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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 30, 2012

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Art Libraries Society of North America Presents
Rosemary Furtak, Librarian at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis,
with its 2011 Distinguished Service Award

TORONTO, CANADA— At its 40th annual Conference in Toronto, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) announced that Rosemary Furtak, Librarian at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was presented with the Society's 2011 Distinguished Service Award. The Society's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Award is presented to an individual of any country whose exemplary service in art librarianship, visual resources curatorship, or a related field, has made an outstanding national or international contribution to art information.

At the Toronto conference, President Jon Evans, Director of the Hirsch Library at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston praised Ms. Furtak by saying "Rosemary's dedication to the profession and visionary collecting practices sets a distinguished model for art information professionals across North America."

Ms. Furtak, who recently retired, holds a Masters degree in Art History from the Dominican University at Villa Schifanoia in Florence, Italy and a Masters degree in Library Science from the University of Iowa. She was hired by the Walker Art Center in 1983 as Librarian and Head of Library/Archives, after a post graduate internship at the National Gallery of Art Library (1982) in Washington, DC, and dual positions as Associate Professor of Art History and Studio Art and Co-Director of the Hillmar Art Gallery at the College of St. Mary in Omaha, Nebraska from 1975-81. At the Walker, Furtak assembled an internationally recognized collection of artists' books that she helped integrate into the Walker's programming while she built the Walker Art Center Library into one of the finest Modern and contemporary art research facilities in the Midwest. An internationally recognized specialist on artists' books, Ms. Furtak curated several exhibitions for the Walker, most notable *Text/Messages: Books by Artists* (2008) that featured many of the over 2,000 artists' books in the Library's collection, the majority of which Ms. Furtak acquired for the Walker.



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Shortly after arriving at the Walker, Ms. Furtak realized that some books were not like others. Books created by artists sometimes transcended the content and format of a traditional book or as she phrased it, there are “books that refuse to behave like other books.” In the early 1980s there were no defined precedents for these books and Rosemary Furtak was among the pioneering group of librarians who segregated the misbehaving books in to artists’ book collections and helped them become better recognized as a separate art form.

Ms. Furtak was nominated for the award by her colleagues in the ARLIS/NA Twin Cities Chapter. The nomination was supported by letters not only from museum professionals in the Minneapolis area and from the students she mentored, but also from museum directors, artists, curators, scholars, and publishers from around the world. Joan Adams Mondale, patron of the arts, former member of the Board of Trustees of the Walker, and wife of former Vice-President of the United States Walter Mondale stated that “As I have watched her work, I have become increasingly impressed with her gifted leadership so widely admired by those who use her library and have benefited from that.” Adam Weinberg, Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York said “I have known Rosemary for more than two decades. Of the Many fine art librarians with whom I have had the opportunity to work with, Rosemary was the best. Rosemary took a modest, somewhat undistinguished contemporary art library at the Walker Art Center and made it into one of the most serious and comprehensive libraries of its kind.”

The Art Libraries Society of North America

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America is a dynamic, international organization of over 1,000 individuals devoted to fostering excellence in art and design librarianship and image management in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. The membership includes architecture and art librarians, visual resources professionals, artists, curators, educators, publishers, students, and others interested in visual arts information. To serve this diverse constituency, the Society provides a wide range of programs and services within an organizational structure that encourages participation at all levels.

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