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President's Year-End Association Update, 2014

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Abstract

This article presents a year-end summary of the Visual Resources Association's activities following the 2014 annual conference in March. Areas addressed are professional communications, the visual resources profession, education and professional development, intellectual property, data standards, and ongoing Association business.

Keywords

Author Bio & Acknowledgements

Elaine Paul is the Director of Visual Resources with the University of Colorado Boulder's Department of Art and Art History. She received her graduate degree in library and information science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her experience and interests include metadata coordination and curation of digital collections, image research instruction and outreach, and support for digital scholarship and research data management in the arts and humanities.

At the close of 2014 and the start of 2015, I am pleased to report that the Visual Resources Association (VRA) has continued its path forward in service to the profession and to members during this period of significant and sustained transformation within our field. Following Past President Jolene de Verges' report on the state of the Association, delivered at the Annual Business Meeting in March, VRA's activities have included reexamining our means of professional communications; recognizing achievement within and analyzing the current status of the profession; offering educational and professional development opportunities; monitoring and shaping the current intellectual property landscape; developing, disseminating, and maintaining data standards; and attending to ongoing business relating to organizational operations.

Professional Communications
As our journal of professional practice, the *VRA Bulletin* remains a vital avenue for our professional communications. The Association is grateful to Anne Blecksmith for her excellent service and dedication during her term as Content Editor, which was completed with the publication of the previous issue (Volume 40, Number 2). Maureen Burns has recently assumed the Content Editor position. With Production Editor Jason Miller she has brought this current issue to fruition and has also begun laying the foundations for those to follow. This is an opportune moment to remind readers that one need not be a member of VRA to publish in the *Bulletin*. Consider sharing your innovative work and perspectives in the form of feature articles, opinion pieces, reviews, facility or project profiles, commercial partner updates, or affiliate news. Please contact Maureen Burns with questions or ideas (moaburns@gmail.com). For information about the aims and scope of the *Bulletin*, see http://online.vraweb.org/vrab/aimsandscope.html.

The exemplary work of the Web Migration Task Force, led by Public Relations and Communications Officer John Trendler, culminated in the launch of the new and dynamic VRA website (http://vraweb.org/) last June. The front page features a VRA News section, where announcements and memos provide current information to all those interested in the Association's various activities, initiatives, events, and opportunities. This has provided a new means of regular communications with our members and other visitors, while the streamlined and easily navigable structure and content offer a user-friendly experience for those wishing to explore the site.

We welcome Stephen Patton as VRA's newly appointed Communications Technology Advisor (CTA). This position is responsible for assisting the VRA Board, Advisory Groups, Committees, Task Forces, and Chapters in promoting and implementing remote communications technologies (e.g., teleconferencing,

videoconferencing) to facilitate meetings and other events, as well as developing instructional materials in support of these activities.

The Visual Resources Profession
Our annual conference provides an opportunity for VRA to honor colleagues for distinguished achievement and outstanding career contributions to the field of visual resources and image management. Our congratulations go to Ann Whiteside, the 2014 recipient of the Nancy DeLaurier Award. Her vision, leadership, and hard work led to the SAHARA project (http://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sahara/), the digital image archive developed by the Society of Architectural Historians in collaboration with Artstor. And a standing ovation goes to Virginia (Macie) Hall, the 2014 recipient of VRA's Distinguished Service Award, for a career exhibiting such extraordinary distinction in the field through leadership, research, and service to the profession that her contributions are too many to list here. Visit the VRA Awards Recipients page (http://vraweb.org/about/committees/awards-committee/vra-awards-recipients/) to learn about the accomplishments of these two remarkable professionals.

In August VRA charged a Slide and Transitional Media Task Force, chaired by Jenni Rodda, to develop guidelines and informational resources on the appropriate assessment, weeding, digitization, preservation, storage, dispersal, and/or disposal of analog image collections. The task force has produced its first document, "Guidelines for the Evaluation, Retention, and Deaccessioning of 35mm Slide Collections in Educational and Cultural Institutions" (http://vraweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/VRA_Guidelines_EvaluationRetentionDeaccessioning35mmSlideColls-_2014.pdf), and has now turned its attention toward creating guidelines for possible re-uses, and for finding new homes for 35mm slides.

