

Survey of Small Art Museum Libraries—Part Two--Narrative Q & A Section

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NB: This document is part of a larger survey, comprised of 40 questions, the answers to most of which are compiled in a companion Excel file (Survey of Small Art Museum Libraries—Part One). The following 8 questions elicited refreshingly frank and informal narrative responses that could not easily be entered simply as “Comments” in the Excel file. A decision was made to edit the responses very lightly and to enter them more or less anonymously in this Word document, listing the answers in separate sections devoted to each question. Because some questions were left unanswered by some respondents, the number of answers listed under each question varies.

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What is distinctive about working in an art museum library?

=Working with the curatorial staff.

=Specialized collection; cross-fertilization of library and art collections.

=By definition, you are always surrounded by art, which feeds you even when the work is overwhelming or boring!

=Staying abreast of the current research in all aspects of the art field (I do take my job from the art historical perspective, as that is my primary background), especially through publication exchange, handling all the new serials, etc.

=Main focus of institution is art collection and exhibitions; patrons are mainly museum staff and scholars.

=Since I don't really have any comparison, I will tell you what I like about it, not necessarily that it will be distinct. I like the autonomy and "9 to 5" feeling of it. I get to go home at the end of the day to my very own life. I like having access to art objects as a staff member. I like working closely with curators to have a sense of what is going on in the museum world in general through my work in the library.

=The collection.

=Your reference work is very specific. You work for both the staff and the public. You are often both the only manager, worker and clerical staff.

=Specialized subject matter.

=The subject matter and the quantity of special artists' books in our collections.

=Close involvement with other areas of the museum, opportunities to interact with artists and curators, immersion in subject matter I'm passionate about.

=The focus and specificity of the collection, both art and supportive material.

=Being able to work with art (in our case, artists' books); being able to do many different things.

=As the sole librarian, I must do a little bit of everything from acquisitions to cataloging to technical services. I like the variety. However, without adequate support staff, I end up doing a lot of clerical work. An additional advantage to this library is that I work closely with its primary users—the curators, scientists, and educators of the museum.

=The content! Lots more fun.

=The subject focus.

=The relationship of research questions to works in the permanent collection and to special exhibitions.

=Art subject specialization; variety of responsibilities.

=The collection is non-circulating since this is a research library. The subject matter is less diverse than in other types of libraries, but there is more depth to coverage of the subjects. The clientele is well-educated, very polite, and quite appreciative of efforts to supply information to them.

=More “special” collections: artists’ books, artist ephemera, folio and oversized items.

=It is very different from the public library. Great care is given to documenting local artists. Books are kept even if seldom used. Most of the budget here goes into periodicals, not books.

=Obviously the fact that the main subject is art. I do get questions from the community concerning paintings and obscure artists. They may not use the collection, but they know that there’s a librarian here.

=The reference work is challenging and the researchers are diverse.

=Interesting variety of reference needs; I found the opportunity to broaden the scope of my job beyond strictly art librarianship.

=It’s very similar to other non-profit library settings.

=Museum curators and other highly educated museum staff seem to think that library work is pretty easy and that really anyone could do it. They certainly have a lot of oddball suggestions to “improve” the library! And, of course, the books are prettier!

=The pace is much slower than when I was in the corporate library world.

Would you recommend working in a small art museum library to another librarian?

=It really depends on the librarian—you have to be able to hold your own as the lone librarian, and be the constant advocate for the library.

=Yes.

=Yes.

=Yes. It is interesting work, and there is great variety and challenge to the work.

=Absolutely—but make sure the institution is supportive of the library, preferably with an endowment, etc. In times of budget constraints/cut-backs, the library tends to be the first to feel the impact.

=Yes, but you have to do everything yourself and make all decisions yourself.

=Yes!

