

## Art Libraries Society of North America | Mountain West Chapter 2016 Travel Award Recipient

### Conference Report: Jessica Mlotkowski

I would like to thank Margaret Van Dyk, Caroline Dechert, the award committee, and the other members of ARLIS/MW for providing me this opportunity to attend the ARLIS/NA annual conference in Seattle, Washington through the Winberta Yao Travel Award. As a new member of ARLIS, the annual conference was a wonderful way to meet and connect with other librarians and learn more about the issues facing the field of art librarianship.

I started the conference by attending the ARLIS/NA Mountain West and VRA Wild West Combined Chapters meeting on Wednesday morning. I enjoyed meeting the other members of our regional chapter and hearing news of what we have been working on as a group. My favorite part of this meeting was the opportunity to meet with other librarians in the chapter and discuss the work we do at our respective institutions. I connected with several other librarians who are also new to the Mountain West region, and it was interesting share our reflections on our new work.

Immediately following the meeting, I attended the *Getting in the Game: Three Free Tools that Take You from Flat Data to RDF* workshop. I did not know quite what to expect from this workshop, and I was very pleasantly surprised by what I learned! As catalogers, most of us understand RDF only from a conceptual perspective. The leaders of the workshop presented a workflow for creating metadata for visual resources and creating these linked data relationships through RDF that simply made sense. We were introduced to several transformation tools created to aid in this process as well. The process itself was very similar to digital project workflows I have used in the past, and I left the workshop feeling a shift in my understanding from the conceptual to the practical.

This workshop also nicely complimented another session I attended—*RDF and LOD in Use Today*. The presenters of this session discussed their experience working with linked data and converting their data to RDF data through specific projects they have spearheaded in their libraries. Alongside this theme, I also decided to attend the ARLIS Cataloging Advisory Committee meeting. This meeting gave me a taste of how committees function within ARLIS/NA, as well as insight into the special priorities of catalogers in art libraries. What I learned through this meeting is that art libraries have very diverse metadata needs, which are dependent upon what they collect. Some people argued their need for very specific subject access, while others expressed their relative satisfaction with Library of Congress subject access and other controlled vocabularies. Being new to art librarianship, I found this discussion of specific institutional needs and the need for more specific cataloging standards very interesting.

One of my favorite ARLIS activities was the First Time Attendees and New Members Reception, where I connected with both new and seasoned members of ARLIS. Everyone participated in a fun, social game in which we were given a playing card and asked to find the person in the room with the same card. It was a nice icebreaker and an easy way to start a conversation with other ARLIS newbies. In search for

my matching card, I met a Princeton art librarian, a federal librarian, the former director of IAIA, two Serbian librarians, and some very friendly and enthusiastic MLIS graduate students.

Another favorite session I attended was *Do It, Make It: Current Initiatives and Advice on Creating a Makerspace in Academic Libraries and Visual Resources Centers*. All three presenters had very different approaches to their makerspaces to fit the needs of their students. From Legos at Rutgers University for stress relief to a 3-D printer at the University of Maryland that helps support architectural students' scholarship, I learned that makerspaces are fluid in their conception and use. At IAIA, we have experimented with some pop-up makerspaces during finals and midterms weeks to help take the edge off of testing stress. I left this session with many more ideas for low-cost, stress-reducing, and fun makerspace activities for our art students, and, a somewhat altered perception of the role of academic libraries in student life.

As inspiring as these sessions were, my two favorite sessions of the week were two sessions on diversity offered by ARLIS this year: *Connecting Social Justice to the Workplace: Issues of Diversity in Our Professional Lives* and the *Diversity Forum*. The presenters for *Connecting Social Justice to the Workplace* interwove interdisciplinary research with their own social justice work and their personal experiences as people of color in the field of librarianship. They also offered participants resources, such as Stanford's Diversity Toolkit, to help us start conversations about diversity within our own libraries and institutions. In the *Diversity Forum*, we had a group conversation about the lack of diversity in librarianship and the reasons behind it. We also had the opportunity to complete a worksheet on how we self-identify and why. In small groups, we had an open and honest conversation about our identity and how our self-identification affects how we perceive and treat others. My hope is that ARLIS/NA expands upon the forum and offers a workshop on diversity in librarianship in the near future.

In addition to the more formal ARLIS conference activities, I was happy to run into several colleagues of mine from my days as a graduate student at UNC Chapel Hill. It was wonderful to reunite and discuss the direction our careers have taken us over the past four to five years. One of these colleagues and I have decided to have periodic Skype sessions at the end of each semester to share our work offer each other feedback. Another of these colleagues is now a professor with the University of Washington's School of Information Science and Medical School and lives in Seattle. Over green tea lattes at Moore Coffee Shop, we had a wonderful conversation about our respective work and how information systems help connect people to solve real life problems. I would not have been able to reestablish these connections without the Winberta Yao Award.

Reflecting upon my time in Seattle at the ARLIS/NA annual conference, I am filled with gratitude for this opportunity. I learned so much, met some wonderfully creative librarians, reconnected with former colleagues, and had the opportunity to do all of these things in a beautiful city. As a new ARLIS/Mountain West member, I look forward to future meetings and involvement in the chapter, as well attending the ARLIS/NA annual conference in future years. Thank you!

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