



# **VRA Archives Task Force II**

## **Final Report**



February 2016

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## Introduction

Since its inception the Visual Resources Association has actively saved artifacts that document its origins, its publications, its conferences, and its history. Those artifacts were typically in the form of papers along with some ephemera that have been kept in storage under the care of the VRA Archivist. More recently those documents are being produced in digital form, creating a new layer of complexity in the care of these records. The efforts to preserve digital records presents very different challenges for the VRA. In many ways, digital records are far more ephemeral than their analog counterparts, requiring specialized knowledge, tools, and procedures to ensure that they survive more than a decade.

## Background

The VRA Executive Board has wrestled for some time with the question of how to best archive and preserve its records, communications, and the various products of the work of the organization. In 2006 a Task Force was formed to address a series of questions surrounding the physical papers and archival holdings of the organization. That group produced a report that recommended policies for the VRA archive and also focused on the VRA Bulletin as a principal asset in the VRA's collection. An additional section detailed other types of materials in the collection. That report is included here as Appendix I.

In the time since that report was produced, the shift to an all-digital environment gained significant momentum and the paper materials in the VRA archive became superseded largely by electronic versions. Much of the material in the collection is certainly still of historical value to the organization and potentially of value to a future researcher. Currently however, those same types of documents are produced and used digitally. While still of value, electronic resources require a different approach and standards to properly maintain a functioning archive.

In addition, there are large amounts of material that are routinely created by the VRA as its members conduct their operations. These materials require deliberation as to the merits of preserving them. Older versions of web pages, email threads, social media output, and online discussions within the organization's project management software are all examples of these new materials. The daily chatter of the organization was not under consideration for preservation at the time of the first Task Force.

Recognizing these issues, the Executive Board decided to convene a second Task Force in 2013 and asked it to examine the digital preservation environment and make recommendations on how the electronic products of the organization could be best archived.

To develop a set of recommendations for establishing an archive for managing and making accessible born digital VRA records. The recommendations should address policies, procedures and schedules for retention, standard archival best practices, including format and submission guidelines and resources required for the management of the archive. ***The 2006-2007 Archives Task Force report should be used as a starting point. The first priority of the Task Force is to address an archive of born digital or digitized materials, with a lower priority given to the current physical archive contained in a storage facility.*** The Task Force will become informed about the archives programs of other organizations. Additionally, the Task Force will recommend the scope of work for a paid **consultants or interns** to advise the Association on policies and to develop a step by step working plan to implement the archive. Options for hosting and managing the VRA Archive will be included in the recommendations. Decisions for implementing standards, guidelines, and systems will require board approval.

### Task Force Membership:

Marcia Focht, Curator of Visual Resources, Binghamton University, Co-Chair  
Brian Shelburne, Head, Image Collection Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Co-Chair  
Stephanie Beene, Art & Architecture Librarian, University of New Mexico  
Marie Elia, Archivist, Poetry Collection, University at Buffalo  
Kelcy Shepherd, Head, Digital Programs, Amherst College  
Molly Tighe, Archivist & Public Services Librarian, Chatham University  
Emily Vigor, Environmental Design Collections Archivist, University of California at Berkeley

### External consultation

As the Task Force was being formed, a member of the Executive Board who also served as a member of the Task Force suggested that the VRA Archive could be the subject of a project for a course offered at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Information. The course, Introduction to Electronic and Digital Records, taught by Prof. Patricia Galloway, examined issues of digital preservation and took particular interest in how organizations could manage their digital content. Teams of students enrolled in the course examined different organizations as case studies and created detailed reports with recommendations for those organizations. After some discussion between then-VRA President Jolene de Verges and Prof. Galloway, it was decided that the VRA would serve as a case study organization for the class.

It should be noted the University of Texas students included the VRA Foundation as part of their case study. The VRAF materials were discussed on occasion by the Task Force, but those materials were not specifically part of the charge to the Task Force. Because of that, the Task Force did not examine the VRAF in specific detail. The recommendations by the University of Texas class and the comments by the Task Force could also extend to the VRAF.

These steps were taken during the formation of the Task Force, so as that group began to do its work there was a parallel group examining the same issues. Ultimately the use of the University of Texas students was quite effective, and they produced a detailed report (henceforth, the Texas

Report) of recommendations for the organization to follow as it moved to implement a digital preservation plan.

While the Task Force membership recognized the student project work as positive and desirable, the presence of that group created a challenge of identity and purpose for the Task Force. There was no coordination between the two groups as each began their work. The Task Force never knew precisely what the student group was doing as it conducted its examination. One of the Task Force chairs would regularly answer detailed questions posed by the leader of the student group, and the students had access to the communications and documents of the Task Force. Apart from this, the Texas students conducted their work independently.

Not wanting to duplicate the work of the University of Texas student group, the Task Force attempted to examine aspects of the problem that may not be examined by the students. Without progress updates from the students, or without their plan of action, it was difficult to know what they intended to address and what they intended to leave unexamined. Developing a meaningful plan of action was difficult until the work of the student group had concluded.

When the Texas group delivered their report, it was extremely thorough. They had carefully considered all aspects of the VRA's digital output and to some degree the workflows that create this material. They made many recommendations for creation of an idealized archive in which all of the VRA's digital materials, from the communications of the Executive Board regarding certain issues to the VRA Conference presentations posted to SlideShare, to the daily chatter on the VRA listserv, would be preserved and ultimately made available.

## The University of Texas Report and its Recommendations

The report generated by the students in the University of Texas course was quite effective in depicting the organization and its challenges with regard to preserving its digital materials. With access to most of the VRA's organizational documents from the recent past, the Texas students created a profile of the organization and found quotes within the documents to reinforce the benefits of following their recommendations. The report outlined most of the types of materials generated by the organization in the course of its operations and developed its recommendations based on the notion that all of these materials should be preserved.

The report made seven recommendations for the VRA to follow. Since the Texas Report addresses so many of the issues in the Task Force's charge, the Task Force decided that the most effective way it could fulfill the charge was to add commentary and qualifications to the Texas Report recommendations. The full report is attached in its entirety as Appendix II, but the recommendations of the University of Texas class are listed here to allow for comments by the Task Force. The recommendations from the Texas Report are:

- Establish a trusted digital repository or pursue an archival partnership
- Create a records management plan and records retention schedule
- Create position of Digital Archivist
- Upgrade Basecamp and export files
- Determine a preservation strategy for current and future websites
- Determine a preservation strategy for VRA listserv

- Determine a preservation strategy for social media content

### *Establish a trusted digital repository or pursue an archival partnership*

The Task Force agrees with the first recommendation. The VRA should either work to establish a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) or pursue an archival partnership with another institution. Of the two options, it is the opinion of the Task Force that the latter is a far more pragmatic approach for the organization. Currently the VRA has neither the required finances nor the labor at its disposal to establish and maintain a central location into which all its electronic output is placed and maintained according to best practices. The Texas Report suggests the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an appropriate institution to house the VRA's collections due to its interest in housing materials from library-related organizations. UIUC currently houses the documents of the ALA, the SLA, and ARLIS/NA.

The Task Force made inquiries with the Archives at UIUC concerning placement of the VRA archives in their care. They are tentatively interested in hosting the materials. They have many preliminary questions that must be answered by the Executive Board or by a Board appointee who has authority to begin implementing a preservation plan.

The Texas Report notes that the first VRA Archives Task Force Report from 2008 recommends against locating our physical materials with another institution for a variety of reasons. While the current Task Force was not charged with making recommendations on the paper archival materials, it is clear from preliminary inquiries with the University of Illinois that they would want all of our materials, paper and electronic as part of one agreement. In initial conversations with UIUC they had more questions concerning the nature of our paper materials than our digital materials. Regardless of which repository the VRA may decide to use, there must be a clause in the contract stipulating that the repository will be required to manage all electronic and web-based materials. The VRA may also consider stipulating that the collection of those materials will also be the responsibility of the repository.

It is likely that the separation that the VRA sees between its paper and electronic output will not be recognized as practical by any institution approached to house the organizational records. The VRA should re-evaluate its decision to maintain its own paper archive as a unit distinct from any repository for its electronic records.

### *Create a records management plan and records retention schedule*

The Task Force agrees with this recommendation and recognizes that having policies to determine the types of materials to be collected and a timing schedule for the collection of those materials is a crucial piece of the preservation effort. This step has been a recommendation of every group that has examined the question of archiving the VRA materials.

The Task Force drafted an outline for such a policy and procedures to provide a possible framework as connections were made with likely host institutions (see Appendix III). In the process of creating that document the Task Force realized that there were many questions that required decisions from the Executive Board in order to turn this framework of a policy into a formal plan.

### *Create position of Digital Archivist*

The Task Force agrees with the recommendation to create a position of Digital Archivist. The Texas Report refers to the position as an officer, but in the context of the VRA that term connotes an Executive Board level position. The Texas group likely did not mean for the position to sit on the Executive Board, but for the sake of clarity the Task Force recommends that the position be an appointee of the Board.

