

**Association News**

**2008 VRA Distinguished Service Award: Christine Hilker**

The Distinguished Service Award honors an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of Visual Resources through their leadership, innovation, participation and/or service to the profession. Christine Hilker exceeds the criteria for this award.

Christine's positive "can do" attitude is the characteristic that defines her leadership style. Early in her career, she was interested in the professional status of visual resources curators, which led her to survey colleagues across the nation. She reported her findings at the 1987 national conference. In that report, Chris demonstrated a clear understanding of the value of communication among professionals and the need for accurate statistical data. She was approached to place her name in nomination for the office of Treasurer and accepted the call. During her term (1991-94), which coincided with my term as President, Chris was a valuable member of the Executive Board. As Treasurer, she was responsible for the financial accounts, including sales, income, and expenditures. She fulfilled these duties with great fiscal responsibility and accurate reporting to the Board and the membership. She also maintained the membership database and produced the printed Directory of Members each year, improving its usefulness by adding new indexes and maps. As President, I valued her expertise, insight, and good humor. It was during this time period that the Executive Board established a new electronic forum for visual resources discussions, the VRA listserv, with Chris taking the leadership role in setting it up on her campus and serving as moderator. The listserv began as an open forum beyond the VRA membership. As moderator for twelve years, she was responsible for reading each message that came through and assessing it for posting. She spent many hours facilitating message delivery, filtering inappropriate messages, and answering all queries about membership and posting to the listserv. The continued success and usefulness of VRA-L to the profession is attributable to Chris' dedication and leadership in the early years of this forum.

After her service on the Board as Treasurer, Chris continued to be active; presenting a research paper, "Stress and the Visual Resources Curator," at the 1995 annual conference, serving a two-year term as chair of the Nominating Committee, and compiling and editing the VRA annual Sourcebook and Membership Directory in 2002. Also during this time period, she continued to be an active member of the Southeastern College Art Conference (SECAC) Visual Resources Curators affiliate group. She again demonstrated her "can do" attitude by saying "yes" to the call for a program coordinator to organize VRC sessions and activities for the SECAC 1999 and 2000 annual conferences.

In 2003, the Executive Board established a new Board position, the Public Relations and Communications Officer. The responsibilities include overseeing Association publications, facilitating communication within the organization, and developing and maintaining our public relations program. Chris' well known dedication to fostering effective communication and her prior VRA service made her the ideal candidate for the new office and she was elected to this new Board position. As usual, her approach to a challenge is to give her best and put in the long hours to learn what skills are necessary for the job. She defined the role of this new position and set the bar high for the accomplishments of the Public Relations and Communications Officer. During her three-year term, she oversaw the improvement of the Association's communications and visibility through its electronic and printed publications.

Chris finished her second term as an officer on the Executive Board in 2006, and without hesitation accepted the appointment as the new Website and MemberClicks Coordinator. This Coordinator is in charge of overseeing the editing, function, organization, and maintenance of vraweb.org and MemberClicks services. Chris reports directly to the Public Relations and Communications Officer and oversees the work of the Web Administrator and the Web Editor. Her experience and knowledge serves the Association well in this undertaking. At the same time, Chris was appointed by the Board as co-Chair of the Professional Status Survey Ad Hoc Committee. The VRA's last professional status survey was conducted in 1999. The Ad Hoc Committee developed an online survey instrument to facilitate gathering the data from the visual resources community. Chris' early career work surveying visual resources professionals and her expertise with MemberClicks was of extreme value to the important work of this Ad Hoc committee. At the 2007 annual conference in Kansas City, she and co-Chair Margaret Webster disseminated preliminary data findings during a session with the full report due out soon. As you can see, Chris' leadership skills and commitment to effective communication among professionals continues to benefit the VRA membership and further enhances the Association's stature in the international community.

Chris' career as visual resources curator for the School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville began in 1979. Through her leadership over the past twenty-eight years, her position has evolved into the directorship of the Smart Media Center, which has led the way for delivering digital images and metadata to her faculty and students. This transition from analog to digital visual resources has been successful through Chris' initiative, foresight, and collaborative efforts on her campus.

Fourteen support letters from Chris' colleagues and fellow VRA leaders accompanied my nomination letter. To further illustrate the contributions she has made to the profession, I want to share some quotes from these supporters:

Past President Kathe Abrecht commented: By establishing and developing the VRA-L as an ongoing professional conversation, Chris made a great impact on the profession at an important time in its development. As digital media quickly changed what we do on a daily basis and plunged us into unfamiliar territory, VRA-L enabled us to learn quickly and efficiently. Chris was instrumental in making this happen.

Liz Hernandez remarked: Chris has always maintained a high level of professionalism while remaining warm and supportive. Chris possesses a knack for and a delight in working on diverse projects with multiple people.

Former Vice President Jeanne Keefe emphasized Chris' leadership style: No matter what task she is undertaking at the moment on behalf of VRA, she brings to bear the same level of professionalism, enthusiasm and expertise. She continuously gives 110 percent, all the while smiling and laughing her way through the rough spots. She is ALWAYS willing to take the time to help when asked, and often, before she is asked. She unselfishly gives of her time and her energy, encouraging collegiality and good will. She has been a role model for me, and I'm sure many others over the years.

Former President Elisa Lanzi adds: I applaud Chris' enthusiasm and initiative, leadership skills, and her strong commitment to VRA. Her VR expertise, technical savvy, and willingness to do whatever it takes to get the job done, add to the total package.

