RISS (Reference and Information Services Section) Business Meeting

Minutes

April 2, 2001

Art Libraries Society of North America 29th Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA

Tom Grieves, Moderator
Marcy Neth, Co-Moderator
Judy Donovan, Update Editor

Elections/Nominations

The first order of business was the nomination of a new slate of RISS officers. Marcy Neth, who currently is Co-Moderator of RISS was nominated for Moderator. Judy Donovan, who currently is Update Editor was nominated for Co-Moderator as was Terry Wilson, a new member of RISS. Erica Dowell was nominated as the new Update Editor. Since the candidates for Moderator and Update Editor were running unopposed, there was no need for a vote. Members approved the new appointments unanimously by a voice vote. Members voted on Co-Moderator candidates Judy Donovan and Terry Wilson. Judy Donovan was elected as the new Co-Moderator.

Announcements

Margaret Webster reminded everyone that conference proposals for the 2002 meeting in St. Louis were due May 1st and distributed proposal information forms. The categories for proposals are: The changing Research and Collections Environments; Redefining Roles and Responsibilities with the Digital Age; Digital Projects: Revelations, Project Management, Models and Future Initiatives; Issues and Challenges; Workshops; Plenary sessions.

Tara Carlisle, the new editor of Art Reference Services Quarterly, a peer-reviewed journal devoted to visual arts and architecture, announced that this somewhat irregular publication has again resumed publications and welcomed RISS members to submit articles for publication.

2002 RISS Session Proposals

Tom asked members if anyone wanted to propose RISS sessions for the 2002 conference. Tom Jacoby proposed a session on the Mississippi River. Tom Grieves proposed a session on Digital and Virtual Reference. Lucy Stylianopoulos proposed a session, possibly in conjunction with the Diversity Committee on building web pages that conform to web accessibility guidelines. The Diversity Committee is planning a session on the planning of virtual and physical spaces, so this topic might mesh well with that session.

RISS’s 2001 Session, “Too Much of a Good Thing?”

Tom commented that our panel for this conference, co-sponsored by the Cataloging Section, was a success and thanked everyone involved. Judy Donovan, who co-moderated the panel along with Alexandra deLuise, mentioned that during the question and answer session the issue was raised that ARLIS ought to be taking the lead in putting together a “core collection” of art/design websites that its members could rely on when creating their own pages to assist students. Judy asked if any of the RISS members wanted to form a Task Force to begin investigating the possibility of creating such a list. Members voted in favor of creating such a task force on Core Collection of Art/Design Websites. Kate Shaw, Liv Valmstat, Alba Nora Fernandez, Ruth Thomas and Judy Donovan volunteered to join this committee. They will discuss the issue together via email and on the ARLIS-L listserv over the coming year.

The business meeting ended early in order to allow time for our three speakers to do their presentations. Tom mentioned that he had heard these speakers at this year’s ALA Midwinter conference and was delighted to be able to get them to repeat their presentations for ARLIS.

Our speakers were Joan Stahl “Joan of Art” from the Smithsonian who repeated her colleague Diane Nester Kresh’s (Library of Congress) presentation on the Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS) of the Library of Congress; Susan McLamery, from the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System in Pasadena, CA who spoke on Cooperative Reference Using E-Commerce Software; and Nancy O’Neill from the Santa Monica Public Library who spoke on How Digital Reference Service Works in Public Libraries.

What follows are brief summaries of each speaker’s presentation. The summaries are quoted from a report on their original presentations at ALA Midwinter that was published in Information Today. The complete article can be found at http://www.infotoday.com/it/mar01/saunders.htm

The website for CDRS is http://www.loc.gov/rr/digiref/
The Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS) of the Library of Congress (presented by Joan Stahl on behalf of her colleague Diane Nester Kresh:

"Having heard two speakers refer to LC's Collaborative Digital Reference Service without much explanation, we were ready for Diane Nester Kresh's in-depth presentation. After describing its rationale with trends about the short life span of Web sites, Internet use, and challenges that libraries are facing, Kresh stated the purpose of CDRS: to provide professional reference service to users anywhere, anytime, through an international, digital network of libraries. With this service, an end-user may ask a question and receive an answer from a librarian working through a participating member organization. The infrastructure supporting the system includes operating agreements describing the scope of services and software for tracking and managing the routing of questions and answers. LC is also building resource databases that will include member profiles and a searchable knowledge base of questions and answers.

Kresh reported that in November 2000, LC finished the final test of the CDRS's Phase 3, in which more than 50 members had participated. The goals of the pilot tests included developing a Web form for the question-and-answer process, creating procedures for assigning and tracking, measuring response time and interoperability, determining the scope of researcher requests, and defining best practices... More information about CDRS is available http://www.loc.gov/rr/digiref.

Susan McLamery, from the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS) in Pasadena California “Cooperative Reference Using E-Commerce Software”

Representing the Metropolitan Cooperative Library System (MCLS) in Pasadena, California, reference coordinator Susan McGlamery provided an energetic account of and a few war stories about cooperative reference using e-commerce software. Awarded a grant in 1999 to purchase software, this multi-type consortium of more than 40 libraries aimed to provide 24/7 service, live interaction with a librarian, a network of subject specialists, and point-of-need Internet service. It selected Web contact center software that provides live collaboration, routing, reporting, request tracking, scripting, authentication, and browser compatibility.

McGlamery displayed a number of system screens via the Santa Monica Public Library's Web site (http://www.smpl.org/library) to show how the digital reference system actually looks. The consortium is now concentrating on Web-accessible information, pushing Web pages to users, and building FAQs. During the process of developing digital reference processes, librarians identified a number of problems. One issue was the increasing level of computer skill and technical expertise required of them. McGlamery concluded by stating that chat reference is just in its infancy and has a long way to go before being as easy and spontaneous as an in-person reference interview.” For more information on the MCLS project go to: http://247ref.org To try it out yourself, ask a question at MCLS Reference Service http://www.247ref.org/asklib/mcls.html

Nancy O'Neill, Santa Monica Public Library:

“How Digital Reference Service Works in Public Libraries”

“Nancy O'Neill, principal librarian at the Santa Monica Public Library, followed up with her session, "How Digital Reference Works in the Public Library." Despite her library's vision of using digital reference services to meet the needs of a diverse clientele wherever they are, O'Neill stated that 24/7 service is not quite there yet. She suggested that before initiating such a venture, librarians need to consider how digital reference service fits into the library mission and institutional culture, whether there is acceptance from administration and staff, and whether the appropriate technology infrastructure exists.

Having provided an e-mail reference service since 1989, in March 2000 Santa Monica Public Library began participating in the Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS) through the Library of Congress initiative. In July it started interactive reference through the MCLS's 24/7 Reference Service. O'Neill described the professional librarians who participated as fearless risk-takers. The library learned lessons that included rethinking the reference interview process, frequently updating written policies, coordinating digital reference with other reference services, evaluating for quality control, and developing new competencies. O'Neill defined digital reference as a core service, not an add-on, and said, "When our library clients are out there on the Web, I want to be out there to meet them." For more information on this project, or to try it out go to http://www.smpl.org/

The presentations were followed by questions from the RISS members. Meeting adjorned at 11:30.

Judy Donovan, session recorder