The Texas Report does not recommend any specific qualifications for the appointee, but the Task Force believes that because of the special needs of digital preservation any appointee must have training in the archiving of electronic materials. It is also a suggestion of the Task Force that the Digital Archivist position be term limited in order that one person does not become burdened excessively with the responsibility of processing the organization's materials over a long period of time.

The Texas Report recommends creating a separate position of Digital Archivist to distinguish from the existing Archivist position. The first VRA Archives Task Force recommended one Archivist position that dealt with all forms of materials. During the initial stages of establishing the policies and workflows for the archiving of the materials the Task Force seconds the recommendation of the Texas Report. Due to the complexity of the materials it will be necessary for one person to work with the digital materials exclusively. After patterns have been established it may be possible to consolidate the positions into one. That may also be necessary depending on the relationship with a potential repository. It is likely that any institution that will host the VRA archive will prefer to work with one person.

The Texas Report suggests that it would be prudent to hire a professional archivist to assist with the creation of a retention schedule and policy. The Task Force believes that this idea is sensible. The Task Force notes that the VRA has many members with archival training and it may be possible to find a temporary part-time contract archivist or even enlist volunteers from the membership to help with the development of policies and a plan. The Texas Report also suggests using a graduate student in an internship as another alternative.

The Task Force recommends that the Executive Board act on this recommendation as one of its first actions in the process so that person can assist in the development of the preservation plan and its policies. The person in that position will also be best suited to investigate possibilities for repositories for the VRA archives. They should follow up with the University of Illinois and investigate other potential sites as well.

### *Upgrade Basecamp and export files*

The Texas Report recommends upgrading the VRA's project management software from Basecamp Classic to the more current version. This has been in process for some time. New projects created in Basecamp are created in the current version, and previously existing projects are being converted as time allows.

The Texas Report notes that it is not possible to export the Writeboards of a project from the Basecamp Classic versions. Writeboards are the collected threads of individual messages that were

created in the course of working on a particular project. While it is the tendency to want to preserve every aspect of a project, the Task Force suggests that if it is a cumbersome process to preserve the Writeboards, it may be more practical to save the final decisions and actions associated with a project rather than the train of thought that led to those decisions and actions.

#### *Determine a preservation strategy for current and future websites*

The Task Force agrees with this recommendation. The Texas Report suggested that the VRA develop a new website that incorporated a plan to archive versions of that site. The report was completed after the website had been migrated to the new version, so preservation elements suggested by the report were not built into the design of the current website. It is probable that the organization has access to previous versions of the website for the purposes of archiving, but it is not certain. Nor is it clear if our website hosting service offers versioning.

The Task Force also agrees with the Texas Report's statement that the VRA must decide how much of the website should be earmarked for preservation. The Texas Report observed that the previous version of the site was inconsistent in its designs and menus. The current version of the website is more consistent in its design. If the organization intends to archive the previous version of the website, the question arises whether to preserve the entire site as it appeared or to preserve only the content. The Texas Report also poses the question of whether social media communications should be preserved as part of the website. In addition to the social media channels, the organization uses other third party software for various tasks, such as SCHED for conference scheduling. The organization must determine if it wants to preserve those as well.

Given the limited resources of the organization and the challenges involved with preserving the original context of the site, the Task Force suggests that the VRA concentrate on archiving the content only unless it involves minimal effort to preserve the original websites as well.

#### *Determine a preservation strategy for VRA listserv*

The Texas Report recommends eventually transferring the archived content from the VRA listserv to the same repository that houses the rest of the VRA's digital materials. The Report also poses a series of questions for the University of Arkansas IT department concerning the preservation policies in place. The Task Force agrees with the Texas Report.

#### *Determine a preservation strategy for social media content*

The Texas Report recommends the VRA evaluate its social media use for preservation and develop a policy. Earlier in the report is a mention of possibly including these postings with the website. Should the VRA decide not to follow that path, the report outlines the archiving options available through the individual sites used. These options are all viable, though there are possible downsides. All will require someone to archive the materials actively on each site independently, and some of the sites will require an upgrade to use the archiving functions. Using the preservation services of each individual piece of software will require more effort to archive the information and it will be scattered across various locations outside of direct VRA control.



If the VRA contracts with a repository to host its materials, that repository will likely provide access to tools or preferable methods for gathering and selecting social media, listserv, and email content. They may also make recommendations for what materials should be selected for preservation. If this is the case the Digital Archivist can evaluate the recommendations of the repository and devise workflows that satisfy the repository's requirements.

The report also suggests using SocialBckup to consolidate the posts from major social media outlets into one place. Should the effort of compiling or harvesting all the social media content be too great for the organization, the Task Force suggests an alternative for consideration. Rather than archiving all of the social media sites separately the VRA might consider using Twitterfall or a similar tool to capture the sense of a VRA social media event without preserving all of the individual messages. This is not considered best practice in the archival world, but it would provide a quick and simple way to preserve the essence of conversations. As with many other aspects of the Digital output of the organization, the Digital Archivist and the Executive Board will need to come to a determination of the level of granularity of the information that should be preserved.

## Conclusion

Establishing and sustaining a viable digital preservation program requires a significant commitment of resources. The recommendations of the Texas Report establish a foundation on which the VRA can begin to develop a preservation policy for its born-digital materials. The VRA Archives Task Force has been able to review these recommendations and qualify and refine them with the benefit of having some knowledge of the workings and resources of the organization.

The implementation of the recommendations presented in this document and in the Texas Report will require more deliberation on the part of the Executive Board. In order to maximize the use of the resources of the organization and not overreach the organization's capabilities, the Board must make many decisions on broad questions that will provide direction for the Digital Archivist. Some of these are listed below, and there will be many more.

## Questions for the Board

Will the VRA seek an institutional partner to house the VRA materials?

Should the paper materials go into the archive along with the electronic materials?

What will be the level of access for the VRA materials?

What documents will be restricted and for how long?

How will the organization handle the digital archivist position? A short term hire? A student/intern? A volunteer?

Does the organization preserve all email and Writeboards associated with projects or only the end results?

What does our website hosting service offer in terms of versioning and access to previous website designs?

Should previous website designs be preserved or just the content?

Will social media be preserved as part of our website or independently?

Will social media communications be preserved in their entirety or in more of a digest form?

Does the organization wish to preserve all things used in other software (e.g. SCHED)?

## Appendix I – VRA Archives Task Force I – Final Report

### Archives Task Force Recommendations and Discussion:

This committee wishes to thank Macie Hall, Martine Sherrill, John Taormina and Mark Pompelia for their work in preparing and moving the contents of the physical archive from Durham to Wake Forest in 2006, and recognizes their efforts to begin the process of managing the VRA Archive to comply with current professional standard of physical and electronic organization for access and use.

#### The Bulletin and Special Bulletins

The committee first addressed management of The Bulletin and Special Bulletins, as it was deemed the most pressing need by Archivist Martine Sherrill. Current and recent past Bulletin Editors, Mark Pompelia and John Taormina, respectively, were invited to participate in the online discussion with this committee concerning the issues of management of Bulletin hard copies, archiving policies, electronic migration and access. It is recommended that these policies be coordinated between the Bulletin Editor, the Special Bulletin Editor, the Public Relations and Communications Officer and Archivist.

#### Summary:

##### 1. Electronic Versions

- Confirm definition of “record” copy (final published version)

- Current and Future (begin with Vol. 34)

- 1996 -2007 (all volumes existing in pdf format- begin with V.23#2)

  - Conversion from Pagemaker to Indesign:

    - Bulletin Editor to oversee workflow – possible out-source?

  - \*Organization: work flow to be defined; add to VRA Web as processed

  - Bulletin editor to begin placing past issues online beginning with the most recent volumes.

- Pre-1996: Scan and convert to pdf

  - Set technical specifications for scanning

  - Workflow to be defined, coordinate policy with PPG

  - out-sourcing or in-house hire recommended, rather than grant

    - (research cost, compare to effort for a grant)

- Archival storage of all:

  - Consider content and format

  - Non-proprietary format; prefer XML marked up plain text; pdf acceptable currently

  - Archives: redundant off-site - external hard drive – define format

  - Bulletin Editor: completed issues on external hard drive

##### 2. Access

- Current and Future electronic versions

  - Member: download from VRA website

Non-member: download from VRA website for a fee  
Previous versions treated similarly as they are converted; work-flow to proceed from current and work gradually back to first issue.

Print versions:

Keep 10 copies for each for a to-be defined period of time; to deal with claims and sales.

Suggested policy for dealing with claims: starting with the first electronic Publication, none will be honored earlier than the previous 5 years.

3. Policy for Re-use (compilation, presentation or new publication)

Although this is not necessarily an archive issue, it is pertinent as part of a digitization policy in general.

PPG and Bulletin Editor coordinate policies for re-use; recognizing that the responsibility for permissions and copyright rest with the individual creators.

Formulate a statement for the submitter: all submitted materials will be kept in electronic format in the VRA Archive.

