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2025 State of the Association Address

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2025 State of the Association Address

Abstract

The organization remains financially stable, with the annual conference being its largest expense. The Board emphasizes adaptability and progress, facilitating the evolution of the organization by initiating member-driven projects--such as adopting new membership software for better user experience. Ongoing discussions center on expanding VRA's impact through increased funding, organizational development, and documentation efforts. Conference planning now considers factors like travel funds and virtual fatigue. Chapter engagement has also been revisited, reflecting a mix of informal and traditional structures.

Keywords

Visual Resources Association (VRA), presidential address, State of the Association

Author Bio

Xiaoli Ma is the Metadata Librarian and Head of Metadata Unit at the George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.

A year ago, John Trendler passed the torch of VRA President to me, and I am happy to report that the VRA is doing well.

Financially, we are stable, with the annual conference being our biggest expense.

Regarding annual conferences, we are always open to discussing sustainable ways to hold this most important event without compromising its original purpose. In-person meetings are fantastic but can be challenging to organize and attend. While virtual meetings are more affordable, they come with Zoom fatigue and reduced interaction. Last year, continuing holding on to the best of the two worlds, we successfully hosted a hybrid conference in Minneapolis. However, hybrid conferences may not be the best solution for all occasions. We need to adapt to the needs of the times.

Adapting to change while laying the groundwork for improvement is the theme of this Board. As a team, we have prioritized the tasks left by the previous Board and have made significant progress in many areas, thanks to the contributions of VRA members.

A task force of four members identified a cost-effective membership management software with updated technology. This month, we hired the Implementation Manager from VRA members. We hope all of you will soon enjoy a much smoother experience when renewing your membership and registering for events.

We have also brainstormed ways to further support VRA's growth. Frequently discussed topics include:

- funding more positions to advance various aspects of VRA's work
- securing more grant funding
- promoting VRA
- developing tangible plans for the organization's future
- archiving the VRA's documentation

Circling back to the conference planning, we are considering all factors — including travel fund changes, the benefits and drawbacks of virtual meetings, post-Covid lifestyles, and financial sustainability—to determine the best model for the years ahead.

These same factors have also impacted chapter activities. We have reached out to all chapters to confirm their status, posted the latest updates on our website, and updated the membership registration form. At present, for regional gatherings, casual social groups co-exist with traditional, well-structured chapters.

As you can see, our organization is evolving. If you enjoy being part of VRA in any way, and feel you can learn and grow here, please consider contributing. While the future is never fully predictable, your contributions are crucial to keeping VRA moving forward.