

Twin Cities Chapter Travel Award Report  
2014 ARLIS/NA Conference in Washington, D.C.

Dear Twin Cities Chapter of ARLIS/NA,

I would like to extend to you my gratitude for the 2014 Twin Cities Chapter Travel Award, which made attending the 2014 ARLIS/NA Conference in Washington, D.C. possible. This was my first conference experience and was an extremely positive one, in large part thanks to the support I received in many forms from the Twin Cities Chapter.

My conference experience began with a workshop held outside of the conference center at Pyramid Atlantic in Silver Spring, Maryland. Pyramid Atlantic is a non-profit contemporary arts center that provides studio space, educational programming and community engagement with printmaking and book arts. This may have been an atypical way to begin a conference, but for me, it was perfect. The workshop was called “Bookings: Making Makerspaces for Artists Books.” It was led by the inspiring women from Women’s Studio Workshop, and it was a real treat to meet artists and directors Tatana Kellner and Ann Kalmbach, whose work I have long admired. In this workshop, we discussed examples of successful makerspaces and actually *made* things ourselves. It was a valuable exercise in how to organize such a workshop and how to create an inspirational experience while keeping realistic expectations. It was also a great way to meet library professionals from *all over* (from Banff, Canada to Melbourne, Australia) who are similarly interested in artists’ books and making things.

Back at the Grand Hyatt, I attended many other workshops that fit perfectly with my professional interests. One of my favorites was “Collecting Outside the Mainstream: Alternative Avenues for Library Collections,” which was formatted as a panel discussion presenting diverse perspectives on the topic – an art book distributor, an independent publisher, a bookseller and a bibliographer. To me, this format worked really well and underlined how important it is to form relationships across this spectrum. It raised some great questions about how to foster those relationships and increase awareness of alternative publications.

Another favorite of mine was “Creative Engagement for Advocacy: Innovative Partnerships between Artists and Librarians.” I was most inspired by the people from “The People’s Library” in Richmond, Virginia. Artists Mark Strandquist and Courtney Bowles direct an amazing program where community members create books – pulp, paper, bindings and all – and add their personal histories to the library’s collection. I know all of the attendees were particularly moved by their presentation, and it has certainly left an impression on me. They even created zines that outline how to go about initiating such a program. It was a great example of how a big and heart-felt idea can actually come to life.

Of course, I attended some sessions of broader interest. I am fascinated with intellectual property rights and chose to attend the session “Fair Use/Fair Game: Intellectual Property and the Visual Arts.” I was very impressed by the

presentation on the CAA Fair Use Project by Angelica Das from the Center for Media and Social Impact at American University. Das talked about the how it is really the artistic communities themselves who will decide the standards for fair use. Fair use in film may be very different from visual arts, etc. While this discussion did not make intellectual property rights less of a murky topic for me, it did give me hope that fair use standards within a discipline might someday make common sense to its members and truthfully promote progress.

In addition to all of the stimulating sessions, I thoroughly enjoyed the time for mingling and the conversations I had with fellow professionals. I was able to reconnect with several classmates from Summer Educational Institute 2013. The Friday night reception at Dumbarton Oaks was simply magical – from the beautiful gardens, fine wine, elegant galleries and research facilities, all the way down to the party bus we took back to the hotel (I think it was ordered on error, but it was still silly and fun). The Saturday night convocation at the Library of Congress was equally spectacular. I think we were all a bit giddy by our surroundings. For this profession, it felt like an important pilgrimage.

I am very grateful for the Twin Cities Chapter Travel Award that enabled me to attend the ARLIS/NA Conference in Washington, D.C. and receive the internship award in person. I began my internship at the National Museum of Women in the Arts on the last day of the conference, where I helped the library welcome ARLIS/NA members to an open house. Krystyna Wasserman, the Book Arts Curator at NMWA, shared several of her favorite artists' books with visitors. It was a great introduction. I finished the day by joining the Washington, D.C. chapter in celebrating the close of a successful conference. It was an honor to be welcomed in to their network. As I begin my career as a librarian, I feel well supported by a national network of professionals and inspired by all the creative people (librarians, artists, publishers, educators) who came together at the conference to have intelligent and inspired conversations about the future of our field.

Sincerely,  
Margit Wilson