4. Print Versions

Archive two copies of each issue.

Recycle backstock of >10 copies; Archivist to begin immediately.

5. Documentation of Bulletin history (digitization not recommended)

Schedule of transfer to archive:

Documentation of strategic direction of editorial board

Correspondence

Submissions

Advertisers

6. Financial documents

Originals with purchaser for documentation, currently Rice or VRA

\*Confirm housing of duplicates (editor, treasurer, archivist)

\*confirm with treasurer the 7-year rule for keeping these documents.

## **Inventory and Archive Space**

The committee recommends the following:

Support Archivist Martine Sherrill's 2009 budget request for \$200-\$300 to purchase a 2-level top table, chair, light & stepladder to allow her to work functionally in the archive space. Working without proper lighting, work surface and ease of physical access to

materials is deemed a hindrance to the completion of the inventory and management of the physical content.

The archivist will update the content list from the previous version and will have discussion with the Board to consider hiring a part-time archivist to create a baseline descriptive level finding aid on the website to institute standardized terms and titles for the records, so that the finding aid is consistent and non-redundant (comparable to the standardized program now used by the treasurer). Following the completion of the online finding aid, the archivist should institute a call for items and/or item search to the membership.

A membership in the Society of American Archivists (SAA) should be maintained for the VRA Archivist to facilitate following current archive standards.

The VRA archivist charge, description and responsibilities should be updated to address the issues of electronic migration, records retention and access schedules.

### **Archiving Policies**

Update the Archiving Policy as found in the officer's handbook with the inclusion of a records retention policy and schedule for each committee, defining them as either intellectual or physical (see SAA guidelines online for sample lengths of time for record types). Define difference between access and archiving - each committee chair should review their records in this light: ex: a conference poster and its electronic version. Each committee chair should then be responsible for uploading each scheduled record to the archivist according to the schedule, and to the website provider.

### **Access to Sensitive Materials**

It is recommended that the board consider the use of a record management template with access restrictions on any records set by the board with recommendations from committee chair and managed by a Filemaker-type template for category levels: Ex: X people can see X items after and/or for X years....and, after X years, the hard copy and/or electronic version disappears.

The VRA Board, with input from the VRA committee chairs, should ultimately determine which documents are sensitive and if and when access to these documents is appropriate to which membership category. Ex: board meeting tapes, board meeting minutes, unpublished correspondence etc.

It is noted that for non-profit organizations, the decision to make available board agendas or minutes is discretionary and exceptions to access by members is set by the board. Classified documents need not be held in perpetuity, rather they should better be considered time-sensitive and could become available to members according to an access schedule.

## **Accessibility**

The VRA archives should not be housed at another institution as other institutions often have a legal say in issues of access and restrictions which may not coincide with VRA policies. After an inventory is completed and the records retention policies are set, the VRA may consider physical housing for certain items with this in mind.

The VRA Archivist should research and institute reasonable fees for a request for a hard copy of a record based on fees charged by like associations, and coordinate a method of payment with the treasurer.

Consider the use of an electronic data service provider (currently VRA hosting service - ipower.com) as host for archives material so that all VRA Committees can submit approved documents to the archivist for upload to this server via ftp.

Intellectual access to this finding aid for non-publication items should be available online through the VRA website; appropriately on either the members-only section or public section.

It is noted that there is currently a debate among archivists as to the acceptability of the PDF format as a long-term software format. PDF is currently acceptable if conversion to electronic format is all that is desired, but if the desire is to provide not only access but searchability, then mark up with XML or OCR plain text indexing is required. It is recommended that the board, in discussion with the Bulletin and Special Bulletin Editor, the Public Relations and Communications Officer and Archivist consider options other than PDF for publications or certain document types. This may be necessary if a decision is made to consider the use of a data management provider for electronic storage, rather than CD's or external hard drives residing with the Archivist.

## **Member Survey**

A survey to the membership for consideration of intellectual and physical access to the archives is deemed to be premature at this time. The priorities for establishment of archive policies and practices as outlined above should take precedence, and once policies, retention schedules, organization, finding aids and online access are created, it could be considered at that time.

## **Addendum**

### **VRA Archivist Description**

Title: VRA Archivist

Reporting To: VRA Executive Board

#### **Description:**

The VRA Archivist is responsible for managing all aspects of the VRA's archival collection of print material, photographs and electronic media, including but not limited to the acquisition, appraisal, access and preservation of these records. These materials are significant to the Association and comprise almost 25 years of the association's corporate history.

#### **Responsibilities:**

The Archivist negotiates the acquisition of material with the relevant providers (executive officers, committee chairs, and appointees), describes, processes, catalogs, and preserves manuscript and oral collections. Responsible for developing, enhancing and revising procedures and policies relating to all aspects of collection management, including acquisition and access, processing and storage, security and preservation policies. Processes collections and maintains a guide to the collection (in paper and online formats); provides occasional reference services for manuscript and archival material.

The Archivist develops and tracks metrics for the collection, including accessions, access, storage and growth projections, and communicates activities in midyear and annual reports.

#### **Qualifications:**

Familiarity with the management of a growing archival collection of both print and electronic records is desirable. The ability to travel to the collection site in Durham, NC at least twice a year and to perform physical activities associated with archival environment will be necessary.

## **Archivist: Officers' Handbook**

### **IX. VRA ARCHIVES**

The VRA Archives includes the items listed on the following page and has been housed at the University of Michigan in Dearborn, under the supervision of Marlene Gordon.

#### **General Files**

Constitution, Bylaws, Amendments (all revisions) Permanent  
Meeting Minutes Permanent  
Association History, establishment & early growth Permanent  
Membership Lists, Directories Permanent  
Memorials & Awards Permanent  
Obituaries of officers, directors, etc. Permanent  
Publicity - clippings, articles about assoc. or its membership Permanent  
Legal Documents Permanent  
Workshops Permanent

#### **Officers Files**

Roster of Officers and Committee Members Permanent  
Executive Board Meeting Minutes, Reports, Correspondence Permanent  
President  
Annual Report (if one exists) Permanent  
Correspondence Permanent<sup>\*\*1</sup>  
Reports from Committees Permanent  
Vice President  
Annual Report (if one exists) Permanent  
Treasurer  
Annual Report Permanent  
General Ledger Permanent  
Bank Statements, Checks, Passbooks, other Acct. Records 7 Yrs. & Current  
Other Officers  
Reports Permanent  
Correspondence Permanent<sup>\*\*</sup>  
Committees  
Reports Permanent  
Correspondence Permanent<sup>\*\*</sup>  
**Publications Files**  
VRA Bulletin and all superseding publications Permanent  
Slide Buyer's Guide Permanent  
All Special Bulletins Permanent  
MACAA, CAA, CAA/VRA publications Permanent

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<sup>1</sup>Permanent unless mundane, routine, i.e. requests, thank you notes, etc.

#### **Conference Files**

Workshops, association-wide meetings Permanent  
(save programs, speeches, schedules, etc. **not** travel plans, reservations)

#### **Professional Standards/Status Files**

Surveys, published findings, recommendations, etc. Permanent

#### **Special Projects Files**

Keep all Permanent<sup>\*\*</sup>

#### **Nancy DeLaurier Files**

Reports Permanent  
Correspondence Permanent<sup>\*\*</sup>

## **Photographs Files**

All association related photographs, also would include AV materials Permanent

## **Memorabilia/Realia Files**

T-shirts, posters, fliers, etc. Permanent

## **Regional Chapters**

Newsletters Permanent

Meeting announcements Permanent

Reports Permanent

[Transcriber's Note: In 2000, the Archivist's Guidelines were revised slightly. That revision follows below.]

## **ARCHIVING POLICY STATEMENT**

What follows is an outline of the documents that accumulate in the course of regular Association business. The determination of what is saved, and what is discarded, should be affected in consultation with the Association's Archivist. For the foreseeable future, materials to be archived should be hard copy, in the case of routine correspondence, contracts, and publications; and appropriately formatted disks or CDs, in the case of electronic media. It should become the ongoing duty of the Archivist to migrate electronic data as necessary. The records particular to each Board office, including the Officers Handbook and copies of routine correspondence, should be passed from Officer to Officer as terms end, the Past President transferring records to the President-elect. The records particular to each Committee Chair or Regional Chapter Chair should be similarly transferred.

