

ARLIS/NA HONORS DEBORAH KEMPE WITH THE 2020 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

May 7, 2021. The Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is pleased to announce Deborah (Debbie) Kempe as the recipient of the 2020 Distinguished Service Award, the 30th recipient of the society's highest honor. The Distinguished Service Award (DSA) honors an individual whose exemplary service in art librarianship, visual resources curatorship, or a related field, has made an outstanding national or international contribution to art information.

The award will be presented to Debbie at the society's virtual convocation ceremony on Tuesday, May 11 from 4:45 – 5:30 PM EDT. Daniel Starr, 2015 DSA recipient and retired associate chief librarian of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, will make the presentation.



Debbie's deep and far-reaching contributions to our organization and to the field of art librarianship perfectly embody the accomplishments most valued by the society. One nominator identified Debbie's greatest achievements as "raising the profile of art libraries, their needs and concerns, as well as their critical value to the advancement of art scholarship."

Debbie's service to ARLIS/NA includes four years on the executive board as president, vice president/president-elect, and past president (2011-2014) and Northeast regional representative (1999-2001). She also served as chair of the New York Chapter, the nominating committee, the Wittenborn Book Award Committee, and the international relations committee, as well as a successful conference fund-raiser.

As ARLIS/NA president, Debbie championed stronger ties with our international members and our affiliated organizations. With grant support from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and the Getty Foundation, she expanded international participation and programming at the 2013 and 2016 annual conferences. Debbie facilitated activation of a new strategic plan, increased membership numbers, oversaw management company changes, and provided support for Art Documentation's new peer-reviewed publishing model with University of Chicago Press (and perpetual archive with JSTOR and Portico). Her leadership in promoting more access and diversity in ARLIS/NA included the creation of additional awards for conference participation.



As member and chair of the international relations committee, Debbie capitalized on her ability to build bridges and leverage strategic connections in pursuit of her vision of engagement and exchange across the international art information community. She established the first ARLIS/NA international study tour and helped to plan five others, working with partner organizations on symposia recorded for the benefit of all ARLIS/NA members. She helped to establish a study tour subsidy for newer librarians and served as a reviewer of Samuel H. Kress Foundation International Conference Travel Award applications. In 2013, Debbie's work was honored with the John Jacob Astor Award in Library and Information Studies from the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation in Berlin, Germany.

Debbie recently retired from 25 years of providing transformative leadership as the chief of collections management and access at the Frick Art Reference Library, bringing intellectual curiosity, an international perspective and courage in applying new technology to the discovery and use of art information. Prior to the Frick, she held positions at Columbia University's Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library as name authority editor for the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals, at Bobst Library, New York University, and at Mullins Library, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

Her early career involvement with the Getty vocabulary program, Union List of Artist Names and the Name Authority Cooperative Program developed into a model for collaborative metadata creation in the 21st century. Debbie's vision continues to pay dividends, from best practices in shared cataloguing to the promotion of a linked data environment. She served on the RLG-SCPIO advisory taskforce to preserve auction catalogs, a perennial concern for provenance research. During her 14 years as director of NYARC (New York Art Resource Consortium), she joined with other New York museum libraries in making art information resources more visible, first through the shared Arcade catalogue and later through NYARC's visionary web-archiving program for born-digital resources.

With a long-standing interest and proven expertise in web-archiving, digitization projects and grant administration, she is recognized internationally as a thought leader, lending her voice and perspective to many large-scale inter-institutional initiatives such as the Digital Cicognara Library project, the Wildenstein Plattner Institute, the IFLA Art Section, and as a member of international advisory groups for the Getty Research Portal and Art Discovery Group catalog.

Debbie's professional generosity shows through her lengthy publication and presentation record, as well as through a consistent and selfless effort to develop new professionals. While her national and international profile attracted interns and fellows to the Frick, her inclusive, compassionate leadership style and professional fellowship inspired an entire cohort of art information professionals.

Debbie's sustained leadership and vision, her advocacy for and service to the profession, and her effective and generous mentorship has enhanced the skills and furthered the careers of dozens of librarians through



a long and distinguished career. For her contribution to the field at large and to ARLIS/NA in particular, Debbie Kempe has been awarded the 2020 Distinguished Service Award.

The team of nominators included Sumitra Duncan, Jon Evans, Beverly Mitchell, Christina Peters, Linda Seckelson and Daniel Starr. Members of the 2020 ARLIS/NA Distinguished Service Award Sub-Committee were: Sylvia Roberts (Chair), Elisa Hansen, Katie Keller, Jillian Ewalt, and Rebecca Friedman.

About the Art Libraries Society of North America

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America is a dynamic, international organization of more than 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and others interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the Society provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at all levels.

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