Carolyn Lucarelli provided this insight: Chris led the Nominating Committee with a great degree of dedication and energy. Her commitment to the task of finding exemplary candidates for the VRA Executive Board offices was outstanding. Throughout her many years as a member of the VRA, Chris has made it her responsibility to get to know others in the association. She is incredibly adept at recognizing the strengths and abilities in others, which served her well when nominating candidates for board positions. In addition to her keen judgment, Chris is frequently able to inspire others to participate in whatever ways they can. She is an excellent mentor.

***2008 VRA Distinguished Service Award recipient Christine Hilker and presenter Christina Updike.***



Amy McKenna states: As founder of the listserv, Chris has fostered a direct line of communication between visual resources curators regardless of geography, enabling colleagues to share wisdom and hard-earned experience, while developing an ever-growing base of professional knowledge available in the listserv archives. As a newer visual resources professional, I greatly value the example that Chris has provided for me as a dedicated volunteer, continually finding new ways to contribute to the profession, while achieving excellence as the Director of the Smart Media Center at the University of Arkansas.

Linda McRae speaks for many of us when she wrote: I have always been struck by Chris' technical knowledge and her ability to manage numerous online information systems including the listserv, the website, and now MemberClicks and make them work successfully. These skills are of tremendous value to an organization that depends upon volunteer labor, particularly today when no organization can operate without having such systems in place.

Astrid Otey concisely states: Chris personifies the VRA's welcoming and collegial spirit, and represents the best of what we have to offer in service and professionalism.

Sherrie Rook summarized Chris' impact by saying: In her many roles in VRA Chris has managed our money; kept us connected; kept us informed while reaching out to the broad visual resources community; worked to find new leadership for our organization; and participated in finding out just who we are, what we are doing, and where we are going. I have seen her treat first time conference attendees as warmly and as graciously as her longtime friends. I have observed her as a patient conference tour shepherd waiting for the last of the group to make a purchase in a gift shop.

Henry Rowe, Systems Analyst at the University of Arkansas enthusiastically states: Christine brings the highest level of intelligence, leadership, and enthusiasm to any project in which she participates. Her ability to listen and quickly grasp new concepts and understand different ideas gives her the strong leadership and management qualities that have played a key role in expanding a collection of architecture slides into a university wide Smart Media Center.

Heather Seneff remarks: Chris is a role model for all of us for her many talents and her active service to the profession. She is a charming, funny, and modest person with talents outside the VR field as well. Her achievements exemplify the growth of the VRA, and the visual resources profession, and are an inspiration for us all.

University of Arkansas Dean Jeff Shannon wrote: Christine has built up the visual resources available to students and faculty over time to a very significant extent, making the collection a most valuable educational asset, perhaps our most important asset aside from the faculty itself. Over the most recent several years, she has almost single-handedly and on her own initiative begun the arduous transformation of our large slide collection into digital format and has inspired faculty member after faculty member to make the leap to digital presentation formats. In short, Christine has been of inestimable value to her home institution. Thank you for this opportunity to "sing her praises."

Former Treasurer, Ann Thomas remarked: I would suggest that a true leader has a dual role – that a leader serves by leading and leads by serving and that the two qualities are entwined. Christine Hilker is the embodiment of this paradox. Throughout her career she has not only provided leadership and service to the visual resources community, but has and continues to pursue research in the field of professional status.

And lastly, another former Treasurer, Lynda White writes: After producing three print membership directories as Treasurer in the early 1990s, Chris came full circle, producing the online Sourcebook and Members Directory in 2007. It would seem her life's purpose is to keep us connected and informed. In addition to her many years on the Board, Chris has contributed her expertise through articles for the *VRA Bulletin* and sessions for the annual conferences. I am always amazed at her energy level, and the fact that she contributes not only to VRA, but to local music organizations in Fayetteville. She encouraged my budding interest in jazz and took me to my first jazz concert. There are few gifts greater than that.

As you can see, Chris is a tremendous gift to our Association. I am honored to present the association's highest recognition, the 2008 VRA Distinguished Service Award to my colleague and dear friend, Christine Hilker.

Christina B. Updike

Visual Resources Curator, James Madison University

## ***2008 VRA Annual Conference***

### **2008 VRA Distinguished Service Award: Recipient Remarks**

Thank you VRA friends and colleagues. And thank you, Tina!

This is truly an honor I didn't expect, especially looking back at others who received it before me. It is amazing to be added to such an exceptional group of people. Being a VR curator and sharing this profession with all of you in VRA has been such a rewarding experience. I've been inspired and encouraged by so many. Early on there was Nancy DeLaurier and her three wonderful summer workshops at UMKC in Kansas City in the 1980s. (There are still some people here tonight who I first met in those classes!) Other colleagues I've worked with in VRA, especially Executive Boards from 1991-1994 and 2003-2006, have forgiven my errors and praised my successes. But maybe most of all I am grateful to the Visual Resources Association for making me feel and act like a professional. I've always said that for many of us who are "professionally isolated" at our own institutions VRA is more valuable to us than other professional organizations are to faculty, librarians, etc. This is often our only opportunity to discuss our unique issues with others "of our own kind" so to speak.

And now it's really great to see so many new faces in VRA. The advent of the digital age has definitely broadened our ranks and opened our minds to so many more possibilities. One thing I would encourage our membership is to get involved in some aspect of the organization. Don't think that you don't have anything to contribute! Everyone has something to offer, and by getting involved you'll be surprised at how much it will give back to you. I've never considered myself an "idea person", not terribly interested in formulating policy or steering the organization in a particular direction. Instead, I have enjoyed keeping records, doing the "busy work" that my two separate terms on the Executive Board required. It's truly been a wonderful experience giving back to the organization that has done so much for me. Keep up the good work, VRA!

Christine Hilker  
University of Arkansas

***2008 VRA President Macie Hall and 2008 VRA Distinguished Service Award recipient Christine Hilker***