As that task force looks back at preserving our valuable heritage, we are also planning for our future as a profession and organization. The newly charged Professional Status Task Force, co-chaired by Jen Green and Virginia (Macie) Hall, will gather and analyze information to assist VRA in understanding recent shifts in the profession, improving membership benefits to serve current members and attract new ones, and advocating for the profession. As such, it will provide critical information to which the Association can respond in its next strategic plan. The task force will consider the diverse demographics of VRA membership and others in image and media management, including their work in academic environments, museums, government agencies, the commercial sector, non-profit agencies, or as students; their focus on imaging, cataloging and metadata, instruction, reference, outreach, digital asset management, digital scholarship,

rights management, and/or other areas of work or study; and other factors such as their gender, age, and ethnicity.

VRA continues to collaborate with the Visual Resources Association Foundation (http://www.vrafoundation.org/) in support of the profession. As stipulated in our Memorandum of Understanding, the Association and Foundation formally review our relationship every five years. With the co-signing of an updated agreement in December, we have embarked on the next stage in the relationship between our complementary organizations.

The missions of our two organizations are closely aligned, with a few important distinctions. The Association, a non-profit 501 (c) 6 trade association is a multi-disciplinary, international organization dedicated to furthering research and education in the field of image and media management within the educational, cultural heritage, and commercial environments. It was created to provide direct services to its members. VRA, like many trade organizations, universities, and museums, established the VRA Foundation to oversee and develop grants, administer educational activities, and support community outreach projects. The Foundation, a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization, serves the profession more broadly by opening up its initiatives globally. The Foundation exists to advance knowledge in the field of visual resources and image management and to provide educational and training opportunities in support of access to cultural information in the digital age. The Foundation advances awareness of important issues for digital information management; encourages the application of professional standards, innovative technology, and metadata cataloging protocols; facilitates workplace training; and promotes awareness of intellectual property rights and copyright issues. It supports a range of educational offerings to help ensure that such information reaches a diverse and global audience. Having been in close communication in recent months with the Foundation's Chair Margaret Webster about the nature of our organizational relationship, I am optimistic that we will continue finding new ways to work together to advance and advocate for our profession.

Education and Professional Development
VRA's annual conferences provide consistently outstanding opportunities for members and non-members alike to gather and learn from one another. The 2014 conference in Milwaukee (http://www.vraweb.org/conferences/vra32/) continued this tradition with stellar programming that covered wide-ranging topics. These included an array of current and emerging technologies; cataloging and metadata; cross-disciplinary and special collections; faculty collaborations; international resources; moving images; intellectual property; personal digital archiving; and more. Special accolades go to Vice President for Conference Program Steven

Kowalik for his outstanding work on coordinating the program and scheduling; to the Education Committee, co-chaired by Beth Wodnick Haas and Ryan Brubacher, for their invaluable contributions toward programming; and to the many presenters, instructors, and moderators who offered such timely and relevant content.

Our congratulations go to the Implementation Team, co-chaired by Amy Trendler and Meghan Musolff, of the 2014 Summer Educational Institute for Visual Resources and Image Management (SEI). A joint initiative of the Visual Resources Association Foundation and the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA), SEI was held this summer at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Over the course of its eleven consecutive years nearly four hundred visual resources professionals, librarians, museum professionals, graduate students, and individuals from an ever-widening number of fields have benefitted from SEI's intensive and comprehensive curriculum.

The VRA Executive Board and the Local Arrangements, Education, Development, and Travel Awards Committees have been working diligently for many months toward what promises to be a fantastic annual conference in Denver, March 11-14, 2015. A substantial Early Bird discount is available to those who register by February 6, 2015. The excellent preliminary program is posted at http://www.vraweb.org/conferences/vra33/, along with details about accommodations, travel, and other relevant topics. We hope to see you in the Mile-High City as we converge to learn about and share the latest developments in image and media management.

As for future conferences, Seattle has been selected as the site of the 2016 joint conference with ARLIS/NA. I am happy to report that after working together for several months the ARLIS/NA and VRA Boards finalized in early December the Joint Conference Implementation Plan. This document will serve as a roadmap for future joint conference planning between our two organizations. It proceeds from the recommendations of the ARLIS/NA-VRA Joint Conference Task Force, which has been discharged with gratitude by both organizations' Boards. Expertly chaired by Ann Whiteside, its members included Greta Bahnemann, Mark Pompelia, Elizabeth Schaub, and myself. As a participant, I witnessed firsthand the impressively thoughtful work of my colleagues in this group and the great care with which every element of conference planning was considered. I am confident that these efforts will be reflected in a smooth planning process and an outstanding program in 2016. Seattle locals Josh Polansky and Alan Michelson are serving as Joint Conference Co-Chairs. Specific dates will be announced once we have a contract signed with the conference hotel.

