



PRESS RELEASE

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The Art Libraries Society of North America endorses the College Art Association's Statement on the Importance of Physical Research Collections

WESTFORD, Massachusetts – The Art Libraries Society of North America endorses the College Art Association's Statement on the Importance of Physical Research Collections. CAA affirms that although digital surrogates are a great boon to researchers and artists, physical collections remain an essential resource for scholarly and creative work. ARLIS/NA heartily agrees with this position.

The digitization of physical research collections is being used as justification by administrators at universities, museums, public libraries, and other cultural institutions to dispose of physical collections. The CAA Committee on Research and Scholarship, co-chaired by ARLIS/NA member Eric Wolf, clearly lays out the ways in which physical materials cannot be replaced by their digital surrogates. A few of these are:

- Tactility and intrinsic qualities of actual objects as fundamental to their experience and function (such as in the case of the mail art of Ray Johnson) are lost in a digital format
- Unique features of individual copies of printed sources, including annotations, hand drawing, hand-coloring, and other alterations or unique qualities of individual copies are obscured
- Absence of physical expressions of data within the original format, from scale and texture to weight and size, to color and legibility of illustrations

ARLIS/NA joins CAA in calling for institutions to consult with faculty, staff, students, curators, and researchers regarding decisions that will profoundly affect the preservation of and access to valuable physical research collections.



About the Art Libraries Society of North America

Founded in 1972, the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) is a dynamic, international organization of close to 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 other 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 every level.

Contact:

Larry Eames

Media Editor

719.255.3929

media.relations@arlisna.org

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