DSA Awards Presentation Notes – Sept. 27 2023

I am thrilled to be presenting this Distinguished Service Award, along with my co-nominator Sonja Sekely-Rowland, to Greg Reser.

This diagram is a visualization of descriptors used by the writers of the support letters for this nomination. And that's only half of them.

Before we go further, I would like to thank the Awards Committee for heartily accepting and approving this nomination, and our support letter writers: Leslie Abrams, Linda Barnhart, Sheryl Frisch, Jason Miller, Steve Tatum, Betha Whitlow and Susan Jane Williams. I'd also like to thank Dawn Reser for her outstanding stealth work!

Early Greg

First a little bit about Greg's background: his formal studies were in fine arts, and for those who don't know he is a very talented painter. He taught studio art at Palomar College for 5 years, then shifted his career focus. In 1997 he accepted a position as the Metadata Specialist in the Arts Library at the University of California, San Diego. Here his expertise in fine arts was put to use in new ways.

Of course it was still a largely analogue world when Greg joined UCSD.

In the early 2000s, widespread work was underway to make digital images accessible to all institutions. With the support of a Mellon grant, Artstor was conceived, and UCSD's slide collection was selected as one of the few complete collections that would build content for the Image Gallery, Artstor's core teaching component. This was an enormous and unprecedented undertaking, involving the selection, organization, and transportation of hundreds of thousands of 35mm slides. Greg provided key support at every point of the project, overseeing a small army of student workers.

Teacher

These slides include quotes from the nomination support letters, and call out Greg's many wonderful strengths.

Greg devoted a substantial portion of his professional career to offering in-person, practical training to the VR community, and the support letters all referenced his patience, his enthusiasm for his subject, and his ability to clearly explain complex concepts. Greg graciously and confidently lent his expertise in the classroom, as well as through online media, to spread the embedded metadata gospel. His workshops at VRA conferences and yearly classes at SEI were always popular and always received glowing reviews.

Leader

The word "leader" also came up repeatedly, and it was clear Greg has the gift of being the kind of leader many wanted to follow. As Steve Tatum wrote, "*Greg was exactly the kind of leader one would like to see more often. The projects were never about him. He took care of the technical side of development and did all the real work.*" This generosity is a Greg Reser hallmark. He would willingly accept requests to lead various endeavors, and volunteer whenever it was clear that guidance was needed.

Colleague

Greg's generosity in sharing time, knowledge and assistance to colleagues he knew well and those he just met is legend. Even after his 2019 retirement, Greg has made himself available, offering advice and answering questions via email, listserv, phone, or in person. He puts in this time simply because he loves the work and is dedicated to advancing and improving its legacy.

Greg is skilled at planning and organizing, and has always been willing to lead, assist with, and support all efforts. I worked with Greg on CAVRACON in 2011 and 2015, and can verify that he participated in nearly every facet of conference planning and execution, from registering attendees and carrying boxes of refreshments, to introducing speakers and providing emergency tech support. During CaVraCon 2015, Greg covered for a speaker who was unable to attend by offering a riveting impromptu presentation on the latest developments in Embedded Metadata and the VRA Panel.

Collaborator

Greg is also famous as a collaborator – he would not have accomplished a fraction of what he's done without the benefit of the exchange of ideas with others, and he knows it. He has thrived on building relationships with colleagues old and new. In addition to collaboration through workshops, listserv discussions, and conference presentations, Greg has authored or co-authored multiple journal articles.

Contributor

At UCSD Greg took a deep interest in how image resources are searched for, located, organized, accessed and used. His advanced research into the standardization of image descriptive data empowered him to make key contributions leading to the development of systems which are widely-used and continue to adapt to growing needs.

Greg's contributions as an SEI instructor are of particular importance, as he carefully broke down concepts such as working with custom XMP versus IPTC applications, mapping, and data migration.

Innovator

Greg has always looked for new challenges. He loves to identify new problems and offer new answers, adding to the existing body of knowledge, and the development of a suite of online tools, including the VRA Panel Export-Import Plug-In Tool (now the VRA Bridge Metadata Tool) and MetaShotPpt. These have provided the everyday working VR community access to free, self-serve tools for managing visual data.

Trailblazer

Spanning his decades of involvement, it is impossible to recount all of the ways, large and small, that Greg has contributed to the vibrancy of the VRA and the competency of our field. Greg has served as President of the VRA Southern California Chapter, and as chair of the Data Standard Committee's Embedded Metadata Working Group. He has served on many other task forces, reports and studies, including the 2015-16 Professional Status Task Force, the 2017 Online Learning Task Force, and the 2017 Cataloging and Metadata Practices Survey Report. In 2013 Greg deservedly earned the Nancy DeLaurier award for his Embedded Metadata work.

Slide with adjectives

Okay, here's the other half of the descriptors pulled from the letters of support. And I would like to point out one that was used by every letter writer, and by every person who speaks of Greg, and that is "deserving" – he is an incredibly deserving recipient of this Distinguished Service Award.

All round nice guy

As a young art school graduate, Greg could have not imagined the trajectory of his career, nor the sheer number of people and institutions that would come to rely on him as a de-facto technical visionary and inspiring teacher.

The possibilities were limitless, and for Greg, a curious professional in a changing field, there were opportunities to be seized. Greg was able to both see the challenges facing others in his field, and anticipate ways to address them. Over time his contributions expanded to benefit not just the VR community but colleagues in adjacent fields, and the interested public. It is hard to imagine where our field would be today were it not for Greg's innovations, energy and generosity. His are the definition of 'career contributions,' with an ongoing impact and a legacy that others will continue to learn from and build on for years to come.

Please help us in congratulating Greg as the recipient of the VRA Distinguished Service Award.