I. Occasionally. These items should be sent to the Archivist as they are published or change.

- A. Special bulletins
- B. Association brochures
- C. Special "inserts" (such as the "Criteria," "Guidelines," and so on)
- D. Official correspondence, that is, any letters beyond what is routine business (letters to the heads of other organizations would fall into this category)
- E. Letterhead
- F. Certificate templates
- G. General Officers Handbook
- H. Bylaws
- I. Committee charges
- J. Any and all contracts signed on behalf of the Association
- K. Copyright transfers and waivers

II. Annually. These items should be sent to the Archivist once a year, as they are published or available.

- A. Conference materials
  - 1. Hotel contract
  - 2. Conference program
  - 3. Conference particulars, such as badges, lists of NTR participants, lists of conference attendees, and so on
  - 4. Download of the conference web site
  - 5. Official photographs (which should be properly labeled)
- B. Directory of Members
  - 1. List of Committee Chairs and Committee members
  - 2. List of Regional Chapter officers
  - 3. List of Honorary Life Members
  - 4. List of award recipients (Distinguished Service, Nancy DeLaurier Writing, Tansey, and so on)



5. List of Executive Board members

C. Financial records

1. Fiscal year budget

2. Conference budget

3. Tax records

4. Non-profit organization statement

5. Donor lists and contact information

III. Semi-annually. These items should be sent to the Archivist twice a year, after the Board's meetings.

A. Committee reports

B. Regional Chapter reports

C. Officers reports

D. Reports of the Archivist, Web Master, Listserv Moderator, and other Board appointees

E. Minutes of the Board's meetings

F. Download of the VRA web site

IV. Quarterly

A. *Visual Resources Association Bulletin*

B. Download of the electronic *Bulletin*

**Visual Resources Association  
Archives Statement  
Revised 2002**

- I. Quarterly
  - A. Visual Resources Association Bulletin (VRA Bulletin Editor)
  - B. Download of electronic Bulletin (VRA Bulletin Editor)
  
- II. Semi-annually
  - A. Executive Board minutes (Secretary)
  - B. Officers Reports (Secretary)
  - C. Committee Chair Reports (Secretary)
  - D. Regional Chapter Chair Reports (Secretary)
  - E. Archivist, Listserv Moderator, Web Editor, Web Master and other Board appointees Reports (Secretary)
  - F. VRA web site download (Web Master)
  
- III. Annually (or whenever published)
  - A. Conference Materials (Vice-President or as noted)
    - 1. Hotel Contact
    - 2. Conference Program
    - 3. Conference particulars, such as badges, lists of NTR participants, conference attendees list, etc.
    - 4. Download of the conference web site (Web Master)
    - 5. Official photographs (properly labeled)
  
  - B. Directory of Members (Membership Director)
    - 1. List of Executive Board Members
    - 2. List of Committee Chair and Committee Members
    - 3. List of Regional Chapter Officers
    - 4. List of Award Recipients (Distinguished Service, Nancy deLaurier Writing, Tansey, etc.
    - 5. List of Honorary Life Members
  
  - C. Financial Records (Treasurer)
    - 1. Fiscal Year Budget
    - 2. Conference Budget
    - 3. Tax Records
    - 4. Non-profit Organization Statement
    - 5. Donor Lists and Contact Information

- IV. Occasionally (as published or changed)
  - A. Special Bulletins (Special Bulletin Editor)
  - B. Association Brochures (Bulletin Editor?)
  - C. Occasional Publications (such as the “Criteria” ; Bulletin Editor)
  - D. Official Correspondence (letters beyond what is routine business, such as letters to heads of other organizations; part of the packet from out-going officers)
  - E. Letterhead (Bulletin Editor)
  - F. Certificate Templates (Bulletin Editor)
  - G. General Officers Handbook (Bulletin Editor?)
  - H. Bylaws (Bulletin Editor or Bylaws Committee Chair)
  - I. Committee Charges (Committee Chairs?)
  - J. Any and all contracts signed on behalf of the Association President; VP for Hotel Contracts)
  - K. Copyright Transfers and Waivers (Bulletin Editor or Special Bulletin Editor)

## **Best Practices and Policies from Other Institutions and Organizations**

### **Museum Computer Network**

The MCN finding aid to its archives (two record groups only: 1967-1988 and 1985-1989) is on the Smithsonian Institution Archives, which houses finding aids to the records of other professional societies as well. The link to the Smithsonian Institution Archives is [http://siarchives.si.edu/research/faprofessional\\_records.html](http://siarchives.si.edu/research/faprofessional_records.html) and the link to one of the MCN record groups is: <http://siarchives.si.edu/findingaids/FARU7432.htm>

### **Special Libraries Association**

The SLA website contains a wealth of information that would be of tremendous use to VRA. The link to the archives policy for the SLA division archives is: <http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/governance/Policies/43-79.cfm>

### **Society of American Archivists (SAA) Information**

As a quick update regarding the SAA archives ... the SAA has a direct link from their main webpage to the organization's records collection finding aid – the collection is housed at Univ. Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
<http://www.uwm.edu/Library/arch/findaids/uwmms172/index.html>

The finding aid gives both a history of the collection (when it was brought in, restrictions, organization of the records) and a history of the Society. great collection / organization to use as a comparison.

### **ARLIS/NA**

The following link was prepared as a guideline for both board, committees and the general membership; however, it is in need of updating as Syracuse University will no longer host the files. Handbook policies for record keeping were last revised in 2004.

<http://www.arlisna.org/organization/admindocs/archives.html>

\*\*At this point the original document contained a sample archive policy document from a small organization that was developing and archives policy. At the time that organization asked that we not share this policy widely. In deference to their original wishes, that report has not been included here.

## Appendix II – University of Texas at Austin course – Final Report

### **Business Case: Digital Preservation for the Visual Resources Association**

Prepared by:  
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Sydney Gulbranson, Stacy Hays, Timothy Mapp, and Mallorie Sayre

INF 389G: Introduction to Electronic and Digital Records

December 12, 2013

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## **Executive Summary**

The Visual Resources Association's (VRA) digital collection is of value to the organization, both as a means to facilitate its business activity and as a way to solidify institutional memory. Digital collections, if neglected, may be at risk for loss, damage, or format obsolescence. It is therefore necessary that the VRA design and implement a strategy to manage and preserve its digital materials.

As students of Dr. Patricia Galloway's "Introduction to Electronic and Digital Records" course in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin, we have created this business case in order to apply our theoretical knowledge of digital preservation to a real-world situation. Through interviews and by assessing documentation provided by the VRA, we have analyzed the internal and external factors that make the management and preservation of the VRA's digital records not only important, but also particularly timely.

This business case presents a thorough assessment of the digital archival collection held by the Visual Resources Association, examines the current risks to the collection, and discusses the benefits of preserving them. It also includes several recommendations for implementing a digital preservation system. Based on professional best practices for digital archival management and preservation, these recommendations are meant to provide practical and sustainable approaches for organizing and preserving the VRA's digital materials.



## 1. Strategic Vision

The Visual Resources Association (VRA) is an international and multidisciplinary organization for image media professionals. Established in 1982, the organization currently has a membership of over 800 professionals working in a range of fields.<sup>1</sup> The VRA is committed to furthering research and education in the area of image management in educational, cultural heritage, and commercial environments. In addition, the VRA has assumed a leadership role in the visual resources field, developing data standards and providing educational tools, publications, and events for the visual resources community. On a broader level, the VRA advocates for the value of images and image management, and addresses the professional demands associated with the emergence of new types of visual resources.<sup>2</sup> In order to fulfill these goals, the VRA carries out activities ranging from producing events such as conferences to publishing educational materials. Many of the born-digital records that result from these activities warrant preservation in the VRA archives.

The VRA has already acknowledged the need to establish more robust archival processes. This awareness is indicated by the creation of a VRA Archives Task Force, which was first charged with researching and implementing best practices for the management of the VRA Archives in 2007. The 2007 Task Force demonstrated an interest in complying with applicable legal requirements through the development of retention schedules, establishing access restrictions, and determining release schedules for sensitive information.<sup>3</sup> It also illustrated a strong desire to store digital archival materials on the VRA's electronic hosting service, so that the records would be independent of any individual institution. The 2007 Task Force identified institutional priorities as establishing foundational archival policies and practices—namely retention schedules, organization, finding aids, and online access. The task force did not survey the VRA membership about desired levels of intellectual and physical access to the archival materials, but eventually an assessment of access needs could be valuable for improving the archive. In 2013, a second task force was charged with addressing the creation and maintenance of an archive of born-digital and digitized materials, indicating the pressing need of implementing such a system. More specifically, this task force will address retention policies, archival best practices for digital formats, and the resources needed to manage and host a digital archive.<sup>4</sup>

This interest in archiving the Association's materials, and particularly its born-digital materials, is especially timely given the priorities for the organization as outlined in the 2009 Strategic Vision document. The 2009 document, which details goals to be addressed and implemented over the next seven years, has a distinct emphasis on moving toward more digital modes of communication and record-keeping. For example, one of the goals identified in the document is

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<sup>1</sup> "Introduction and a Brief History," Visual Resources Association, March 2007, [http://www.vraweb.org/organization/pdf/intro\\_history.pdf](http://www.vraweb.org/organization/pdf/intro_history.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> White Paper Task Force, "Advocating for Visual Resources Management in Educational and Cultural Institutions," Visual Resources Association, October 2009, pp 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> VRA Archives Task Force, "VRA Mid Year Report/Final Report," June 2008, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> "Visual Resources Association Archives Task Force charge," 2013.

to publish the VRA Bulletin in an electronic form only. Additionally, conference proceedings are also moving to web-accessible formats. The goal of establishing an accessible digital archiving and preservation system provides an underlying source of information for the broader 2009 goals of facilitating the transition of new organization leadership, fostering an open and inclusive member community, promoting and advocating for the VRA, and enhancing the VRA's web presence.<sup>5</sup>

The VRA Strategic Plans typically provide a five to seven year period of time to complete the specified goals. The importance of creating a digital archiving and preservation system, however, is such that a shorter timeline is highly desirable. Part of the charge of the 2013 Task Force is to realize their recommendations for a digital archiving program with measurable deliverables. As the task force is assembled for one year, a system ought to be implemented, or at the very least identified, within that time frame. Ideally, this project would be completed in two years. In order to advocate for the profession as a whole, an understanding and directed preservation of digital records of the past activities of the VRA will help to direct the organization and its efforts in the future.

