

Introduction of Ann Whiteside, ARLIS/NA and VRA Distinguished Service Award recipient

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We are here to honor Ann Baird Whiteside as the recipient of this year's VRA and ARLIS/NA Distinguished Service Awards. **Few recipients have been as deserving of this award as our colleague Ann.**

Ann has the distinction of being the only person to have served as president of both organizations:

- VRA President, 2000-2001 and ARLIS/NA President, 2006-2007.

A partial list of her accomplishments and achievements to our professions includes service on committees and task forces to ARLIS/NA and VRA for the past two decades, including:

- the ARLIS/NA Strategic Planning Task Force in 1999
- the VRA Data Standards Committee, where she contributed to the development of the VRA Core metadata standard
- the ARLIS/NA Standards Committee, as chair from 2004-2005
- as co-chair, the ARLIS/NA Conference Planning committee in 2010 in Boston.
- Most recently, Ann served as co-chair of the ARLIS/NA - VRA Joint Conference Task Force.



It is no exaggeration to say that Ann has contributed in a leadership capacity to nearly every important trailblazing initiative over the past two decades benefiting the cultural heritage community whose mission is collection discoverability. We have all benefited from her far-sightedness, intelligence, and creativity.

One supporter wrote that “Ann asks not only the difficult questions, but the right ones. She possesses a perpetual mindset of seeing both the forest and the trees--and is a marvel of on-point organization and communication.”

She served as co-editor of *Cataloging Cultural Objects: A Guide to Describing Cultural Works and Their Images*, published in 2006, an extensive data content standard that paved the way for resource sharing and interoperability.

Serving as **Project Director for the SAHARA initiative**, Ann was a strong advocate for those of us in the VRA and ARLIS/NA communities to keep pace with the rapidly-changing nature of scholarly communication. Jeffrey Klee, the current co-editor of SAHARA who was part of the early group of scholars and librarians who met regularly to expand the SAHARA concept

into a sustainable resource, noted that “there were many good ideas, but it was Ann who, agreeably, respectfully, and always thoughtfully, was able to find an achievable, sustainable path through the thicket of brilliant notions.”

While at MIT, Ann served in a leadership role for FACADE, or Future-proofing Architectural Computer-Aided Design, a group that investigated the best methods for capturing, describing, managing, preserving, archiving, and making accessible digital 2-D and 3-D models produced by architects.

These accomplishments would be more than sufficient to explain this award, however those nominating Ann, without exception, noted her good sense, intelligence, even-handedness and ability to compromise. She was according to everyone, the voice of reason on every committee and during every discussion. This quality, as well as her scholarship, help her bring many a contentious issue to resolution and consensus. In the words of one of her colleagues, “Ann is a teacher, she creates a picture, and she lures people in.”

We completely agree and wish to extend our congratulations to Ann Whiteside, this year’s winner of both the ARLIS/NA and VRA Distinguished Service Awards.

Ann, you exemplify the criteria of both the ARLIS/NA and VRA DSA through your outstanding and sustained service to our professions. It is fitting that both honors are bestowed on you this evening, given the many bridges you have helped to build between the visual resources profession and art librarianship.

Ann Baird Whiteside’s Remarks

Thank you Mark and Margaret (and Laurel) for your lovely introduction. I will say that is a bit overwhelming. In fact, when I received an email message from Kristen Regina and Elaine Paul in early January telling me that I was this year’s recipient of both the ARLIS/NA and VRA Distinguished Service Awards, I had to re-read the email four times to make sure that it was truly addressed to me. I was on the Boston subway at the time, reading the emails of the afternoon – dealing with faculty needing access to course sites, budget questions, the usual emails - and there was this message. I was sure the email was sent to me in error. When I realized it really was addressed to me – my first thought was “How Amazing”. I have been in awe and delight since. To receive these two awards at the same time from one’s peers is truly the best and highest compliment one can receive. And for these awards to be given here at this joint

conference reflects so perfectly on my own work on collaborative efforts across both organizations. It is also a tribute to our two organizations here in Seattle at this time. I am so honored and indebted to ARLIS/NA and to VRA.

