

Banff Springs Hotel

I was the fortunate recipient of the ARLIS/NA Northwest chapter travel award this year, which supported a very enjoyable and stimulating trip to the 34th Annual ARLIS/NA conference in Banff, Alberta. What a stunning location for a meeting! The Banff Springs Hotel was charming and the surrounding views spectacular. Attendees came from as far away as South Africa, and as always at conferences the informal conversations with colleagues were as educational as the sessions. Here are some highlights:

The pre-conference workshop ***Copying Right in the Canadian Context: Looking at the Arts and Images*** led by lawyer Wanda Noel was well worth the early arrival. Knowledgeable of the subject and sensible in her interpretation of it, Wanda presented copyright rules and their application to images in Canada in a clear, logical manner. She took questions readily throughout the day, and encouraged anecdotes from the participants so that we learned almost as much from our colleagues as from her. Since libraries are mainly users rather than copyright holders, it was helpful to have her point out that there are exceptions to the copyright law which particularly help Libraries. These are reproduction for instruction, fair dealing and the maintenance and management of collections. The third case could serve to allow the digital scanning of a slide collection when slide projectors are no longer available (provided the original slides were acquired properly, and no commercial product is readily available.)

I came away with a clearer understanding of how the laws affect the copying of images in Canada and less intimidated by the legal concerns of copyright infringement.

Our heads heavy with copyright legalities, some of us convened at one of the best spots in the Banff Springs Hotel: the Rundle Lounge overlooking the spectacular Bow River Valley.

Friday's workshop ***Collection Development and Assessment*** was broken into two sections. Part A covered traditional approaches to assessment, and was especially helpful for the opportunity to discuss approaches with librarians from similar types of libraries. I had an interesting conversation with a group of art museum librarians about the value of exchange programs, and how to evaluate the research value of an art museum library collection. In Part B Helen Clarke and Heather D'Amour of the University of Calgary presented their carefully planned, technical approach to collection assessment using WorldCat software. Fortunately they recognized that not everyone has access to this sophisticated (=expensive!) software, and as an alternative they showed some basic techniques for assessing a collection using MS Excel. Ultimately, either method should lead to the production of statistics to sway an administrator to provide more funding for a collection.

Art School Superstars

Simon Grennan, Christopher Sperandio

Seattle, WA: Grossman Gallery & Fantagraphic Books. 1998

The afternoon found me in ***Artist Books: Strategies for Collecting*** presented by AA Bronson and Max Schumann of Printed Matter, New York. Unfortunately they had arrived in Banff without their two boxes of books to show us – presumably they had been held up at the border. However, they were able to borrow a stylistically and chronologically varied selection from the Banff Centre Library and from their own installation in the exhibition *Comic Craze* at the Walter Phillips Gallery. It was refreshing to view collections from the viewpoint of makers, and personal collectors. They showed us their favourites, some old, some new, and imparted some of the delight they find in these “artworks for the page”. (Not the precious object type, but inexpensive publications produced in print runs of at least 100) AA's advice if starting or developing an artist book collection: buy books in print when they are still cheap.

Planning for Posterity: The Preservation of Art and Architecture Materials was presented Saturday morning by librarians from Harvard, McGill and the Pratt Institute. They presented techniques for caring and storing rare books ranging from creating special boxes to building a dedicated rare book facility with specific environmental controls. David Grattan from the Canadian Conservation Institute spoke about research he has been involved with on the permanence of paper and electronic media. His comment that “the worst newspaper is better than the best optical disc” gave support to all of the efforts we heard about earlier in the session to preserve printed books. There were several sessions discussing control and access of digital image collections, including ***Improving Access to Images and Metadata***.

Recognizing that many academics are creating their own image banks, Penn State University is developing software called LionShare (<http://lionshare.its.psu.edu/main/>) to allow the easy exchange of image collections, video archives, and large data collections over the internet.

Gunter Waibel from RLG talked about getting images out of the database and into the classroom and summarized the various methods of image control from the current stand alone licensed database model to the Getty's open content model which proposes that reproductions of artworks in the public domain be freely available. Eileen Fry and Ann Whiteside spoke of the challenges of cataloguing images available on the internet when there is no accepted taxonomy to guide subject access. They referred to databases such as Flickr which anyone can add images to and tag as they wish, thus creating a "collaborative rather than an authoritative world".

Art Books, Book Arts, Books in Art: The Canadian Chronicle was a session set in a pre-digital age, and considered images in Canadian books, and Canadian images about books and reading. Jo Nordley Beglo gave a history of exhibition catalogue publishing at the National Gallery of Canada where publications have developed from modest brochures with little if any images to substantial hard cover books co-published with private publishers and rich in images and scholarly text. Many early 20th century painters in Canada began their artistic careers as graphic artists, and Randall Speller showed us some delightful examples of book illustration by artists such as Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven. Carol Gerson brought us images of books and reading in Canadian art from tranquil Victorian ladies immersed in a novel to artist books which take a playful, ironic approach to the book in art.

Some art museums that have archivists among their library staff are making exhibition records available on the internet. In **Online Access to Exhibition Histories: The Role of the Art Museum Library** we heard how the National Gallery of Canada and the Pierpont Morgan Library are creating MARC records for their exhibitions and adding these to their OPAC. The Brooklyn Museum has its exhibition records in a database separate from its OPAC, but also accessible on the web. All these libraries are linking their exhibition records to images and documents scanned from their institution's rich archives. My mind was whirling with the possibilities!

Conferences are the best place to meet librarians working in specialities within the field. Since I spend a large part of my working hours managing an online catalogue, I am always eager to attend the special interest groups devoted to cataloguing. There are some bright, funny people who call themselves cataloguers so these meetings are more entertaining than you might think! This year there was discussion of the merger of RLG and OCLC (though since this had just been announced most of the talk was speculative). There was also talk of a listserv independent of the ARLIS/NA listserv to be used for cataloguing specific questions and issues which would be very helpful for those of us working in small libraries.

And finally, outside of the classroom there was a tour of the Banff Springs, wine tasting, a look at Comic Craze at the Walter Phillips Gallery and a film night to see nine short films made at the National Film Board of Canada that were beautiful and thought provoking and fun to watch.

Thank you ARLIS/NA Northwest Chapter for giving me this opportunity!

Lynn Brockington