## **2. Background, Context, and Status**

### *External Context*

As any digitization preservation plan is drafted, it is important to examine the influence of external factors. Part of this examination includes conducting an environmental scan of similar organizations.

In 2008, the VRA Archives Task Force reported on research conducted of the best archival practices of other institutions and organizations, which included The Special Libraries Association, the Museum Computer Network (MCN), the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the Herb Society of America (HSA), and the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS). This report indicated that the Special Libraries Association had relevant and up-to-date materials that could be of use to the VRA.<sup>6</sup> SLA revised their policies in 2009, but at that time only offered temporary storage solutions for electronic records.<sup>7</sup>

The newly created 2013 VRA Archives Task Force also chose to conduct an environmental scan. Currently, the task force is researching policies for the New England Archivists, SAA, and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archivists. The task force found that these three organizations store their

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<sup>5</sup> Leigh Gates et al, "2009 VRA Strategic Plan," Visual Resources Association, 2009.  
<http://vra.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/2009VRAStrategicPlan.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> VRA Archives Task Force, "VRA Mid Year Report / Final Report," June 2008, pp. 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Special Libraries Association, "Practices for Division Archives," 2009.  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20100706210354/http://www.sla.org/pdfs/divisionarchivespractices\\_revised2009.pdf](http://web.archive.org/web/20100706210354/http://www.sla.org/pdfs/divisionarchivespractices_revised2009.pdf).

archives at other academic institutions, and further findings will be reported at the next meeting.<sup>8</sup> The 2013 Task Force is projected to look at further organizations, similar in size and volunteer-run. They are focusing on the accessioning processes, access restrictions, and how deposits with other repositories are handled.<sup>9</sup>

Other organizations have been updating and determining their plans for handling digital materials. One organization which the VRA previously examined is the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA). Since the initial environmental scan by the VRA in 2008, ARLIS/NA has released an updated strategic plan and action plan. One goal of their 2011 strategic plan was to emphasize the importance and uniqueness of their collections and their role as stewards of their collections. An action plan was created to complement the strategic plan, and the specific actions for this goal included forming a task force to assess their electronic collections, similar to the current VRA Archives Task Force.<sup>10</sup> Like NEA, SAA, and Mid-Atlantic Regional Archivists, ARLIS houses their materials at a separate institution, the University of Illinois Archives.<sup>11</sup>

The role of digital materials within other professional organizations in the information field is ever-increasing, and many organizations and institutions are currently assessing how best to handle these born-digital and digitized materials. It is imperative that the VRA pursue that same goal, either by looking to other organizations as an example or establishing a unique system that could provide an example for other organizations. By creating a digital preservation plan, the VRA can continue to provide best practices for others facing similar issues of digital preservation.

### *Internal Context*

As a result of the previously mentioned environmental scans, the Executive Board has recognized the importance of preserving digital materials, which was not previously considered by the 2008 Archives Task Force.<sup>12</sup> The creation of the current task force denotes the VRA's preparedness to implement a digital archiving plan.

The VRA 2013 Task Force will formulate the best practices and other archival recommendations.<sup>13</sup> This will be followed by the implementation process by the VRA, which will include continual archival activities going forward. It is likely that the 2013 Task Force will face the same implementation challenges as the 2007 Task Force. Given the Association's

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<sup>8</sup> Meeting Minutes, Archives Task Force, October 24, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Molly Tighe, message in "Task Force: Archives," Basecamp project, 5 November 2013.

<sup>10</sup> "ARLIS Strategic Plan and Action Plan 2011-2015," p. 4.

<http://www.arlisna.org/organization/admindocs/planning/stratplan11-15actionsFINAL.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> "ARLIS/University of Illinois Archives," 2009. <http://archives.library.illinois.edu/arlis/index.php>.

<sup>12</sup> VRA Archives Task Force, "VRA Mid Year Report / Final Report," June 2008.

<sup>13</sup> "Visual Resources Association Archives Task Force charge," 2013.

constant creation of digital materials, the VRA will need to be prepared to assign archival responsibilities to volunteers or members.

By the very nature of the organization, many members of the VRA possess the knowledge necessary to responsibly archive digital assets. However, members are spread out geographically and have other professional responsibilities. The VRA has previously relied on volunteers to aid in the archival process.<sup>14</sup> The Association has members with the archival expertise to implement the current task force's recommendations going forward. If the budget will allow, it would be advisable for the VRA to supply paid training for volunteers on any technologies adopted for the preservation of materials, or to provide other remuneration for work performed.

When the Executive Board created sequential task forces to archive their materials, they acknowledged the VRA's need for a plan to collect and preserve the items they create. The professional knowledge and experience of the 2013 Task Force members ensures that effective recommendations will be made, which the VRA can utilize to create an archive. This business case can be used by the VRA as a beginning step in this process.

### *Understanding the Collection*

In order to carry out the Association's mission of furthering research and education in image management, the organization conducts a range of activities. The VRA publishes the VRA Bulletin, a scholarly journal, an online newsletter, an annual directory of members, and occasional Special Bulletins. The VRA also hosts a members-only listserv and multiple websites with separate public and members-only sections. The Association organizes an annual conference and co-sponsors a Summer Educational Institute in conjunction with the Art Libraries Society of North America. The Association has also worked toward being a leader in the visual resources field by creating data standards for images, including the VRA Core and the Cataloging of Cultural Objects. Through these activities, a number of digital records are generated.

There are currently no collection or retention policies formulated for the VRA. The present physical archive consists of a storage unit filled with a desk and non-archival boxes filled with items that were collected as a result of the 2007 Task Force. There is no inventory, nor are there finding aids or a catalog. Digital artifacts were not considered during previous archival planning.

The VRA is now focusing on the path ahead by deciding to do an environmental scan of similar or like organizations so that they can formulate a plan for their entire collection of documents. Moving forward, the task force will be focusing on digital artifacts and the best ways to preserve them. Most of what the Association currently creates is born-digital documents, and the challenge will be to ensure that they are effectively archived and easily accessible to all necessary members in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> Meeting Minutes, Archives Task Force, October 24, 2013.

The VRA Collection encompasses:

- Board output (internal items: meeting minutes, project work, etc. and external items: press releases, membership messages, etc.)
- Board communications: external e-mails, VRA-L communications and Basecamp communications
  - Basecamp:
    - VRA subscribes to Basecamp Classic. Account started in 2009
    - 54 projects
    - 17 “archived” projects – archived in basecamp terms means a project has been marked by an administrator as not editable
    - 799 MB of storage space used
  - Listserv
    - VRA-L is hosted by the University of Arkansas, messages are organized by year and month, starting in December 1996 to the present
- Conference planning records
- Conference output (proceedings, photos, SlideShare compilations, PowerPoints, etc.)
  - PDFs: VRA Bulletin, Brief History, Articles of Incorporation, Business meetings, Annual Reports, Leadership Guides, Sourcebook Guide, Conference Programs from 1983-2013
  - HTML: newsletter bimonthly (every two months) starting in 2004 and links to 13 committee html pages
- Committee documents: correspondence, reports (both mid-year & annual)
  - For specific formats see Conference output
- VRA publications: Special Bulletins, newsletters, etc.
  - For specific formats see Conference output
- Website, current and future versions
  - VRA domains and registration info:
    - [www.vraweb.org](http://www.vraweb.org)
      - Creation date: May 28, 2000
      - Expiration date: May 28, 2017
      - Domain name server (DNS): ipower.com
      - Administrator: Billy Kwan, Metropolitan Museum of Art
      - Tech name: Ann Woodward, Johns Hopkins University
    - [www.vraweb.org/conferences/vra32/](http://www.vraweb.org/conferences/vra32/)

- Conference web page using WordPress – a sample of what the VRA site will migrate towards using WordPress
  - [www.vrafoundation.org](http://www.vrafoundation.org)
    - Creation date: August 1, 2007
    - Expiration date: August 1, 2014
    - Domain name server (DNS): mediatemple.net
    - Contact info: private – [vrafoundation.org@contactprivacy.com](mailto:vrafoundation.org@contactprivacy.com)
- Sub-websites from [vrafoundation.org](http://vrafoundation.org) are:
  - <http://cco.vrafoundation.org> – Cataloging Cultural Objects Commons standards and instructions, includes PDFs, embedded videos
  - <http://sel.vrafoundation.org> – Summer Educational Institute, html links
  - <http://vreps.wordpress.com> – Visual Resources Association Emerging Professionals and Students
- Social Media
  - Facebook – Account created December 2008, 601 followers
  - Twitter – Account created date unknown, 364 tweets, 347 followers
  - SlideShare – Account created 2010, 196 SlideShare presentations, 50 followers
  - LinkedIn – Account created December 2009, 498 members, minimal discussions
  - Flickr
    - VRA Events – 23 members, 411 images
    - VRA photo sharing – 59 members, 2,566 image
    - VRA + ARLIS 2011 - 19 members, 184 images

All of these materials are being targeted by the VRA for preservation because they have unique and specific value to the organization and its members. For example, every conference held by the VRA creates internal documents that can facilitate the planning of future conferences as well as provide a thorough record of the event. The output from the conferences, including photos, presentations, and proceedings, are also valuable because they provide educational information to professionals working with visual resources, many of whom are members of the VRA.

