

ARLIS/NA + VRA 3rd Joint Conference 2016, Seattle – Conference Session

Connecting the Past to the Present: Promoting Cultural Understanding through Collections and Exhibitions

In order to fully comprehend the present we must appreciate the past. A global society demands that we move beyond our cultural biases and be open to the views and perspectives of others. Collections and exhibitions that challenge and provoke can encourage dialogue and promote diversity and inclusion. The past is riddled with controversial ideas and painful events. These records and remnants of a painful past live on in libraries, archives and museums for us to learn from. Librarians, archivists and curators play an important role in the development of cultural understanding and awareness. In this session speakers will discuss controversial collections and exhibitions at their institutions and explore some of the challenges encountered in their display and promotion. These include an exhibit on the impact of war on art-making at Ohio University; Japanese American history digital materials, many of which focus on the WWII incarceration, in California State University Archives and Special Collections; and the Mazinbiige Indigenous graphic novel collection held at the University of Manitoba. The speakers will share strategies and best practices for meeting the challenges of safeguarding and providing access to these collections and exhibitions while acknowledging divergent perspectives. Together speakers and participants will explore how to achieve a balance between intellectual freedom/freedom of expression and the need to respect the views of historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups. Organized by the ARLIS/NA Diversity Committee.

Moderator

Megan Williams, NYARC Kress Fellow for Public Services, Frick Art Reference Library

Speakers

Maureen Burns, Consultant, IMAGinED

Camille Callison, Indigenous Services Librarian and Liaison Librarian for Anthropology, Native Studies and Social Work, University of Manitoba

Mary Kandiuk, Visual Arts, Design & Theatre Librarian, York University

Gary Ginther, Fine Arts Librarian, Frederick & Kazuko Harris Arts Collection, Ohio University

Greg Williams, Director of Archives and Special Collections, CSU Dominguez Hills