



ARLIS/NA Sponsored Session at CAA

Not Just Good, But Better and Best: Art Programs in Los Angeles Area Public Libraries

Wednesday, February 25, 12:30–2:00 PM

Concourse Meeting Room 402AB, Level 2, Los Angeles Convention Center

Moderators:

Alfred Willis (Assistant Director for Collection Development, Hampton University, Virginia)

Amanda Bowen (Head of Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, Massachusetts)

Session Abstract:

For many artists and most independent scholars of the arts, public libraries are the information sources of first resort. Their holdings and services assure crucial linkages to the worlds of art documentation on which the production of new art and art scholarship depends. A number of Los Angeles area public libraries have attained high degrees of excellence in serving Southern California's vibrant arts communities. Representatives of some of these libraries will describe their most successful programs and suggest ways that artists and art scholars anywhere can get the most out of the offerings of the public libraries closest to home.

Serving the Arts Community and Creative Industries

Emma Roberts, Los Angeles Public Library

Serving the creative industries in a city as diverse and geographically wide as Los Angeles presents a challenge of resources and logistics, and services available remotely become almost as invaluable as physical collections. Through targeted programming, outreach and evaluation of patron requirements and demand, collections and resources can be developed to maximize use and potential. Raising awareness of public library resources and adapting the profile of the library to appeal to and support the needs of those who work in industries such as film, fashion, textiles, graphic design, architecture and interior design, is an ongoing endeavor. Guiding patrons to useful material is a process that must therefore constantly evolve.

No Institutional Affiliation? No Problem! Materials and Services for Independent Fine Artists in Public Libraries

Cathy Billings, Brand Library & Art Center, Glendale Public Library

Independent fine artists rely heavily on local public library collections and programs to support their artistic careers. Like colleges and universities, public libraries employ art librarians and provide access to large and eclectic collections of books, periodicals and electronic resources related to the fine arts. In addition, public libraries often have unique

materials related to the local art scene and serve as a collection point for local exhibition ephemera. Beyond these traditional library services, public libraries often make studio spaces and professional caliber exhibition spaces available to independent artists while some even collect the work of local artists, particularly in the form of the artist's book. This talk will discuss these collections and services using examples from around the country, as well as that of the Brand Library & Art Center and the Los Angeles area artists who regularly take advantage of its offerings.

The Dynamic Duo: Scholar and Art Librarian!

Alyssa G. Resnick, Brand Library & Art Center, Glendale Public Library

Many independent scholars do not have local academic affiliation and rely on their local public libraries to fill their research needs. Some public libraries can offer these scholars the services of art librarians who have similar academic backgrounds. The public library can provide reference services, access to scholarly databases, and Inter Library Loan fulfillment. Scholars can also provide the librarian with recommendations for purchases, and if they are writing a publication the library could benefit from an acknowledgement or donated books. Public libraries are venues for scholarly lectures and contemporary art exhibitions; scholars can attend these events, be a lecturer or curator. Generally all of these services and programs are free and open to the public. Furthermore, many public libraries in California allow residents from other cities to get a library card with a valid CA driver's license. The independent scholar and public art librarians can make an excellent team!

Lessons I Learned at the La Brea Tar Pits

Mary Stark, Beverly Hills Public Library

Problem: How does an endangered species survive and protect the other endangered species found on its shelves? Solution: Focus on the history of its habitat and the special qualities that make it so precious, and seek the aid of those who created it. Mary Stark ("I'm a fine arts librarian, not a dinosaur!") is protecting an extraordinary collection from obsolescence with a strategy of staying strong, vigilant, and positive, and by forging an alliance with new technology. The success of the Art Research Library at Beverly Hills Public Library is defined by its survival as a "separate" "non-circulating" collection. The intention of the Friends of the Library when they established it in the early 1960s is the focus of Stark's work today: to provide artists, scholars, art professionals, and collectors in Beverly Hills and the greater Los Angeles community a continuously accessible resource for reference and research.