Some of the VRA materials may legally require access restrictions due to the confidential nature of the documents. For example, a portion of the records will contain personal information about members, account and financial information, or ideas that the VRA does not want made public when they are mentioned (for instance, in meeting minutes). Appropriate levels of security and the development of access guidelines will be needed to be accounted for as the task force develops its plan.

## *Stakeholder Analysis*

The proposed plan will most significantly impact those members of the Visual Resources Association that are directly involved with various committees whose purpose is the management and administration of the organization. As such, these individuals are considered to be the primary stakeholders in this project. It is their documents as they contribute to the workings of the VRA that are of primary concern. Without a considered approach to storing and preserving these documents, which are themselves key to maintaining the VRA's institutional memory, their degradation and loss remains a potent risk. The proposed approach to continued preservation will account for members' access to their materials. As the VRA is an organization characterized by remote members and communication mainly occurring in virtual spaces, access to shared documents is of critical importance.

These risks, however, have already been identified and acknowledged by the VRA. Chief within the organization's membership, the members of the Archives Task Force will be instrumental in bringing about significant change and implementing a coherent preservation plan for their materials. This will ensure the continued access of materials by members relying on these records. The population of VRA members using digitally stored documents goes beyond those members directly involved in the running of the organization (i.e. board members and committee members) to the broader membership of the VRA. Even beyond the scope of the VRA membership, non-members' access to bulletins, newsletters, and conference publications is a vital means of outreach and advocacy for the VRA.

### **3. Digital Preservation Risk Analysis**

This risk analysis considers the types of materials that are outlined in the Understanding the Collection section of this report. To perform our analysis, we used the Simple Property-Oriented Threat (SPOT) Model for Risk Assessment as outlined in the D-Lib Magazine, September/October 2012. The SPOT model uses the six categories detailed below. Once the VRA decides on a direction for creating a digital repository, they may want to undertake a more specific risk analysis to ensure the digital preservation strategy they adopt functions effectively in the long term. This analysis essentially looks at the collection in its pre-repository state and identifies the threats to the records in their current state.

#### *Availability*

Because all the digital records of the VRA are currently in a "pre-repository" state they all have a substantial threat to their long-term availability. Until a strategy and procedures for digital objects are identified and preservation is enacted, this threat to their availability will exist. The current operations of the VRA indicate that electronic records are now produced and accessed in four main categories:

- 1) VRA websites
- 2) ListServs
- 3) Basecamp internal workspace
- 4) Social Media sites such as SlideShare and Flickr

All four sources depend on “cloud” storage and are dependent on access through third party services such as web hosts, subscriptions, and free (advertising based) social media. The VRA is not in direct control of the long term stability of any of these third party companies, therefore a major threat to availability exists in this dependency.

### *Identity*

The identity of digital objects is highly dependent on the metadata of these objects. The current state of the VRA’s digital records contains significant metadata that both identifies and provides context for the digital objects. Any long term strategy for preservation of these digital objects should include the capture and preservation of the metadata currently associated with these objects. For example, the preservation of the current SlideShare records off line should preserve the conference titles and dates that the records are currently tagged with as well as the category of the VRA website that the slides shows are currently linked from.

### *Persistence*

There are two crucial factors in ensuring the persistence of digital objects. They are preserving the bit sequence of a digital record so that it is not corrupted, and ensuring that the medium on which the bit sequence is located remains readable. With the VRA material currently stored on non-repository web servers and cloud based services, they are in a “pre-repository” state with no controls for fixing the bit sequence of their data or ensuring the long term readability of data from the mediums they are currently stored on.

It is worth noting, however, that cloud services such as Basecamp do claim that accessibility and backing up of users data is a core part of their service.

### *Renderability*

The idea of renderability is to ensure that the appropriate software and hardware are maintained and kept available. This ensures that digital objects can be read and interacted with in a manner consistent with how it was used by its creator. An example of this might be an interactive website that is heavily dependent on Flash animation.

Our analysis has not identified any digital records that are being created in especially “exotic” formats. The bulk of the records are in formats such as HTML, XML, JPEG, PDF, etc. All of these standard formats can reasonably be expected to be maintained into the future.



There are, however, two important exceptions to consider. First are the current presentations on SlideShare and future presentations that may be created in web-based software such as Google Drive or Prezi. The second concern is the records created in Basecamp Classic. Documents created in the “writeboard” section of Basecamp Classic cannot be exported as well as any files that are uploaded by users into Basecamp Classic. If Basecamp Classic is upgraded to Basecamp the “writeboard” documents can be exported as html pages and the files can be exported in their native formats.

### *Understandability*

Understandability is similar to the above concept of identity in that the metadata that identifies an object is also essential for its users to understand the purpose of the object. Understandability goes beyond just the metadata of the object, however, and includes the context in which the object was created and used.

Preservation of the current website, ListServ threads, and Basecamp projects will provide an accurate picture of the activities of the VRA and the context in which the records from these locations were created. A threat exists to understandability if selected documents are separated from their current online context in the process of preservation.

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity is the property that a digital object, either as a bitstream or in its rendered form, is what it purports to be. It is the job of the digital repository to insure the authenticity of their records, and this must be taken into consideration when the VRA establishes their standards and procedures for digital archiving.

## **4. Potential Benefits**

The VRA’s board members have recognized the importance of implementing a digital preservation plan, evidenced from the two task forces they have charged with its research. Success will come not only through incorporating digital preservation into the workflow, but also by making the preservation process a top organizational priority to any future strategic plan. By doing so, the Association will reap numerous short and long-term economic, social, and reputational benefits.

Included in each subsection are relevant quotations drawn from best practices of professional archival organizations that support our expected benefits for the implementation of the plan.

### *Archives and Information Management Best Practices*

The VRA will conform to best practices for both archives and information management, and by doing so promote the institution as forward thinking and responsible managers of their information.

“[E]ncourage professional development among their co-workers, foster the aspirations of [others], and actively share their knowledge and expertise.”

— SAA Core Values and Code of Ethics

### *Maintain a Strong Reputation*

The VRA will further its reputation by continuing to be at the forefront of imaging standards, data sharing, and storage by adapting to change and growth.

“The Visual Resources Association Data Standards Committee has updated the Core Categories in order to conform to ongoing developments in data standards, data sharing, and data storage technology.”

— VRA Core 4.0<sup>15</sup>

### *Smooth Transition*

The VRA will create a smoother transition when introducing new members and will increase the shareability and flow of information within the organization.

“Access to records is essential in personal, academic, business, and government settings, and use of records should be both welcomed and actively promoted.”

— SAA Core Values and Code of Ethics

“Maintaining smooth transitions from one VRA Board to the next has been a challenge....VRA Board positions are increasingly complex and diverse. It has become evident that more time is needed to bring newly elected officers up to speed with their duties and responsibilities. Two months on the VRA Board email list and ‘on the job’ training at the conference are simply not enough.”

— 2009 VRA Strategic Plan

### *Achieve More in the Future*

Devoting time to and prioritizing digital preservation will help the VRA maintain any collaborative resources or systems and more successfully engage in educational opportunities.

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<sup>15</sup> Full document available at [http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA\\_Core4\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/standards/vracore/VRA_Core4_Intro.pdf).

“[Image professionals] help integrate these new initiatives and technologies into pedagogy through outreach and instruction; and in some cases they actively participate in the design of collaborative systems....”

“With only a few years of practical experience, collaborative image collections point toward learning environments that benefit an entire institution or multiple institutions.”

— VRA White Paper on Visual Resources Management

To “preserve a wide variety of primary sources for the benefit of future generations.”

— SAA Core Values and Code of Ethics

### *Stay Current*

The VRA’s prioritization of digital preservation will improve the life-cycle continuum of their visual image resources, keeping the organization ahead and ensuring the lasting care of the images.

