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2022 State of the Visual Resources Association Address

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2022 State of the Visual Resources Association Address

Abstract

During the hybrid remote and in-person 2022 Annual Business Meeting at the Annual Conference of the Visual Resources Association, the president highlighted the accomplishments and challenges of the Association in a state of the association presentation. This article provides the transcript.

Keywords

visual resources, annual address, annual report, executive board, VRA.

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Dr. Jeannine Keefer is the president of the Visual Resources Association and the Visual Resources Librarian at the University of Richmond and an architectural historian specializing in the built environment post World War II. Her research and teaching incorporate digital humanities methods and tools.

Good morning VRA Members. Welcome old friends and new colleagues, both in-person and remote, to the pandemic conference 3.0. I had so many plans for these last two years, but the world had other ideas. I want to express my unending gratitude to the members of my two Boards for being so supportive and creative and generous with your time and talents. Nothing about the last two years was normal or easy.... But this State of the Association is going to be short and sweet. We have a packed agenda and I want to get to the good stuff – thanking our outgoing Board Members, giving away travel awards, and congratulating grant winners.

Last year's Virtual Chicago meeting was a success in terms of content, engagement, outreach, and finances. The profit margin on last year's event was one of the best we've seen in a long time – something all current, future, and past treasurers like to see. Continuing with our pandemic proof of concept theme, we are testing the hybrid waters this year with half of our attendees joining us virtually. If there is one thing the pandemic has forced us to do, it's experiment and take that leap of faith toward things we've talked about for years. For those of you here in person: man, is it good to see all of you in the flesh again – to grab a coffee, a drink, or share a meal, or just kvetch together in the corner. You can be sure that as virtual SEI, regional workshops, and meetings show up on your calendars, there will also be in-person opportunities, though they may look different than they have in the past. We will roll with it, go with the flow.

Last summer, members of the VRA Foundation Board and the VRA Board began the exploratory work necessary to merge the two entities into one 501(c)(3). Marcia and I, and other members of the Board, spend a great deal of time in conversation with legal counsel in multiple states. For many of us this represents not a merger, but a reunification to one organization with one identity. The work of the VRA will not be different from before but can further dig into the educational and professional development mission. John and his Board will have the unique opportunity to make this reunified, more nimble VRA the organization we need now.

Subsequent to the merger, the VRA, now a 501(c)(3), is eligible to apply for grant support for the development of VRA Core 5 and to update *Cataloguing Cultural Objects* (which for several years has been back and forth between the VRA and the VRA Foundation). Now these projects have access to the resources needed to move forward with development. Another perk of being one 501(c)(3) is that all donations to VRA are now tax deductible. You will no longer be asked to support two organizations, which we hope will improve internal and external fundraising.

Committees and chapters will continue to function as they have. As is always the case, some committees and chapters are languishing, while others have found their stride and are flourishing. VRA is heterogeneous enough for every member to find at least one committee or chapter on which to share their curiosity, knowledge, and energy to continue to move the work forward. This year Cataloguing and Metadata Standards began grant writing to support its work; Awards gathered a wonderful slate of recipients (and I hope you will join us later today to celebrate their accomplishments); and the *VRA Bulletin* editors Jasmine Burns and Amy Lazet have done a great job soliciting content and keeping production on schedule (for those of you who presented at the conference this week or during the pre-conference, I encourage you to consider publishing your work in the *Bulletin*).

As many of you in leadership roles know, it can be difficult to identify individuals to step into these opportunities. Changes in our work and workplaces before, during, and after the pandemic have presented roadblocks, but also opportunities. Of all the organizations of which I am a member, the VRA is the one that most welcomes participation from all members, no matter how new. As you will see in the Awards ceremony, service and leadership roles have furthered and informed the careers of several members. For those of you who have not had the chance to take on a leadership role, know that this organization thrives on your ideas and enthusiasm, and we can help you gain experience in return. There is a great deal of opportunity – do take advantage. I will fully

admit that I lurked in the shadows for several years for a variety of reasons, so I understand apprehension or bandwidth capacity. But it is not just the work, it is also the camaraderie. I've laughed more this week than I have in a long time, and it is rejuvenating. If you have any questions regarding serving on a committee (even in a position that is not a chair or co-chair) or taking on a chapter leadership role – or serving on the Board – please do reach out to anyone currently on (or stepping away from) those committees or chapters or the Executive Board. Many of our faces or names will look all too familiar.

I am certain I have missed one, two, or three things from the last year, but as you will see from the treasurer's reports, we are doing ok financially for the moment with some bumps in the road in terms of developing our membership numbers (membership rates continue to be at discounted COVID levels), fundraising, and cultivating opportunities. Sure, we had some unexpected curveballs, but the two Boards, now merged, did some big things this year and that is plenty to celebrate. We have documents and work from the recent past, for example the Strategic Plan and the Identity Task Force Report, that can guide the work of the VRA in the near term and set us up for good things in the future.