=I would recommend it to anyone who likes art. As well, to anyone who wants a life outside of work. [The compiler of the survey wrote back to this librarian to ask why they had a “9 to 5” feeling about it—since that was a highly unusual response. Here is the very sensible reply:] Of course there are a million and one things to be doing!! And, perhaps if another librarian came in, they would “freak out” because I wasn’t doing x,y,z . . . but, that said, I somehow feel on top of things by sticking to the day-to-day tasks, and slowly but surely inching along with the big projects. Something similar to what a librarian recently said to me: “Oh, we’re being mandated to digitize, so now we’re just trying to decide what we want to fall behind on.” Going to school and working at the same time I guess made me learn to prioritize. I learned I can’t do it all and slowly learned not to feel guilty for not doing it all! I also learned about myself that if I don’t have some quality down-time (i.e., the weekend free) and just a few hours at night, then, you start to spin your wheels in your job and become LESS productive! There will always be more to do and more to think of (I completely sympathize with postal workers) but the world will not end if it [the library work] gets done a month or two later (unlike the post office worker who has to stay on a relatively timely schedule). Oh yes. . . I also keep a list of goals/projects for the year. It’s encouraging to cross things off.

=Yes.

=Yes, but they would have to love all aspects of art and librarianship.

=Yes, I have freedom to structure my time as I see fit; opportunity to work closely with the larger organization.

=Yes. I have more involvement with the institution as a whole (more involved with museum exhibits, etc.) I am involved in all aspects of the library.

=Yes.

=Yes, but first research and understand the potential shortcomings—though the tradeoffs are often worth it.

=If you can afford to work in a small art museum library, I’d recommend it.

=Yes.

=Yes.

=I would recommend working in a small art library to anyone who can afford it.

=Yes.

=I would.

=Yes.

=Yes! This is a fascinating job that I personally find highly rewarding. The duties here utilize many skills learned in the various other jobs I have held; this is equivalent to running your own small business. Having an academic background in the arts would be helpful. Because this is a very small organization, there is a broader range of duties that include services outside of the norm for other types of libraries. Also due to the small staff size, many more menial tasks have to be performed.

=Depends on the individual, but yes.

=It would depend; it is a challenge to be a solo librarian; it depends on the museum and its support of the library. I am the only librarian/information professional on staff.

=Yes, if you like being on your own.

=YES.

=To one who wanted to work in a small art museum library, certainly! It wouldn't be a place for a young ambitious librarian looking for a wealthy future though.

=Yes, with some caveats.

=Yes, wholeheartedly.

=I love it, but would not recommend it to anyone who actually needs to earn a living.

=Absolutely! But someone with lots of LIBRARY experience, not just art history experience. Failed art historians do not successful librarians make, in my opinion. And you really have to know your (library) stuff to hold your own with the PhDs. Being the only library professional in a sea of other types of professionals, I have to not only explain what it is I do, but why I'm doing it.

=Yes.

=I would have to think long and hard about it. Our museum is very volatile financially and the library has usually been the target of staff cutbacks when we are struggling financially. It is not a very stable situation.

What special qualities are required of the librarian in a small art museum library?

=Subject expertise.

=Ability to represent the library to everyone—the public, the museum staff and other librarians. The ability to handle budgets, human resource issues and other administrative tasks in addition to traditional library skills.

=Required to wear many hats; multi-tasking skills a plus.

=Must be self-directed; able to work alone much of the time, yet able to collaborate with other museum staff. Must be resourceful, both with research and with limited budgets. Must be good at managing your time and your work. Must be able to direct volunteer staff.

=Multi-tasking, flexibility, time management, and most importantly, promoting the library both within and outside the museum to gain more support.

=You have to be well organized, use your time well, work without supervision, and be self-motivated.

=Ability to juggle many responsibilities and tasks; diplomacy; ability to focus on long-term goals.

=You must have the initiative to start a project and the resolve to follow through and actually get it done. The only pressure I have to “get things done” most of the time comes from myself. Therefore, creating a new initiative is not enough; you must also be a self-motivator to keep the momentum going.

=Courage.

=Flexibility to tackle many different tasks, great managerial, planning skills. Must be a people person.

=Patience; flexibility; political savvy.

=Must be well versed in all areas of librarianship (acquisitions, cataloging, processing, reference, circulation, interlibrary loan, systems, management) and in the area of art that your museum focuses on.

=Have to work independently and be self-motivated. No one else at your institution understands the work you are doing, especially the details. There is hardly anyone to confer with except in the broadest sense. Have to reach out to colleagues outside of your institution for advice.

=Patience, flexibility, self-starter ability, independence, creativity.

=Have to like working solo; have a cooperative disposition because you need to work with volunteers, fundraise, and be an ambassador for your museum and the library. Have to have patience with: co-workers because they are one-man shows also; volunteers because they mean well; supervisor when budget-cutting = being fiscally responsible, etc.

