ARLIS/NA+VRA 2016 Conference Report
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Submitted by Bailey Diers, ARLIS/NA-Twin Cities Chair, 2016 Chapter Travel Award Recipient

This year, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) and the Visual Resources Association (VRA) joined forces for their third joint conference, *Natural Connections*, which was held in Seattle in March. I was fortunate to be able to attend this conference and would like to thank the ARLIS/NA Twin Cities Chapter for providing financial assistance. This was the third ARLIS/NA conference I have attended and my second joint conference with VRA. The joint conferences have been especially beneficial to me since much of my work involves digital collections, metadata, and emerging technologies. I also had opportunities to connect with library colleagues new and old across North America.

My conference kicked off with a joint chapter meeting between ARLIS/NA-Twin Cities, ARLIS/NA Midstates, and VRA Midwest. We continued discussions surrounding the possibilities of merging ARLIS/NA and VRA at a national level or at least continuing to collaborate at a local level, which we began discussing at a joint chapters fall meeting in Minneapolis in 2015. The chapters plan to host their third joint chapter meeting in Fall 2016.

Following the chapter meeting I joined a group tour for a special showing of the Seattle Public Library’s *North American Indians* by Edward Curtis and Alfred Stieglitz’s *Camera Work*. Both are exceptional works that are also held at Hennepin County Library in the Minneapolis Athenaeum’s Collections. It was fascinating to compare these two pivotal photography works which were both done over a number of decades in the early part of the 20th century. Following the showing, I met individually with the department head to tour the Seattle Room and learn more about how another local history collection in a large public library system functions. I was inspired by their completely open and browseable collection.
I attended numerous sessions during the conference, primarily focusing on topics related to digital collections. While many of the presenters were from academic and museum institutions, the projects and tools used were applicable to a public library setting. In a session on Rights Management different organizations spoke of their experience working with scholars to provide access to digital collections--some offered resources at a fee, others used a creative commons attribution. I plan to follow up with research into the DPLA Standardized Rights Statements, which were mentioned several times.

In a session on media tools and tactics for audio and visual collections, Geoff Froh from Densho spoke about storing and preserving complex media collections. Another presenter from the Go For Broke National Education Center spoke about their process of conducting oral histories and indexing them at timed intervals. And two presenters from the University of Minnesota shared their new open source software, Elevator, a flexible cloud-based digital content management system. Interestingly, majority of the presenters at this session were not librarians, but came from tech-centered backgrounds. This stressed the importance of technology and computer programming and the need for strong IT departments in libraries who are willing to work collaboratively with librarians to create and implement tools for digital resources.

While Hennepin County Library is not currently web archiving, I see it as a service we will need to provide in the future. In an engaging session on web archiving, several projects were discussed, both large and small. Archive-It and Webrecorder are two main tools used for web archiving--different workflows and slightly different outcomes. But both involved a time-consuming quality assurance process. Does the site resemble the original? Can the user navigate within the site? This session got me thinking about our own institutional sites. Not only our hclib website, but social media pages too, especially sites like Instagram and Tumblr. What are we doing at the county level to archive web resources?

In addition to the sessions mentioned above, I attended sessions on engaging users with technology, running a successful internship program, creating makerspaces, and subject cataloging of images. But the conference wasn't all business and learning. Receptions at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) and the Seattle Public Library provided after-hours access to two amazing buildings and institutions. I was especially thrilled to see the Kehinde Wiley show at SAM! While rainy and
windy for nearly the entire conference, I also had time to explore bits of downtown Seattle (including Pike Place Market) and the lively Capitol Hill neighborhood. I look forward to the next ARLIS/NA conference and hope for more joint conferences with VRA in the future.

Images: Views from the hotel and a kinetic sculpture outside the Seattle Art Museum.