

ARLIS/NA Northwest Chapter 2012 Travel Report  
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Report on the Art Libraries Society of North America Annual Conference  
Colouring Outside the Lines  
Toronto, Ontario, March 29 – April 2, 2012

I arrived at the Sheraton Hotel in Toronto on Thursday, March 29, around 9pm after a long day of travel by road, rail and air. By the time I checked in I had enjoyed a shift in time zones, the lively atmosphere of three international airports, and the occasionally mystifying navigation of three rail systems. That morning in Portland I boarded a plane that eventually failed inspection. After sitting almost an hour the flight crew asked us to “deboard” the plane. Eventually they located a serviceable aircraft and my trip was underway. Later a domino effect of hastily altered travel arrangements ensued, culminating in an dusky subway journey through Toronto and a short, chilly walk to the hotel. By the late evening I felt I was fully prepared to *colour outside the lines*.

The next four days I enjoyed a wonderful array of sessions, meetings and special events. As is often the case at library conferences there were just too many things to do in too little time. I would have been happy spending another week or two in Toronto, especially among the splendid company of art librarians in attendance. My favorite sessions covered a diverse spread of material including ways art librarians can engage artists in their studio practice, book arts technology, metadata usage, collection development, audiovisual preservation and library marketing. I was struck by the thoughtful preparation and creative panache of my colleagues.

There were plenty of other highlights too. Canadian artist Diana Thorneycraft delivered a wonderfully quirky opening plenary address, presenting her work and an enjoyable dissection of the Group of Seven. The clamorous welcome party afterward was fun too—it’s never been more clear that art librarians know how to let loose and have a good time! Cake and drinks were consumed and enjoyed in a celebration befitting 40 years of our organization. The following evening was the real icing on the cake though, as we walked or took chartered buses over to a fabulous convocation reception at the Art Gallery of Ontario. I met up with old friends and made new ones too.

The following morning I presented as part of a panel discussion, *Remix, Reuse, Rework: Fostering Learning Beyond the Classroom*, moderated by Meredith Kahn. My presentation, *Mimi and Homerom: Homegrown Educational Software Solutions at PNCA*, dovetailed nicely with the other participants’ presentations; topics covered mobile app creation in educational contexts to support specific course material, and engaging students by leveraging their familiarity with memes to participate in mash-ups and remixes in innovative class settings. We had a nice turnout and I was encouraged by the responses I received directly after and throughout the rest of my visit.

Monday morning I checked out and hustled over to the Ontario College of Art and Design for the annual Association of Independent Colleges of Art and Design (AICAD) Library Directors Meeting. This is the fourth year I've had the good fortune to be able to attend this meeting, and every time it rates as one of the most helpful chances I get to glean new approaches to running an art school library. Usually about half of the 42 AICAD directors are able to attend. The schools represented range from very small institutions of less than 200 hundred students to much larger colleges with thousands. My school, PNCA, hovers around 600, with ten undergraduate majors and five graduate programs. Anyway, whether from large or small schools, we all have a chance to share our challenges and adventures, while planning for the most advantageous ways to pool our resources, which always seem to be in danger. We compare statistical markers and monitor new developments in the field. We share tips on finagling resources from higher administration. We eat boxed lunch.

It was a great conference, but I suppose it goes without saying that any time spent with an art librarian is time well spent. Perhaps there ought to be a standard plural reference for art librarians, as there is for crows, apes and cats (murder, shrewdness and glaring respectively). I suggest *context*; that seems fitting. The city of Toronto is an excellent place to have a conference—it sports an exhilarating diversity, and supports many outstanding cultural attractions. I was able to walk from the hotel to the University of Toronto, and to many eclectic neighborhoods in between. I loved the transit systems, which were actually affordable and methodically administered. Toronto is one of those rare cities that never eradicated their streetcar lines in favor of buses. The streetcars remain, and with the addition of the subway lines, you can easily travel the city without an automobile. I had no trouble at all getting to and from the airport. Another intriguing facet of Toronto is the vast and sprawling underground, which connects many of the buildings, allowing pedestrians to make their way, even when the snow is falling heavily. Luckily the weather was never an issue during my visit, with only a few sleety flakes falling.

Thank you, Northwest Chapter, for making my visit possible! PNCA chipped in some, and I paid some too, but the trip wouldn't have been possible without you.