“Staying current with research on emerging technology and participating in experimentation....”

“Many digital images created just ten years ago—in situations where professional standards were ignored—have been abandoned because they have become inadequate for today’s higher resolution monitors and projectors.”

— VRA White Paper on Visual Resources Management

### *Future Reference to and Use of Conference Proceedings*

The value of the VRA’s conferences will increase from the preservation of the conference as whole, including the planning process, the proceedings, and output for reference and use in the future. Preservation will also help especially in the planning of future conferences.

“Develop policies for making PowerPoint Presentations and other conference content available to VRA members as soon as possible after the conference.”

— 2009 VRA Strategic Plan

## 5. Recommendations

These recommendations are intended to provide guidelines for establishing and maintaining the digital archives of the VRA. In addition, these recommendations include an overview of some strategies for archiving the range of materials created by the VRA. Based on professional best practices for archival management and preservation, these recommendations are meant to provide practical and sustainable approaches for organizing and preserving archival materials. In order to achieve these objectives, the following recommendations are:

- Establish a trusted digital repository or pursue an archival partnership
- Create a records management plan and records retention schedule
- Create position of Digital Archivist
- Upgrade Basecamp and export files
- Determine a preservation strategy for current and future websites
- Determine a preservation strategy for VRA listserv
- Determine a preservation strategy for social media content

### *Establish a Trusted Digital Repository or Pursue an Archival Partnership*

It is highly recommended that the VRA establish a central storage location that supports digital preservation for its born-digital and digitized materials. Although many digital materials are currently stored in Basecamp, this service does not fill all of the requirements of a trusted digital repository. A trusted digital repository is the best place to store and preserve digital materials. Such a system should have the capability to preserve digital materials long-term by obtaining control over digital objects and their metadata as well as following documented procedures to protect materials against potential threats. A trusted digital repository must also be able to ensure the authenticity of the digital records by conducting integrity checks to make sure that the bitstreams are maintained. It must also be able to provide users with authentic information, including all relevant metadata and rendering software. “Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities,” a report issued by OCLC and RLG in 2002, provides a good overview of the requirements and responsibilities of a trusted digital repository.<sup>16</sup>

The VRA could establish its own digital repository managed and stored on local servers. Alternatively, the VRA could pursue an archival partnership. This requires identifying an institution, most likely a university, which would be willing to house the digital records of the VRA. For example, the American Library Association deposits physical materials at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (<http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ala/>). The university also hosts the archives website, which includes online archival content, as well as publicly accessible finding aids. Although the VRA Archives Task Force 2008 report recommends against housing the archives at another institution for accessibility reasons,

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<sup>16</sup> See Appendix for resources.

establishing an archival partnership may allow the VRA to avoid incurring some of the costs of setting up its own digital repository.

### *Create a Records Management Plan and Records Retention Schedule*

A need for a more detailed records management plan, and specifically a records retention schedule, was identified in the VRA Archives Task Force 2008 Report. As a schedule has not yet been fully implemented, this remains as a high priority recommendation for the VRA. In addition to covering the materials produced by the various committees and branches of the organization, the VRA might consider how archiving its web presence (web site, social media) should be addressed. It is advisable to have a legal counsel look over the final retention guide to ensure that the VRA is fulfilling all legal retention obligations.

### *Create Position of Digital Archivist*

The 2008 VRA Archives Task Force Report recommended that the VRA Archivist charge, description, and responsibilities be revised to “address electronic migration, records retention and access schedules.” However, we recommend that the VRA create an additional position of digital archivist officer in order to ensure that the organization of both digital and physical records receive equal treatment. Establishing a digital archive is a complex task and warrants its own officer position. Designating an officer position to be the main digital collection organizer and records management point person will help the VRA to maintain a reliable record transfer workflow to the digital archives. Creating a digital archivist position would also indicate the organization’s strong commitment to digital archiving. Hiring a short term professional archivist in addition to the officer position could help speed the development and implementation of a records retention schedule and digital preservation workflow, as well as increase the speed with which the digital records backlog is addressed. If the paid position cannot be financially sustained, an archives graduate student could assist with the project as an internship opportunity.

### *Upgrade Basecamp and Export Files*

The VRA currently subscribes to the online project management software Basecamp and is using its legacy platform called Basecamp Classic. We recommend that VRA migrate its past and current projects from Basecamp Classic to the current version of Basecamp because of important differences in how much of the projects will be exported with the two versions. Both the current version of Basecamp and Basecamp Classic have a feature to export a full project in the form of a zip file that contains html pages for the Discussions, Dates, and To Do lists. In Basecamp Classic the export feature will not export the “Writeboards,” the comments related to the writeboards, or any files that have been uploaded to the project. The current version of Basecamp will export the full project including files that were uploaded to the project in the file’s native format.

All Basecamp Classic projects can be migrated forward to Basecamp. When this happens the Writeboard files are now titled Documents and are exported as html pages. All other parts of a Basecamp Classic project are migrated as is and can then be exported with the project. There are however two exceptions that should be planned for before migration takes place:

- The comments related to a Writeboard document are not migrated when the project is moved to Basecamp. The only solution for this is to manually copy them.
- Basecamp Classic has a function to track the time that users spend on a project. This function is eliminated in Basecamp so that information is lost when a project is migrated forward. Again, the only solution to export this information is to manually copy it.

Migrating from Basecamp Classic to Basecamp is an important step before exporting each project to archive them offline. Once a project is completed and is no longer being added to or edited, we recommend these projects are exported and archived within the structure that the VRA adopts. Currently Basecamp states that users can migrate on a project-by-project basis and that when a project is migrated from Basecamp Classic to Basecamp the classic version is left untouched and will continue to be available with the user's subscription. With this in mind we recommend the VRA begin its migration to Basecamp with a test of the 17 projects they currently have archived. Once a workflow and archiving procedures are set, we would then recommend upgrading the projects that are currently active.

#### *Determine a Preservation Strategy for Current and Future Websites*

We understand that the VRA is currently planning a migration of the entire website from their current design to one that will be created through Wordpress. It is therefore an excellent time for the VRA to consider both the archiving of their current website, as well as how to develop their new website with a digital preservation strategy built into it. As the entire digital preservation strategy is currently being considered, the VRA may wish to start with designing their website preservation plan and build the rest of their strategy around this. Of paramount importance will be deciding where the archived website files will be hosted and housed.

A website is a complex structure to archive and the VRA must first decide how much of the website they want to mark for preservation. Will the various blogs and social media sites be included in the web segment of the preservation strategy, or do they want to consider each area of communication as a discrete element? From a thorough examination of the current site—vraweb.org—we can see that it has evolved in a haphazard manner since the domain was registered in 2000. The page designs and menu layouts change throughout the site.

Once the scope of preservation is determined, the next step will be to consider the frequency of web capture for preservation. This could range from a one time capture of the current site before it is migrated to the new design to a scheduled weekly crawl on a blog page to capture the

changing content. This will be somewhat contingent on what the strategy and schedule for changing website format is. Certainly, the VRA will want to capture the site in its current state before changes to its fundamental structure take place.

There are a number of tools and resources to consider for actually undertaking the task of capturing and archiving the website. Archive-it, a division of the Internet Archive, is a subscription-based service that allows for several levels of archiving, including the possibility of capturing social media streams such as Facebook. Archive-it has developed the Web Archiving Life Cycle Model that is a good resource to help the VRA decide what elements of website preservation are important to them. The VRA may not want to use the subscription service of Archive-it because of the costs involved, but Web Archiving Life Cycle Model will provide a useful framework for deciding how to proceed.

An open-source solution that the VRA should consider is the Web Curatorial Tool (WCT), which was developed by International Internet Preservation Consortium (IIPC) for the use of cultural heritage institutions. WCT uses the Heritrix web crawler, which is the same web crawler that Archive-it uses but with a user interface designed by IIPC and each institution is responsible for hosting and preserving the data once it is harvested.

As the VRA develops pages using Wordpress, and looks to migrate the full site onto a Wordpress platform, they should consider incorporating an automated backup procedure into Wordpress template. When backing up websites or blogs that are hosted on Wordpress, or any other Content Management System, both the content and the underlying database that supports the site must be archived. More information about the best practices and tools for backing up Wordpress and available free plugins for automating the process are detailed below in the “Examples of tools” section on page 17.

#### *Determine a Preservation Strategy for VRA Listserv*

The VRA-L listserv, which relies on the L-soft LISTSERV software (version 16.0), is currently hosted by the University of Arkansas. Listserv archiving is enabled by the software, and it is publicly accessible through the University of Arkansas. While this is an acceptable short-term solution, including these archives in a centralized trusted digital repository in the future would be ideal. It would be advisable to consult with the University of Arkansas to learn how their listserv archiving works, such as how and when they harvest listserv content, and determine if the archives are held in a trusted digital repository. Eventually, these archives should be transferred to the VRA’s trusted digital repository, if possible. Questions to ask the IT department at the University of Arkansas include:

- How are the listserv emails collected?
- How often is this done?