I want to thank the group of colleagues who instigated the nomination – Mark Pompelia, Jolene de Verges, and Sherman Clarke – and those who wrote letters in support of my nomination. All of you have been my close colleagues and friends for a very long time. Thank you to the DSA Awards Committee chairs of both organizations – Laurel Bliss and Margaret Webster, and their recommendations for my nomination. And thank you to the boards of ARLIS/NA and VRA for approving the awards, especially the Presidents, Elaine Paul and Kristen Regina. And thank you to all the members of ARLIS/NA and VRA – you are what makes our organizations so fantastic and you provide the support that makes us excellent professionals.

Those who have been the backbone for me through my career are my family and friends, and I cannot imagine doing anything I've done without them. My husband John, here tonight, has always been there with love and support, while I work on different projects and travel. Thank you, John for your support and your patience with my unending supply of new projects. Our children, Leah and David, grew up with ARLIS/NA and VRA; and they know two important things: that art and architecture librarians and visual resources professionals are the center of the information world, and that we have great parties.

My passion about art and architecture librarianship and the visual resources profession was fueled by my first conferences at ARLIS/NA and VRA. At each of those first conferences, I listened to people talking about interesting topics, about how we could make our work better, provide better access to information, how we could provide new kinds of services; and there is an ethos - the deep sense of how important our work is to our institutions and to our society. As I became more deeply involved through volunteering, it fueled my passion for our work.

Through my association with our two organizations, I have amassed an amazing number of mentors, colleagues, and friends. Each of you has been inspirational and have helped to push me forward as a professional. From my first committees – the ARLIS/NA Collection Development Committee, where I volunteered for a project at my first meeting, and the VRA Data Standards Committee, where we developed the VRA Core and a host of other astonishing initiatives, I have been supported and encouraged by the people in our organizations to be creative, imaginative, and to do things I would never have imagined doing. And I have taken that passion and drive back and forth between my libraries and our organizations.

As I progress in my career, I continue to be excited by the changes in our profession, changes driven by technology, but also by changes in higher education and how people learn and do research. As information professionals, we are a critical part of the infrastructure of our cultural heritage institutions. We can lead the changes required to meet the needs of researchers today by continuing to think outside the box about how we support the users of our collections. We also have the opportunity to take the collaboration skills required in a digital world, and use those skills to develop partnerships with scholars to partner in and support their work.

One of the most important things I have learned through my work with all of you and in my institutional homes is the importance of collaboration with stakeholders. Gathering the stakeholders for any project is the primary key to success. It takes time, it takes energy, and it takes political will to bring people along, to try new things, to develop a new model or service. It also takes patience. I am not a naturally patient sort of person, so the development of these skills has been my personal challenge. And yet, over and over, I find that when these skills are utilized, the outcomes are far and beyond the original goal and expectation. Through the process of collaboration, one builds relationships as well as supportive allies, in addition to successful outcomes. And those who have been part of the process like the outcome as well. These skills are critical to the success of just about everything that I do in my work.

For those of you here tonight that are new librarians or first time attendees, like many before me, I encourage you to use this conference to meet people, to attend committee meetings and to participate in the lives of these organizations; test out your ideas on your colleagues here; use your collaboration skills. You will find support and encouragement and joy that you are here. There are many opportunities in our organizations to become involved; and through our organizations you will develop life-long skills and collaborations in and across your institutions, as well as mentors and friends who will be with you for your career. I cannot imagine two more collegial organizations to participate in.

As part of the process of becoming used to the honor of being a Distinguished Service Award recipient, I went to the ARLIS/NA and VRA web sites to look at past recipients. What one sees in those two lists is that each recipient has helped to shape our profession and our organizations and to push us along paths we may not have chosen on our own. Each has had a vision for what our profession can be, and each individual has made important contributions to the field. It is truly humbling to be among this august group of colleagues.

In closing I want to thank all the people with whom I have worked in ARLIS/NA and VRA - on the two Boards, on the various committees, and on the many projects we have taken on and launched. There are too many of you to name as individuals, and you should all know who you are. I will always treasure the work we've done together, what you have all taught me, and my experiences in these wonderful organizations. And, there is so much more to do!

Thank you so very much this dual honor.