The Public Library Division had a very successful annual conference in Pittsburgh. More members attended both the business and discussion meetings than in the previous four years. This included new members to ARLIS/NA and members attending their first national conference. 20 members attended the business meeting and 18 attended the discussion group. Also attending the business meeting was Leslie Abrams, the Executive Board Liaison for the division.

At the business meeting Jeffrey Stephens, Queens Borough Public Library, NY, was elected as Moderator/Update column Editor for another year. Last July he volunteered to act as Moderator to replace Carl Baker, who moved to the museum division. Members discussed the new Strategic Plan which will be in effect 2000-2002. Points of the plan still pertinent to the division are: the need to increase public librarian conference attendance to further professional development, increase membership, share more resources among public, academic, museum, and design libraries and work with these and other ARLIS/NA groups on collection development and resource sharing.

Much discussion ensued regarding conference attendance. There exists a wide variation in how much funding public librarians receive to attend conferences, from those who receive no funding at all but get paid time off, to some who have their registration paid, to those who receive almost full funding from their libraries. We agreed that with low public librarian salaries and little funding for travel, the number of public librarians at conferences will always be low. The possibility of an ARLIS/NA travel award for a public librarian was discussed, but this award would have to be independently funded. Public librarians might also work to receive funding from library friends groups. The first step would be to find out, perhaps through an informal survey over ARLIS-L, how much funding public librarians receive for conference travel.

Ideas for the 2001 conference in Los Angeles were then discussed. Three librarians from LA, Beverly Hills, and Glendale public libraries proposed a tour of their libraries which would also take in fascinating sight seeing along the way. Other tours might include a film script or film company library. Session proposals covered Collection Development and how public libraries must cater to different age levels, and how art librarians can share access to important vertical files that librarians may have compiled over the years but are not known to exist outside that particular library.

At the discussion group members aired their pet peeves and grievances over a wide spectrum. Lack of space for collections is a problem that all libraries face and collection weeding is a continuous process which sometimes results in difficult decisions as to which art books to keep or discard. Art divisions in many public libraries must also compete for space with music, drama, theater, film and sports collections which also affects collection development and weeding. Several members bemoaned how much space auction catalogs take up and several libraries are turning to online or CD-ROM products such as Art Price Annual, Art Sales Index, and ArtFact. There was also discussion regarding budget considerations in purchasing expensive titles for reference or circulation. All members present felt that the discussion group should be continued at future conferences as an effective forum for exchanging ideas and getting better acquainted.

The Division co-sponsored three panel sessions, two of which covered issues of particular interest to public art librarians: Access to Access: Library Building Accessibility which covered better access to buildings and library materials for the disabled in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act; and From Collaboration to Consortia: Developing Partnerships regarding developing partnerships with other libraries to enhance resource sharing, outreach, and art programs. We also co-sponsored the session Wrought of Steel and Philanthropy: The Forging of Andrew Carnegie’s Cultural Legacy which focused on Andrew Carnegie’s establishment of hundreds of public libraries in the U.S. and Canada and its consequences for libraries and the profession.

It is always a professional restorative to connect with other public library Fine Arts librarians at the annual conference, as well as art librarians from academic, museum, and design libraries, to share ideas about expanding our professional development, how we can contribute more to ARLIS/NA, and how we can better serve patrons who enter our libraries.
looking for a particular nugget of art information.

Thanks to all the organizers for a well-run and wonderfully fulfilling conference!

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