- Are these archives stored in a trusted digital repository? Are there any security measures in place to ensure that the archives are not lost or deleted?
- Can the listserv archives be exported for transfer to another location, should the VRA establish their own digital repository?

### *Determine a Preservation Strategy for Social Media Content*

Creating a strategy for preserving the VRA’s social media accounts is advisable. The educational and promotional content posted on these sites, as well as any responses to posted content, may be worthy of preservation. The VRA must determine which sites should be preserved, if it is feasible to capture all of the included information, or if responses to postings are beyond the scope of their digital archive. It is essential for the VRA to create a schedule for how often each social media site is backed up and if or when old backups of these materials should be disposed of. The files that result from archiving social media can be stored in the newly created digital repository.

Some options do exist for archiving multiple social media outlets in one place. One service that is offered is by SocialBckup (<https://www.socialbckup.com/?gclid=CO-j3-zR-7oCFcKDQgod4B4A2g>), which can archive your Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn accounts. If the VRA wanted to outsource this archival service, there is a \$7.95 per month fee after a 30-day free trial. Archive-it, as previously mentioned, is another subscription service that includes the archiving of social media. Below are individualized free options for archiving each social media outlet.

Examples of tools that can be used:

- Facebook
  - Facebook’s “Start My Archive” feature
    - This will download your Facebook timeline information, posts shared with others, messages, photos, ads clicked onto, IP addresses used, and more.
    - <https://www.facebook.com/help/131112897028467>
  - ArchiveFacebook 1.4, add on for Mozilla Firefox
    - Free tool that allows you to archive messages, activity streams, friends list, notes, events, photos and groups to your hard drive. The activity of friends is not included.
    - <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/archivefacebook/>
- Twitter
  - Twitter’s Archive Option
    - In Twitter’s Settings section you can request a file that has an archive of your messages. Once the file is generated, an email will be sent to the account owner notifying them that an archive of their account has been created. You will receive



a .zip file containing an excel spreadsheet of your Twitter activity, as well as an “index.html” file which will be an offline archive of your account. This file can be stored in the newly created digital repository by the VRA. A new request for an archive of your messages can be made based on any retention plan developed by the VRA. Unfortunately, the Twitter archive only contains the tweets and retweets made by your account, not your followers or who is following you.

- Tweetake & TweetDumpr
  - Tweetake will save your tweets, followers, friends, favorites and messages in a CSV file format (which can be read by any spreadsheet software).
    - <http://twitdom.com/tweetake/>
  - TweetDumpr is a free application that exports your Twitter timeline with timestamp to a CSV file format.
    - <http://twitdom.com/tweetdump/>
- Wordpress sites
  - Wordpress has been used by the Emerging Professionals and Students group with VRA as well as by others planning Conferences. It is advisable for the VRA to preserve these blogs and sites. There are multiple plugins available that will automatically backup Wordpress.
    - These plugins can be found here: <http://wordpress.org/plugins/tags/backup>
  - One example of a tool that can be used to back up Wordpress databases is DB Backup, which has options to backup in SQL or CSV file formats and has save and print options.
    - More information can be found here: <http://wordpress.org/plugins/db-backup/>
  - An example of tool that allows you to backup your Wordpress site is Ready!Backup. Automatic backups can be scheduled to download to a Dropbox account FTP and other locations. Logs are kept of backups and Wordpress sites can be restored using these backups.
    - More information can be found here: <http://wordpress.org/plugins/ready-backup/>
  - For additional information on best practices for backing up Wordpress blogs and sites, see the below resources:
    - <http://www.noupe.com/wordpress/how-to-backup-your-wordpress-website.html>
    - [http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress\\_Backups](http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Backups)
- SlideShare
  - The VRA can back up the SlideShare presentations manually. Each presentation can be downloaded to ensure that important materials from Conference presentations are not lost over time. These can be saved to the newly created digital repository.
  - If the VRA would like to view, utilize and archive analytics for their SlideShare account, it will require a subscription for SlideShare Pro. Once a Pro account is purchased, the analytics can be exported into a CSV file.

- [http://www.slideshare.net/features?cmp\\_src=analytics&cmp\\_src\\_from=main\\_nav](http://www.slideshare.net/features?cmp_src=analytics&cmp_src_from=main_nav)
- LinkedIn
  - LinkedIn does not offer an all-inclusive archival feature like other social media sites. However, the Association's profile can be captured manually by copying it and pasting it into a text document. LinkedIn has a built-in tool to preserve your contact information. There are settings options in the contacts section of the website, one of which is "Export LinkedIn Connections". This option allows users to save their contacts information as CSV or VCF files, and can export to various email clients.
  - The LinkedIn Export options can be found here:  
<http://www.linkedin.com/people/export-settings>
  - An article with directions on how to complete this process is available here:  
<http://www.linkedin-makeover.com/2012/01/09/backup-your-linkedin-account/>
- Flickr
  - Flickr does not have a batch download option at this time, but third-party applications have been created to allow this. One is an application called Bulkr and allows for batch downloads, including the tags and descriptions of the photos.
    - <http://www.flickr.com/services/apps/72157622874451890/>

## **Conclusion**

This business case addresses many challenges facing the collection. It will make it easier for the VRA to access information and will ensure that their artifacts are located in a central location that members or leadership can access at any time. This plan also helps to preserve and backup the information they produce. This proposal will fit with the wider organizational policy strategy and help the VRA determine a starting point for further archival practices.

## **Appendix: Resources**

Archive-it: Web Archiving Life Cycle Model:

[https://archive-it.org/static/files/archiveit\\_life\\_cycle\\_model.pdf](https://archive-it.org/static/files/archiveit_life_cycle_model.pdf)

International Internet Preservation Consortium:

<http://netpreserve.org/web-archiving/tools-and-software>

Records Management for SAA.

[http://www2.archivists.org/governance/saa\\_archives](http://www2.archivists.org/governance/saa_archives)

SPOT Model reference:

<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/september12/vermaaten/09vermaaten.html>

Trusted Digital Repositories:

OCLC-RLG. "Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities." RLG, May 2002.

<http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/activities/trustedrep/repositories.pdf>.

Web Curator Tool:

<http://webcurator.sourceforge.net/>

Wordpress:

[http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress\\_Backups](http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Backups)

Young, Sandra Florand, et al. "Don't Throw It Away! Documenting and Preserving Organizational History." Special Collections, The University Library, and Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, College of Architecture and the Arts, The University of Illinois at Chicago, 2006. <http://www.uic.edu/depts/lib/specialcoll/pdf/DTIA.pdf>.

## **Appendix: Statement of Contribution**

Our team members divided the project among the following sub-groups:

- Catherine B., Megan, and Sydney worked on the Strategic Vision, External Context, and Potential Benefits sections.
- Mallorie and Stacy worked on Understanding the Collection and Internal Context sections.
- Catherine C. and Tim Mapp worked on the Stakeholder Analysis and Digital Preservation Risk.

After revising and editing the sections within our groups, we combined all three groups' sections. Everyone contributed to researching and formulating the recommendations for the VRA. All members helped edit the report as a whole, and approved the final draft of the document.

We, as a group, feel this was an equitable division of labor and are pleased with the results of our project.

## Appendix III - Initial Draft of Collecting Policy and Procedures

The Visual Resources Association Institutional Repository is a [n open access?] repository **charged with collecting, permanently storing, and providing digital access to born-digital records of the VRA**. The material in the IR at [partner institution] consists of official records, correspondence, and publications, and is open for use by VRA members and other members of the VR community. [Need a provision for materials that contain sensitive information that can be stored at the partner institution but excluded from the open access IR—could be a decision on how long to restrict particular records, i.e. 75 years from creation.]

Records of enduring administrative, legal, and research value should be deposited into the IR, including but not limited to the following:

- Official records, such as constitutions, by-laws, policies, minutes, transcripts, rosters, reports, agendas generated by the executive board, committees, local chapters, and task forces.
- Publications, such as the VRA bulletin and the conference program for the annual meeting.
- Audiovisual material, such as photographs from the annual meeting or regional chapter meetings. [We may focus on text-based documents only at this time.]

### Procedures and Timeline for Filing Documents

Documents should be uploaded in the approved format (i.e. PDF or TIFF, etc.) and according to the timeline established for each administrative area (i.e. yearly, quarterly, upon the completion of a task force charge, etc.). [Recommend that the Secretary or Archivist be charged with collection documents from individual chairs and officers to be submitted directly to the IR by that one person.]

Documents should be filed in the appropriate folder in the IR, i.e....

- Executive Committee
- Committees
- Chapters
- Conferences
- VRA Foundation
- History]

### QUESTIONS

*\* Will there be a finding aid for our archives? If we were to work with UIUC like ALA, there is already precedent for the partner institution providing faceted access through harvested metadata.*

*\* Our agreement with the partner institution should include provisions for dissolving the relationship that allows VRA to retrieve its records. I imagine something like this exists for ALA at UIUC.*