Library Faculty Publications   **Library Faculty/Staff Scholarship & Research**

6-30-2008

Expertise for the visually-oriented from the visually-oriented: ARLIS/NA contributions to the library profession

Jeanne M. Brown
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, jeanne.brown@unlv.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/lib_articles

Part of the Art and Design Commons, and the Library and Information Science Commons

Expertise for the Visually-Oriented from the Visually-Oriented:
ARLIS/NA Contributions to the Library Profession

American Library Association Annual Conference
Anaheim June 30, 2008
Jeanne M. Brown

ARLIS/NA stands for "The Art Libraries Society of North America." BTW how many of you have heard of ARLIS before? The name of the society is a bit misleading since the Society is composed of individuals not libraries. ARLIS (Slide 2) has members whose responsibilities are in art, architecture, and design, and who work in museums, public libraries, academic libraries and visual resources collections. The Society holds an annual conference, has an active publications program, maintains a complex web site, and addresses the continuing education needs of its members.

My focus today will be on the publications program, since that is readily accessible to ALA members, with many of the publications online on the ARLIS/NA web site (Slide 3). I will attempt to show the contributions these publications make to librarians outside of the arts, and to the library profession in general. Specially, I will address the areas of instruction, cataloging, collection development, librarian education, and copyright.

Instruction

For instruction to students who are visually oriented, ARLIS has produced two publications of interest: *Information Competencies for Students in Design Disciplines*, and *Library Instruction for Students in Design Disciplines: Scenarios, Exercises, Techniques*. (Slide 4) These two publications are of special interest in light of the fact that it is no longer just arts-related students who are said to be visually oriented, but a large portion of the younger generation as well!

Information Competencies for Students in Design Disciplines (slide 5) is based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards, and seeks to customize those standards to students in art, architecture, interior design, fashion, landscape architecture, and museum studies. The slide being displayed shows Intermediate skills for art history students.

Unlike the ACRL standards, these competencies are divided into basic, intermediate, and advanced – emphasizing the progressive nature of skill development. The competencies were posted January 2007 on the ARLIS web site, in the publications section. Although these competencies are NOT visual literacy competencies, they would be useful to a librarian addressing the disciplines mentioned above.

Library Instruction for Students in Design Disciplines was published in 2002 and contains exercises appealing to the visually oriented, applicable even to students in disciplines not specifically targeted by ARLIS.

One example is a project (slide 6) which called on students to graphically illustrate their understanding of the library search process by making an analogy between parts of the research process and another field. The analogy project was part of a one-credit class, and was the culmination of the semester. Here is an analogy as fleshed out, comparing elements of the search process to boxing. They were also asked to illustrate the analogy visually.

Cataloging

Moving now from instruction to cataloging, the cataloging group in ARLIS is very active and has addressed several areas of interest to catalogers. (Slide 7) Since I make no claim to cataloging competence, I will simply share the titles of the publications – all of which are online.

Artists Files Revealed: Documentation & Access. Posted: 25 April 2008 by The Artists Files Working Group and provides general guidelines for MARC records representing artist files.

Another title which addresses specialized cataloging is *Cataloging Exhibition Publications: Best Practices.* This title (slide 8) was posted April 2008 by the Cataloging Advisory Group. It addresses the unique challenges of cataloging a type of publication which often requires "more use of a cataloger's judgment, and more intervention in terms of transposing, omitting, and supplying data". Main entry is just one example of the kind of guidance this publication provides.

Collection Development

Those involved in Collection Development, whether an art and architecture materials selector, a manager of collection development, or a selector of databases, will be interested in several publications from ARLIS (Slide 9).

Collection Development Policies for Libraries and Visual Collections in the Arts includes policy statements from academic, architecture, museum, and art school libraries, as well as from visual collections. Considerations unique to visual materials are of course part of the unique value of the work. Such considerations include visual quality, production specialties of art publishers, and specialized publication formats (such as the exhibition catalogs and artists books addressed by the catalogers in the above examples). This is only available in print.

The [Digital Image Database Standards Checklist: Technical, Functional, Content, & Access Recommendations](#) was posted to the ARLIS web site in January 2006. Here is just a small bit from the checklist. (Slide 10). It is a substantial contribution by the ARLIS Standards Committee. Its use is to serve as an evaluative tool for electronic image databases. Although designed to evaluate image databases that are content repositories with asset management and presentation functionalities, portions of the checklist may be used independently to assess products with fewer capabilities.

Librarian Education

Anyone interested in or involved in the education of librarians (slide 11) should be familiar with the ARLIS/NA print -- and online in an abbreviated format -- publication *Core Competencies and Core Curricula for the Art Library and Visual Resources Professions* which is an invaluable tool can be used for job descriptions, job analysis, professional development, and for those seeking to enter the field. It includes course materials, and descriptions and curricula outlines from exemplary LIS programs focusing on arts, humanities, museum, and digital librarianship.

And speaking of museum librarianship, the newly published *Art Museum Libraries and Librarianship* handbook is an excellent in-depth description of the workings of the museum library which is essential to any student interested in this field. This joint publication between ARLIS and Scarecrow Press edited by Joan Benedetti contains 16 chapters describing areas including readers services, visual collections, security versus access issues, copyright, ephemera, special collections, working with volunteers and much more.

Copyright

Using images, and dealing with image copyright are critical issues being addressed by ARLIS members, many of whom are in both ARLIS and a related organization, the Visual Resources Association (VRA). On the VRA site there are ample resources on copyright, including the *Digital Image Rights Computator (DIRC)* program which is intended to assist the user in assessing the intellectual property status of a specific image documenting a work of art, a designed object, or a portion of the built environment. (Slide 12) Following the sample question on the slide are several citations to works that can help answer the question. The point of the computator is to help you work through a series of levels and questions until you arrive at the point of determining copyright status.

Conclusion

So in conclusion I'd like to thank you for your attention. (Slide 13) I believe the expertise embodied in the publications I have reviewed in Instruction, Cataloging, Collection Development, Librarian Education, and Copyright -- is useful to librarians in many different contexts, and will hopefully prove so in your specific context.