Annual Report 2005
ARLIS/NA Liaison to the Visual Resources Association

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This position was new in 2005. I regret that I was unable to attend the ARLIS/NA conference in 2005 and again 2006, which made it difficult for me to be effective as a liaison, even though I did attend the VRA conferences in those years. As there is no assurance that institutional resources will support my attendance at ARLIS/NA’s conference in 2007, I have resigned to allow for the appointment of someone who can actively participate in both ARLIS/NA and VRA. Because this position is new and in need of definition, I feel that it is necessary for the appointee to be active in both national organizations.

There is significant overlap of membership between VRA and ARLIS at the national level, and most members I have talked with are strongly in favor of collaboration on joint events. Although the will is there, the practical impediments are large to holding a joint national conference. A great disappointment of this year was the inability to find a hotel that could meet the needs for a joint conference in San Diego. Each organization alone needs more meeting spaces than most hotels can accommodate, and doubling that number makes finding a suitable venue nearly impossible.

When ARLIS/NA and VRA meet separately, opinions vary on whether to make the programs as different as possible, or to allow some repetition (or related sessions) for the benefit of those who can only attend one conference or the other.

I feel that there is great potential for grassroots collaboration among regional chapters, however. In New England, I was able to attend chapter meetings of both organizations during the past year. At a meeting of ARLIS/NE at Brockton, MA, on April 29, 2005, the attendees discussed meeting jointly with VRA/NE and the executive board was encouraged to work toward that end. On May 22, 2006, the two regional chapters will meet jointly at the Peabody-Essex Museum/Phillips Library in Salem, MA. Both chapters will hold business meetings, with a library tour available as an alternate event during both of those meetings. Where VRA chapters exist, I recommend that ARLIS chapter officers work with their counterparts to plan joint meetings, and/or extend an invitation to VRA chapter members to attend an ARLIS chapter meeting. Perhaps collaboration at the chapter or regional level is the easiest way to bring members of the two organizations together for joint programming.

Because of the overlap of interest, many messages are cross-posted to the listservs of ARLIS/NA and VRA, without the need for intervention of this liaison. This liaison’s duties should be, I think, less about disseminating information about ARLIS/NA in print and electronically, and more about facilitating interaction of the two
organizations. I did, at the request of the conference planners, post several messages promoting the ARLIS/NA conference at Banff.

Coincidentally, during the past year I also served on the Implementation Committee for SEI (Summer Educational Institute), to be held this summer at Reed College in Oregon. Reading the glowing evaluations by last year’s participants convinced me that this joint project of the two organizations is without a doubt a great success. An impressive week-long program is planned for Reed, and planning is already underway for 2007 at Indiana University. SEI is surely one joint achievement in which both ARLIS/NA and VRA can take great pride.