=Must be able to perform many functions, work with different types of people, have a love of art.

=Flexibility, strong organizational abilities, and an abundant amount of energy.

=Versatility and willingness to do the necessary. Subject background highly desirable. Self-directed. It is hard to think about this one.

=Ability and willingness to do all aspects of librarianship, plus background in visual arts.

=Knowledge of the permanent collection as well as familiarity with art in general, especially art created in the time period covered by the museum. I think enthusiasm and curiosity about art is critical. A large amount of flexibility, the ability to do a lot of different kinds of things in a single day, some very routine, others requiring a lot of thought. Good writing and communication skills are essential, as is an openness to working with many kinds of people. Knowing what others are working on in terms of research and being able to contribute information on an ongoing basis is very important. One has to be a self-starter in this situation, and be willing to be very persistent in trying to convince others of the worthiness of one's projects.

=Flexibility, resourcefulness, creativity.

=Where shall I start? This is definitely not a job for everyone, particularly people bothered by solitude or unable to work without supervision. Basic requirements would be professional maturity, strong public relations skills, well-honed organizational skills, working knowledge of all aspects of librarianship (reference, cataloging, serials, collection development, etc.), ability to handle multiple tasks, familiarity with technology, flexibility (physically for handling large art books as well as mentally for the variety of duties), ability to work independently, and problem-solving skills. A positive outlook and a good sense of humor help, too.

=Knowledge of current trends in art/art history, not just research/library skills (cf. law librarians who do not necessarily need to know the law, but do need to know how to find the law).

=Be able to do a little of everything: reference, cataloging, budget, etc.; be ready for lots of distractions, things that take you away from what you are working on.

=You must wear many hats. It also helps to have a good memory and pay close attention to details.

=Subject knowledge; fondness for the subject; personal involvement with some aspect of the subject. And for a one-person library: strength, stamina, and great determination!

=Persistence. Imagination. A good sense of humor. Organizational skills. Probably everything that makes a good librarian.

=Subject knowledge a dead heat with advocacy skills—the ability to make the library a well-used resource.

=Ability to juggle competing demands; high computer competence; ability to see the “big picture”—especially the needs/plans of the museum as a whole, and then proactively respond; understanding of current trends in information policy, internet, copyright issues, etc.

=You've got to learn to deal with some pretty high maintenance patrons—diplomacy and good manners are a requirement!

=Patience and fortitude! And library experience and know how. I have no background in art history and I have not found this to be a handicap. Good public service and PR skills. A real customer orientation. And, the one thing I really wish I had—reading knowledge of a foreign language like French or German. Being monolingual is a real drawback!

=Juggling abilities, creativity, imagination, determination and enthusiasm, and interest in art.

=It is essential to be constantly providing quick, high level service to staff, and to be always involved in self-promotion because we are frequent targets of budget cuts. We have to provide high level, professional service on an extremely tight budget, which can be very difficult.

As the Museum Librarian at your institution, what is your greatest concern at present?

=The size of the library in relation to the vast quantity of material it must contain; part-time job status. Having very little say in collection development.

=Funding.

=Inadequate methods of saving electronic information.

=Making sure the library is valued by the administration and museum board. Obtaining adequate budget resources to allow a decent budget for acquisitions. We have a terrible space problem.

=Budget cut-backs.

=A shortage of money and space.

=Economic state of museums nationwide.

=Justifying the cost of my services to management. While my budget is just a drop in the bucket for the rest of the institution, when they want to make cuts, I'm sure they think about "we're paying xxxx amount of money for 4 curators to do research!?" My regular audience is basically the curatorial staff with the odd academic or grad-student trickling through.

=Space.

=Budget—lack of funds, staff time to complete projects.

=Shifting infrastructure of the parent organization.

=That I can't keep up with technological changes, copyright laws, cataloging rules, new print and nonprint materials dealing with art. That I don't have knowledge about things that an art librarian in a large library would, such as licensed databases, digitizing of collections, etc.

=Budget cuts.

=Adequate funding.

