and Historians, Librarians, and Archivists.

INALJ (I Need a Library Job)

If you are looking for a job in the library world, you must explore www.INALJ.com. This website is extensive and includes a daily jobs digest that can be sent to your email, links to job sites, "job hunt" related articles and interviews with library professionals who have recently found work. We especially like the approach of the articles and job digests, as they encourage new professionals to think outside of the box by listing non-traditional library jobs that may help emerging professionals get much needed experience (and money) while traditional opportunities are scarce.

We hope that the above resources will inspire and revitalize all of you VREPS out there and we will continue to report on employment resources and educational opportunities in future VREPS columns. We welcome your comments, suggestions, feedback, and column submissions, so please feel free to contact us and get involved!

Upcoming Conferences

Submitted by Brooke Sansosti (Reed College)
and Kelly Smith (Lafayette College)

Information, Interaction, Innovation: Celebrating the Past, Constructing the Present and Creating the Future

American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T)
October 26 – 30, 2012
Baltimore, Maryland
<http://asist.org/asist2012/>

Digital Book Summit

October 13, 2012
Olin College, Needham, MA
http://digitalcommons.olin.edu/digital_book_summit/

Shifting Perspectives, Evolving Spaces, Disruptive Technologies

Museum Computer Network (MCN)
November 7 – 10, 2012
Seattle, Washington
<http://www.mcn.edu/mcn-2012-annual-conference>

Feminist Art History Conference 2012

November 9-11, 2012
American University, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.american.edu/cas/art-history/femconf/index.cfm>

Consume: Respond - Digital Engagement with Art

Computers and the History of Art (CHArt)
November 15 – 16, 2012 London, England
<http://www.chart.ac.uk/>

Innovating e-Learning 2012

JISC (formerly Joint Information Systems Committee)
November 19 – 23, 2012
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearningpedagogy/elconference12.aspx>

Introduction to Metadata

JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)
November 22, 2012
<http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/training/event/introduction-to-image-metadata>

8th International Digital Curation Conference (DCC)

January 14 – 16, 2013
Mövenpick Hotel, Amsterdam City Centre, Amsterdam
<http://www.dcc.ac.uk/events/idcc13>

BTEC Professional Certificate in Digital Imaging

(JISC)
January 21 – 23, 2013
<http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/training/event/btec-professional-certificate-in-digital-imaging>

American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting

Seattle, Washington
January 25 – 29, 2013
<http://www.ala.org/conferencesevents/upcoming>

Video Production: Lectures and Interviews 2-Day Course

(JISC)
January 28 – 29, 2013
<http://www.jiscdigitalmedia.ac.uk/training/event/video-production-1-lectures-and-interviews>

Chairs News Regional Chapter
Submitted by Trudy Levy (Retired)

The Chairs of the VRA regional chapters have been taking advantage of the "Go-to-Meeting" services that the national VRA is providing to the chapters and other groups. We have met twice "virtually" to continue a conversation which was begun at the Conference in Albuquerque. At that time people wondered what people were archiving and how. It became clear during our first virtual meeting that current material is mostly being saved as digital files in the same form as they are created.

As one might expect we quickly got into the nitty gritty. We are now well on our way to creating recommendations for file naming, organization and topics of material, We have also discussed where to store material and have settled on using the file uploading and storing capability of MemberClicks' Chapter pages.

All of this will be compiled into the Chapter Chair Guide that the Membership Committee is bringing in line with our current use of technology. For others struggling with this same issue our proposed best practices reads as follow:

As each Chapter creates digital files for promotion, recording or general communication, it will upload the file to its Chapter page within MemberClicks, or some other central storage area provided by the national VRA if and when that should occur. This file will be considered each Chapter's archival copy. The chapters are also encouraged to post current material on their own communication system.

We propose the following file naming standards with the goal of indexing by sorting on file name as that is what is available at this.

[CHAP]_[Topic]_[Date]

Date format to be either yyyy-mm-dd or [yyyy]QTR{#}

The subject for our next meeting in October will be "how to set up our chapter pages / archival space within Memberclicks" using Go-To-Meeting to demonstrate. The Chairs are also taking advantage of the listserv capability offered by Memberclicks, to continue the conversation and share research between meetings.

The Membership Committee is grateful to the Regional Chapter Chairs for taking this time to resolve some confusing issues as a group, whose resolutions we will compile as part of the Chapter Chair Guide to preserve for future chairs.