Intellectual Property

In July the VRA Board appointed Greg Reser to VRA's seat representing educational institutions on the PLUS Board of Directors. PLUS, the Picture Licensing Universal System (https://www.useplus.com/index.asp), is a cooperative, multi-industry initiative that "provides a system that clearly defines and categorizes image usage around the world, from granting and acquiring licenses to tracking and managing them well into the future." The PLUS Registry (https://www.plusregistry.org/cgi-bin/WebObjects/PlusDB), still in development, will serve as an "online resource developed and operated cooperatively by a global Coalition of all communities engaged in creating, using, distributing and preserving images. Search the Registry to find rights and descriptive information ("metadata") for any image, and to find current contact information for related creators, rights holders and institutions." Watch for new PLUS developments in the months and years to come.

The VRA Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Committee has been monitoring the discussions in the United States Congress surrounding Orphan Works legislation, especially as they relate to the profession. It has also been continuing its efforts to disseminate and raise awareness about the VRA Statement on Fair Use. A brief article about the document appeared in the spring 2014 issue of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference's newsletter, *Mid-Atlantic Archivist*, outlining how the Statement can support the activities of archivists and their patrons (https://marac.memberclicks.net/assets/documents/maaspring2014.pdf).
Committee members have contributed pieces about the Statement on Fair Use to a variety of other professional newsletters, thereby ensuring the broadest possible reach of the document and the work of the VRA community.

Data Standards

In 2014 the VRA Data Standards Committee remained active in developing and promoting standards and tools, offering training opportunities, and advocating for the cultural heritage sector in the broader data standards community. The committee's Embedded Metadata Working Group (http://metadatadeluxe.pbworks.com/w/page/20792294/VRA Embedded Metadata Working Group) developed a custom VRA XMP info panel, Bridge palette, and Export-Import tool. With funding from the VRA Foundation, committee member Amanda Rybin completed the Apple Macintosh version of VRA's MetaShotPpt tool, which creates a PowerPoint presentation from a folder of images, embedding metadata from the images into the slides or presenter notes. The committee offered its popular embedded metadata workshop at the 2014 Milwaukee conference, as well as organizing and endorsing two sessions addressing the Semantic Web and tools to extend the capabilities of VRA Core 4 data. Committee members Greg Reser and Steve Tatum continued their participation in

the IPTC/SCREM project, which proposes the addition of new artwork/object fields to the widely used embedded metadata IPTC Extension schema. This project involves collaboration with IPTC (International Press Telecommunications Council), many museums and libraries in the UK and Europe, and Adobe.

The VRA Core Oversight Committee, co-chaired by Johanna Bauman and Trish Rose-Sandler, has focused this year on improving how they communicate and promote the VRA Core, and on developing tools and maps to share on their website.

Association Business

Members of the Executive Board, various appointees, and numerous committee members volunteer their time throughout the year to attend to an array of ongoing business matters concerning finances, leadership, governance, and membership. Ultimately, these are interdependent topics. As we consider the financial challenges arising from increasing operational costs and ponder how to mentor our next generation of leaders, it is clear that our membership numbers are key to maintaining and building upon the excellence that VRA has built over the last three decades. The Membership Committee, chaired by Melanie Clark, has focused extra attention to this year's membership campaign. With an updated contacts list and outreach e-mails created for specific audiences, we hope to broadcast our value to a wider audience who may not yet be familiar with the opportunities that come with VRA membership. Outreach will be a continuing theme in the coming year.

The myriad accomplishments this year of our appointees and all of the chairs and members of our task forces, committees, and chapters merit our deep appreciation. Their work has enriched the Association and the profession beyond measure. I am immensely privileged to serve the Association with my fellow Executive Board members: Vice President for Conference Arrangements Cindy Abel Morris, Vice President for Conference Program Steven Kowalik, Treasurer Allan Kohl, Public Relations and Communications Officer John Trendler, and Secretary Stephanie Beene. Their ongoing dedication to the Association has inspired and encouraged me daily. I look forward to working with all of these individuals to meet the challenges and enjoy the rewards that 2015 will bring.