

Nominees for the Association's highest honor share many common qualities, yet they bring their own unique profiles and gifts. To be outstanding isn't good enough, there must be marks of excellence in leadership, scholarship, or service to the profession. It is an abundance of all of these qualities that we saw vested in one individual, one who is long on ethics, and even longer on humility, and whose personal motto is "Whatever I can do to be of service." We are humbled to present the 2017 VRA Distinguished Service Award recipient, Allan Tyler Kohl.

But who is Allan Kohl, really? Allan's many facets take time to reveal themselves. As Rebecca Moss states, "There's a dichotomy to Allan. In person he's mostly shy, preferring to listen in on conversations. But when asked directly for his input, or even more so, when he's on stage, this huge presence comes out, this confident, well prepared and well informed being stands before you, and you'll never mistake him for a wallflower again."

Allan has not let any tendencies toward introversion affect his service to the Association and the profession. Allan wears many hats. His astonishing record within VRA includes a term as President, two consecutive terms as Treasurer, and leadership roles on committees and task forces. Allan has helped plan and execute many VRA conferences, and as both art historian and information professional he's frequently presented at VRA and various other conferences; published articles; and delivered lectures to diverse audiences on wide ranging topics in art history.

During his time on the Board Allan served with no fewer than 22 individual officers. As Marcia Focht states, "He has strong opinions and ideas, but was always willing to listen to other viewpoints, especially from newer members. We worked hard, but he worked hardest of all."

Allan doesn't shrink from daunting tasks. As Brian Shelburne notes, "During Allan's tenure as President the conference went to a three day model..., the VRA Foundation began operations, and the chapter bursary system was developed and implemented. These three major developments alone would constitute a significant amount of effort, but when coupled with all of Allan's other activities during that period, his VRA career may be seen as truly exceptional." Allan's supervisor Amy Naughton Becker shares that "He's always working for the "greater good" of an organization. Allan impresses me time and time again, not only with his subject expertise, but also his innovative approach to connecting people with images, flexibility, and ego-less efforts to support art and image research."

That spirit of facilitating research inspired Allan to create Art Images for College Teaching (AICT). Allan volunteered his own time and money to globetrot in pursuit of photographing images that he shares freely with the educational community, for which he was honored with the Nancy DeLaurier Award in 2003. As Susan Jane Williams states, "When the history of Open Content is written from the VRA perspective, indeed from the entire visual arts education perspective, this pioneering project will stand out. Because of this work, he participated in further

exploratory image-sharing projects with the College Art Association, the Digital Library Federation and the Mellon Foundation, in turn making them more aware of VRA.” Susan Jane goes on to say, “It was no doubt this experience...[that] fueled his subsequent VRA work within the Intellectual Property Rights Committee...His work throughout has been to demystify—and to seek to open and broaden—educational and public domain image use. Allan was saying “yes we can” when others were saying “no, you better not.”

Gretchen Wagner observes that Allan has “been instrumental in leading the IPR Committee...and in encouraging new members of the VRA to join the committee and to learn more about copyright issues.” On the Committee, Allan was crucial to the development of the Digital Image Rights Computator, an online tool for making informed decisions about the educational use of images. He also contributed significantly to VRA’s influential *Statement on the Fair Use of Images*.

And there are other memorable hats, and wigs, that he was worn. Maureen Burns comments, “Allan balances an intense work ethic with a self-effacing, earnest, and quasi-humorous style. It is not uncommon for Allan to break into song or quote from theater pieces to lighten the atmosphere of a meeting. He reminds us not to take too seriously things that, in the end, aren’t that important on a cosmic scale”. For seven years, everyone’s Uncle Al set aside his demure demeanor and transformed himself into a parade of entertaining alter-egos at the service of the VRAffle fundraisers. He wrote lyrics and scripts, choreographed, sang, acted, danced, and created props for productions to augment the drawings. Junior, Rhett Butler, Edgar Allan Poe, the VRAvue’s Silver Cowboy, Sgt. Preston, and Neptune are some of his witty personae. Time prevents us from extolling his virtues further, for there is much left unsung. So, it is with joy we call to the podium Allan T. Kohl.