

“The VRA Distinguished Service Award recognizes individuals who have achieved a level of distinction in leadership, research, or service to the profession.” In all three of these areas, Maureen Burns’s contributions to the field of visual resources, and to the wider realm of education, have been demonstrated time and again on the local, state, national, and international level. Her leadership and remarkable ability to inspire collaboration are born out of her tireless energy and personal commitment to education, the arts, and public service.

Our time is limited, so I will simply summarize some of the highlights of Maureen’s exhaustive contributions to our profession, as detailed in Karen Kessel’s nominating letter to the Awards Committee, along with excerpts from a number of the supporting letters written by her colleagues.

Maureen worked as visual resources curator for 22 years, first at California State University, Long Beach, and then at the J. Paul Getty Museum and at the University of California, Irvine. She concurrently earned her doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership. Since the VR facility at Irvine closed, she has continued her association with the VR profession, reinventing herself through independent consulting work, as sales representative for Archivision’s digital research library, and as the systems administrator and a guest editor for the online *Journal for Learning through the Arts: A Research Journal on Arts Integration in Schools and Communities*.

Maureen served as our Association’s President-Elect, President, and Past-president from 2009 through 2013, and has also served on the VRA Finance, Nominating, Education, and Awards Committees, as well as the International Task Force. She served as Implementation team Co-chair and instructor for

the Summer Education Institute co-sponsored by VRA and ARLIS. Maureen has served on the Board of Directors of the Visual Resources Association Foundation and is currently the copy editor for the *VRA Bulletin*. While at UC-Irvine she organized the other curators in the UC system to pool their resources and build a digital image consortium together: LUCI, the Library of University of California Images, and then worked with the California Digital Library to help build the image project into a collaborative, cross-campus collection for classroom instruction. She similarly used her organizing talents to help establish a local VRA chapter in Southern California.

In conference presentations, and in articles published in the *VRA Bulletin* and other national publications, Maureen has addressed some of the most pressing concerns brought about by changes in technology in the field of visual resources. She headed the task force that authored “Advocating for Visual Resource Management in Educational and Cultural Institutions”, the VRA White Paper published in 2009.

And somehow, this well-rounded individual also finds time for her interests in California native plants, Celtic music, hiking, snow skiing, and playing cutthroat scrabble!

As Karen said in her nominating letter, in descriptions of Maureen, “words such as energetic, enthusiastic, fun, kind, warm, encouraging, friend, mentor, and funny keep appearing; but beyond the warm and fuzzy adjectives, the writers also acknowledge her intelligence, her talent for building partnerships, inspiring people to do more and see in new ways; her inclusiveness, and her involvement in multifaceted activities.”

In the many supporting letters, a few themes stand out.

I served as Association Secretary during Maureen's term on the Board. There I really got to observe her work ethic, intellectual versatility, and her leadership skills. She worked hard to include all voices and opinions, respecting others even when they disagreed with her. She was sensitive to those who served the organization, valuing everyone's involvement, large or small. Maureen has a positive attitude, always helping others find ways to get a project done, work around a stumbling block, or move on after a defeat.

Brian Shelburne, Vice-President for Conference Arrangements during Maureen's presidency, praised her approachability, "her warmth and ability to make those of us who were relatively new to this profession comfortable. Maureen is one of the most collaborative and inclusive people with whom I've ever worked. To Maureen everyone has something to offer, whether ... a 30 year veteran of the profession or a first semester Library Science student." In terms of her energy and enthusiasm, Brian described Maureen as being "like a hummingbird on speed."

Former VRA President Joe Romano recalled "Maureen's wonderful smile, eager handshake, and warm personality," and as "someone who sincerely cares about others. She doesn't seek the limelight, but other colleagues seek her out for her kindness and willingness to help. We are most fortunate to have her as an ambassador for the VRA. "

Elisa Lanzi served on the Foundation Board during Maureen's term as VRA president: "Maureen is the perfect example of what I call a "systems thinker," ... someone who makes essential partnerships between VRA and our sister

communities. As I review her numerous conference presentations and papers I am struck by her constant themes; *building together, sharing, advocating, and convergence.*”

Susan Jane Williams, former VRA Vice-president, spoke appreciatively of Maureen’s high academic standards, observing that, “The many conference sessions she has organized have been marked not only by their liveliness and engagement but by bringing in assessment techniques and metrics from the education field.” Susan also noted Maureen’s sensitivity towards those facing professional challenges in a time of unsettling change and transition: “I am sure there are scores of VRA members, like myself, who can testify to what it means to receive her sisterly support in critical times. Maureen’s blend of professional endeavor and active personal kindness constitutes the best of what any VRA member can aspire to do.”

Trudy Levy praised Maureen for her “enthusiasm and support” on the California State Library’s Local History Digital Resource Project: “Our clients, many inexperienced with digital imaging needs, always felt secure under her management. As I heard or read her communications with them, I couldn’t help thinking about all her other projects, which were simultaneously demanding her time and attention, ... and yet each client felt [they] had her total attention.”

Jackie Spafford, of UC Santa Barbara, described Maureen as “a lively, funny, very smart person ... deeply committed to her work in visual resources,” and continues: “We all admired her energy and desire to kick start new projects, and to get us involved with larger image sharing collaboration... it would certainly not be the same, or ever have happened at all, if it weren’t for Maureen.”

Concluding with Jan Eklund's words, "[Maureen's] leadership and remarkable ability to inspire collaboration is born out of her tireless energy and personal commitment to education, the arts, and public service. Best of all, she does all of this with a relentlessly positive attitude and a wonderful sense of humor, which makes her a joy to work with." In that spirit of joy, but also with profound gratitude, I am proud to present to you the recipient of the 2015 Visual Resources Association's Distinguished Service Award: Dr. Maureen Burns.

-Marcia Focht