

ARLIS/NA

ART LIBRARIES SOCIETY of NORTH AMERICA

2015: 43rd Annual Conference
Fort Worth, Texas | March 19–23, 2015

Decorative Arts SIG Meeting

March 20, 2015

Submitted by [Jessica Shaykett](#)

Introductions & updates

The meeting was led by SIG co-coordinator Jessica Shaykett, American Craft Council, Minneapolis, MN. Those in attendance included: Geraldine Billingham, Bloomsbury Publishing, London; Michelle Johnson, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Lindsay Keating, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Jessica Pigza, New York Public Libraries, NYC; Lindsey Reynolds, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL.

Digitization of makers' marks resources

Note: A ceramics marks book was one of the top hits on the Smithsonian website's Internet Archive; in reaction the Smithsonian Institution Libraries (SIL) are actively digitizing makers' mark resources and have requested assistance from SIG members.

There is definite interest from the group on a collaborative makers' mark project and in helping the SIL. A few questions for the SIL that arose from our discussion:

- Will the SIL digitize makers' marks books from SIG members' collections?
- Will the SIL host digitized makers' marks content provided by other institutions?
- Is the SIL (or the museum) actively capturing actual marks?
- How can existing resources like Arntzen & Rainwater or the Digital Library for Dec Arts and Material Culture (<http://decorativearts.library.wisc.edu/>) be tied into this project?

Michelle Johnson at the MFAH shared that they are actively photographing makers' marks of the MFAH and partner institutions for a project on Texas Artisans and Artists. The images of marks they have documented so far have been uploaded to the MFAH database alongside the full object image, not as an individual listing.

Geraldine Billingham noted Bloomsbury's recent publication, [British Studio Potters' Marks](#) by Eric Yates-Owen and Robert Fournier. This led to the question as to whether any U.S. publishers are planning to publish a similar guide anytime soon, updating existing information on U.S. makers' marks. This was unknown by the group.

Establishing a website/blog for the Dec Arts SIG

Attendees agreed a web presence was needed for the Dec Arts SIG, especially given that ARLIS/NA will host. Jessica Shaykett will contact ARLIS/NA about setting up the page and

will solicit content from members with the help of Lindsay Keating. The goal is to have the site up and running by the end of summer 2015.

Possible blog topics:

- Member introductions (what does your collection have?)
- International directory of decorative arts resources
- New acquisitions and titles
- Links useful to the Dec Arts field
- Guest posts from other ARLIS/NA members

Session proposals for ARLIS/NA 2016 in Seattle

Those in attendance discussed the possibility of a panel session on World's Fair resources. Jessica Pigza noted that the NYPL had an extensive collection of World's Fair materials online. A few questions that arose during the conversation that could shape the panel discussion:

- The literature is so extensive. Where are the strong collections?
- Consider creating a LibGuide to track strong collections focusing on seminal fairs to share information (RISS has a repository of fine arts LibGuides)
- Can we call on the listserv to contribute details about their projects?
- What are the idiosyncrasies of dealing with this kind of material?
- Should we broaden the topic to include international art expos (like Art Basel or SOFA)?

Other topics of interest

Michelle Johnson noted an ongoing project at the MFAH to document occupation trade terms that fall under the category of "artisan or artist". Michelle shared the following information on the project:

We have established criteria for occupation inclusion in our list as well as an "exclusion list" for those occupations that may be categorized as artisans but whose products are not associated with the decorative arts. We're happy to share all the information with anyone interested, especially if it can get us some feedback. It is definitely a work in progress, with updates and/or changes every month. We don't have a crosswalk with definitions available online yet, so what we have is an inelegant spreadsheet—see attached image of the direct crosswalk fields for an example. *Note: for crosswalk fields example Michelle shared with the SIG or for more information, contact Michelle (mjjohnson@mfa.org).*