

2016 ARLIS/NA Distinguished Service Award Introduction  
Presented to Elizabeth O'Keefe at the ARLIS/NA Conference, New Orleans, LA,  
February 8, 2017

Remarks by Maria Oldal and Marie-Chantal L'Écuyer-Coelho (nominators)

Maria:

It is our distinct honor and great pleasure to introduce Elizabeth O'Keefe, formerly Director of Collection Information Systems at the Morgan Library & Museum, retired in January 2016, as the recipient of the Art Libraries Society of North America Distinguished Service Award, the greatest honor ARLIS/NA as a society bestows on its outstanding members.

Marie-Chantal:

We would like to thank members of the Distinguished Service Award Subcommittee, chaired by Henry Pisciotta, for their careful review and thoughtful consideration of our nomination. We would also like to thank the twenty-two letter writers who contributed eloquent and enthusiastic testimonials to Liz's achievements.

Maria:

Liz's career in art librarianship spans more than a quarter of a century. In 2017 it is difficult to think back to where the field was when Liz started working at the Morgan and exploring art documentation in a museum library environment. It is equally difficult to imagine where art documentation would be today, had Liz chosen to apply her formidable talents to some other area of librarianship. Fueled by an unwavering belief that museum, image, library, and archival documentation practices are not mutually exclusive but can work together towards a common end, her commitment to and extensive work in standards development have helped to permanently alter the standards landscape. CORSAIR, the collections catalog she helped to create at the Morgan Library & Museum, is not just an extraordinary research resource; it stands as a proof of concept, demonstrating that a single

library system can accommodate multiple cataloging traditions and multiple formats.

Marie-Chantal:

There are many ways for art librarians to distinguish themselves in their profession. Liz's deep, long-term engagement with creating, developing, and refining data standards has been a demanding one. Standards work requires a keen intellect, persistent pursuit of the minutest details while maintaining an awareness of major trends and shifts, and ability to negotiate tactfully and effectively within national and international arenas. Liz has been a "spokesperson" and an "admirable ambassador" for ARLIS, making the Society more of a presence and a player in the world of international data standards, reinforcing existing relationships and building new alliances, and broadening ARLIS's sphere of influence and its impact." Few ARLIS members have such an unbroken record of conscientious endeavor in any area of librarianship as Liz has compiled in the area of standards development. Through her work ARLIS as an organization and art librarians as a group have become the stronger.

Maria:

On a personal note, it was my privilege to work with Liz for over 25 years, first as a cataloger and then as Head of Cataloging at the Morgan Library & Museum. The small steps we took from cataloging manuscript facsimiles and exhibition catalogs to cataloging original manuscripts and master drawings became leaps in the evolution of art documentation. As Liz often said, all our big lies were coming true. Her "Yes we can, and yes we will" attitude guided generations of art catalogers to look and go beyond real or perceived boundaries. Along the way, her colleagues much appreciated her infamous wit and sense of humor. She once exclaimed, only half-jokingly, "They will have to pry my left-anchored search out of my cold dead hands."

Marie-Chantal and I are delighted to present to you the 2016 Distinguished Service Award winner, Elizabeth O'Keefe.