

## **1997 Distinguished Service Award**

**Presented to Christina B. Updike, James Madison University**

### **Christina's Remarks:**

I am so honored by this recognition. It is surprising to me to hear Joe Romano's listing of all my accomplishments. I knew I had been busy, but all the work seemed to flow from one commitment or project into another, so that it never seemed overwhelming. One never truly knows what impact one's efforts will have, but you always hope your daily steps will help create a better future.

I have also been blessed with many "encouragers" in my life. One such person who had an early influence on my career is an art historian at my university, Martha Caldwell, who upon my hiring for the visual resources curator's position, gave me information about the professional organizations of ARLIS/NA, Mid-America CAA, and SECAC. She encouraged me to join these groups, and a year later, took me to my first SECAC annual conference in Charleston, SC. Martha introduced me to everyone she knew and demonstrated to me how important networking is with your professional colleagues. She asked me what I thought of the conference and I expressed concern that there were no sessions devoted to my profession. She challenged me by replying, "Why don't you do something about that?" That one statement launched my thinking and motivated my professional efforts. I proposed and chaired a roundtable session for visual resources curators at the next SECAC conference and one other curator attended that year. I was thrilled, because I found a new colleague and we shared information helpful to us both. My development of the Visual Resources Curators affiliate group of SECAC and my subsequent leadership roles in the Visual Resources Association grew from that successful first session. The value of collegiality, the sharing of energy and ideas has always been important to me.

I have also enjoyed encouragement and support from the art and art history faculty, and the several department chairs and deans of the university. Even when funding was not always possible, their interest and enthusiasm for my endeavors has provided motivation. My faculty at James Madison University surprised me this evening with this beautiful corsage I am wearing and a note of "congratulations."

Many of you here tonight have been "encouragers" to me and that has had a profound impact on my ongoing professional commitment. I must also share with you that my life partner, Phil Updike, has been a primary "encourager" to me. His support, optimism and good sense of humor has helped facilitate my success. Even when I presented to him my idea of hosting the first VRA Executive Board mid-year meeting at our home, he said, "Sounds like a necessary step forward for the Association. Try it, but did you say HERE?" Because of my "encourager" role models, I have been inspired to be an "encourager" too.

This Distinguished Service Award honors my accomplishments in a way that I never expected. Receiving the top award from one's professional association is extremely

exciting, and special because it is from one's colleagues. When your colleagues are also your best friends, it is doubly special! Thank you all so much for this tremendous honor.