

## **49th ARLIS Conference 2021 - Report - Andres (Andy) Resto-Spotts**

Attending the ARLIS Conference was a rewarding experience. I've gained a much richer understanding of the depth of opportunities available and creative ways of working in the art librarianship field. I was able to make a few valuable connections with professionals, whom I hope to remain in touch with. Though many things were new to me, I was happy to dive in headfirst, and by this time next year will hopefully feel that much more comfortable both as an emerging professional and ARLIS member.

### *Sessions*

There were times during the whirlwind three days where I felt a bit like a fish out of water, but I truly enjoyed letting the material sink in. I attended three sessions per day for the three days. I will mention a series of technical sessions and two practical sessions to highlight my experience.

When I say "technical", what I mean by that are sessions which covered tools used by galleries across North America. On day one, several presentations were given under the heading of "Linked Data for Art Libraries." I learned a lot about the Getty Research Portal and their network of controlled vocabularies; other tools mentioned include BIBFRAME, OpenRefine, and the use of Wikidata. As I took all of this information in, I began to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of linked data. Often these concepts have a bit of a learning curve, especially for someone like myself who has only foundational knowledge in database structures and little to no programming experience. However, through seeing concrete examples of the use of these tools, I was able to both see their growing value in today's age, as well as start to see that the knowledge required to pursue this particular aspect of the profession is not as opaque as it originally may seem.

A great example of the value of this technology, using metadata to promote interconnectivity, is the partnership between the Getty Research Institute and the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties. Not only does this partnership show the value in sharing previously inaccessible cultural materials across the globe, but it also shows how western metadata standards can adapt and grow when confronted with new ways of thinking.

A couple of sessions I attended felt immediately applicable to some of my previous experiences, while also acting as frameworks to use in the future for similar projects which are bound to come up. This includes a session titled *Inter-Agency Collaboration: Piloting a Visual Resources Consortium to Meet Society of Architectural Historians Preservation Goals through an NEH Grant-Funded Project*. Sonja Sekely-Rowland and Jacqueline Spafford from the University of California presented on a Color Film Emergency Project, which set out to identify and evaluate at-risk 35mm slide collections and come up with ways to digitally and materially preserve them. This session was great because it spoke in-depth about the grant-writing process, which is something that I believe every aspiring art librarian should become familiar with, but which isn't often taught in an academic program. They also used an intriguing consortium model for the project, hoping to invite institutional partners to contribute to the preservation of slide collections. Having previously worked with the Western Front Society in Vancouver, I am aware of how specialized some of the knowledge around sound and moving image archives can be. If I hope to continue to work in similar organizations in the future, the methodology and thought processes of this grant project will be important to keep in mind.

A second example that I found worthwhile, titled *Processing During the Pandemic*, spoke about an archives processing project that was undertaken in Marfa, Texas. The presentation was excellent because it took us through the planning and execution of the project step by step, from the records survey, to tracking methods, to technology needed and used, to digitization and provision of access. I have been involved with a couple of processing projects during my short time as a graduate student, and will certainly be part of many to come in the future. The organizational tools presented here will be something that I come back to for reference.

### *Connections*

I made a few valuable connections during the conference through one-on-one meetings and informational interviews. They were able to provide valuable insight into different aspects of my current situation, be that as a sound archives enthusiast, a soon-to-be graduate, or a student researcher.

The first of these, though we of course knew each other previously, is with Emma Hurst, the other northwest chapter representative at the conference. It was great for us to be able to check in throughout the week about what we were attending and learning, and how we may move forward in the future. The two of us attending the conference and in a way bonding through it established an ongoing friendship with someone in the same position as myself; each of us are entering a niche portion of an already niche profession and continuously trying to find ways to learn and grow and find opportunities. I believe moving forward Emma and I will be able to support one another in our career development.

My personal interviews / chats were with Margaret English, Amy Rose, and Karen Halliday. Margaret English is the Art History Librarian at the University of Toronto, with a background in community radio and a passion for sound art. This background intrigued me as I have the same experience, myself having been a Music Director at a community radio station. It was awesome to talk with her about ways to incorporate her skillset and passion around avant-garde sound art to her current position. I spoke with Margaret and a student she works with about starting an ongoing group within the ARLIS membership for sound enthusiasts to share resources from their libraries and job opportunities. I definitely plan to continue staying in touch with Margaret going forward.

Amy Rose, from the National Gallery of Canada, was able to provide me with a wonderful perspective on navigating the job market, in particular by expanding my horizons to include searching for government positions and the myriad of opportunities that may open up. I learned a lot from Amy about how the National Gallery works and will be keeping my eye out for positions in Ottawa.

Karen Halliday presented on her project involving provenance research into Nazi looted materials. After attending her session, I reached out to her for advice on planning this kind of a research project, particularly dealing with sensitive materials in historical and cultural senses. The reason this was important for me is because in the fall I will be pursuing a directed study research project involving a collection of family letters written from the gulag in the 1930s. I got tips from Karen regarding time management, types of organizational tools she used, and how she approached speaking about and describing the difficult situations she was researching.

Thank you so much for selecting me to attend the ARLIS Conference 2021. I look forward to staying involved with the society through the remainder of my degree and beyond.