

## **Burns Response upon Receiving the VRA Distinguished Service Award**

Thank you is so inadequate. I'm absolutely thrilled to receive this award from VRA and am overwhelmed. Many of you know that I'm a woman of too many words, but I can't tell you how hard it is to know what to say at this moment.

How did I get here? I can honestly say that when I was in grade school I didn't tell anyone that I wanted to be a "visual resources curator." My mother found one of my early self-portraits. I'm dressed in a black habit with a note saying "I want to be a nun," but even 12 years of Catholic school couldn't make that work. College studies helped me discover my affinity for ancient history, art history, and archaeology.

As I searched for career paths, serendipity landed me in California State University Long Beach's Slide Library and that was the beginning of the end. I discovered work that allowed me to exercise my organizational skills, love of the arts, and hands-on photography, while immersing myself in the glorious world of images--their organization, description, and now digital access. CSU is where I first heard of the Visual Resources Association and the Chair gave me a whopping \$100 worth of travel funds to go Austin for basic training in 1988. And now, here tonight, CSU comes back around. Thank you, Karen Kessel. I know how much hard work it takes to put something like this together and so appreciate your extended efforts and thoughtfulness. I'm also exceedingly grateful to all the letter writers, the VRA Awards Committee, and the VRA Board for supporting this nomination.

There are many challenges to finding one's way in the world and I feel that I've had the great good fortune to land in visual resources. Isn't it wonderful that the field has progressed and is viable enough to be taught in library schools and to attract budding information professionals? This organization means the world to me.

To my mind, visual resources is about the people, the clientele we provide image services to and this professional network that is our lifeblood. The VRA conference is the source of our annual rejuvenation. I attribute much of my professional growth to this event and to you VRA colleagues who are such a remarkable support system. There are too many people that I should and would like to acknowledge by name, but there is not enough time and I don't want to try your patience or leave anyone out. But, I hope you will indulge me with a few general and specific thanks.

After two decades of working together and doing some fascinating cooperative work, I can vouch for the fact that my remarkable colleagues in the University of California Visual Resources Group are as responsible as I am for our successes.

Then there is the Board. When you work on the VRA Board with weekly communication and lots of teamwork, you grow to appreciate and get very attached to the people who come through in such a big way for this organization. The incredible colleagues I had the good fortune to serve with all made me look so good.

I'm also grateful to Scott Gilchrist for providing me with the wonderful opportunity to handle sales for Archivision and to learn about the business side of visual resources. And, thanks to everyone who has supported my adventure of starting a consulting business, allowing me to continue to work in this field, without an institutional affiliation.

The main person who suggested consulting is my perpetual inspiration, Brad Lancaster. We have been together for 40 years and he is attending his first VRA conference tonight. Brad is my go-to guy; reality check; moral, educational, professional, emotional, and financial supporter, without whom I would NOT have had the opportunity to do the work that I have done for VRA. As I approach the 30-year mark of working in visual resources, you can image how many earfuls this man has endured over the years about things he only pretended to care about, because I care so much!

Although this award singles out one person, I think you can tell from the nomination presentation that I rarely work alone. I truly believe that so much more can be accomplished when a functional network of people apply themselves to projects, especially when an enthusiastic group works together--like we have just seen demonstrated in such a big way with CCO. There are so many people working behind the scenes to help VRA thrive and progress, many of whom are unsung heroes doing invaluable work for this volunteer organization—thank you. That said, I feel deeply privileged to be joining the noble ranks of the previous award recipients, giants upon whose shoulders I am now standing.

For those of you newer to the field of visual resources, I hope you know how welcome you are, that you feel empowered to participate, and can see the opportunities this field provides for, not only professional development, but building deep friendships. I recall all of my first tentative steps along the way: summarizing a session and having it published in the *VRA Bulletin*, presenting on my first panel, working up the courage to ask VRA all stars to be on panels of my own design (many of whom wrote letters for this nomination), and embarking on committee work, etc. Know that you can do all this and more!

VRA has been everything to my professional life—it has been a privilege and still is a blast working, learning, playing, and laughing with you.

In conclusion, just because I'm now distinguished, doesn't mean I'm done! There is still plenty of work that needs to be accomplished. It has been a rewarding and fulfilling experience to play a leadership role in the VRA. Thank you all for being here to share this incredibly special honor with me.