=Budget. I barely had any when I got here and it's been cut. In the big picture, I'm glad that the budget was cut and not my position, half-time as it is. It's all about numbers (i.e., visitors) so to build a budget does mean cutting it out from under you. I'm hoping things will improve in a year but Jackson Hole, Wyoming is a weird market for museum vs. gallery art. We definitely have a place and niche in this community but the genre is new in terms of fine art vs. poster and commercial wildlife art. It is the most intellectually debated topic: Wildlife Art: kitsch or kunst?

=Lack of money for acquisitions.

=1. the need for additional staff; 2. the need for additional space.

=1. the health of the museum; 2. getting off the dime on the OPAC; 3. security.

=The rapid growth of technology and online databases with attendant rising costs. There is a fear that we will be priced out of access to these things—particularly online databases.

=Since we are moving in another year or two, wondering how the new library will work vis a vis communication with curators and others that I am used to being in close proximity to; hoping the library's effectiveness will be maintained or even enhanced in the new space. Immediate and daily concerns include a large workload without additional professional help.

=Lack of a staff cataloger and lack of collections space.

=If I had to pick just one, it would be the challenge of keeping abreast of rapid changes in technology. This includes the educational aspect as well as the cost of obtaining/maintaining the equipment and data. In addition, there is too little time to accomplish everything I would like to do, but that can be said of other professional positions as well. The increasing cost of quality art reference materials is also a major concern as are copyright issues.

=Supporting functions formerly handled by staff who have been cut.

=Lack of library staff to process new materials and archives.

=Funding cuts!

=Space constraints within the present library.

=There is talk of the formation of a new Fine Arts Library, which would swallow up several small libraries here in the arts complex. Our collection would then lose what distinction it has. Fortunately, with the dismal state of education and arts funding in Arizona under our current governor, this will probably not happen for years.

=Uncertainty about unplanned information policy at the museum. I fear that the collections, archives, and library may never be able to work effectively as a unit or a collaboration. I'll add to this that I also struggle with troubling information illiteracy amongst staff. With my limited time and their limited time how can we overcome [information] illiteracy to make the library a well-used resource when so much is going high-tech?

=Inadequate space.

=I'm always worried that someone will look at the library budget and see a great way to chop off a chunk of the museum budget! Other concerns are space, staffing.

=Getting automated. We got a big grant to help us, but there are lots of records still to convert. We will launch our catalog in April [this month] and learning about the system and integrating it into the lives of the users and the library staff will be a full-time job. Job security!

=Convincing the museum board of the need for a paid librarian and a budget to sustain the library [Ed. Note: this librarian, though a professional, is a volunteer.]

= Curators' requests become more frequent and the cost of materials more expensive as the acquisitions budget becomes smaller and smaller. Because of financial difficulties, the museum has reduced everyone's work week to 4 days/week and has laid off staff and offered retirement packages to older employees. The answer is quite simply, my biggest concern is the financial security of the museum in general and how that will affect the library.

What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your present position?

=Subject specialization and diversity of responsibilities.

=The opportunity to be part of a community institution.

=Helping a patron make discoveries.

=Implementing the library automation program and building the partnership with the public library. Demonstrating the usefulness of a library professional when the staff asks for help with research.

=Helping patrons (including staff) find the answers they need while working in a relatively calm environment that enables me to work primarily alone.

=Doing research (least satisfaction would have to be cataloguing!).

=Developing and establishing library collections, policies, and shaping the library for the future.

=Seeing the collection grow and fill-out and slowly receive greater recognition.

=Helping people.

=Reference work for curatorial and other staff.

=Providing service; freedom; opportunity to work in non-library areas (archives, bookstore, museum publications).

=Being able to do library work in all areas, especially ordering books and other materials for the library, in addition to other things like maintaining the museum's web site and working on the museum's publications.

=Knowing that the library is organized and that staff can find materials. At the moment, I'm also cataloging more than I'm acquiring. . . I usually copy/create at least 50 books per week.

=The ability to shape the future of a new library.

=I really enjoy living here in Jackson Hole with the real Tetons (not posters on my wall) and Yellowstone National Park in my backyard and then to come to work and find this gorgeous scenery impressionistically reflected in some of the art that we own is such a delicious treat! I love the wildlife fine art and I'm passionate about preservation, conservation, and education regarding wildlife both here in the West and around the world. To be affiliated with the museum through my library experience and expertise is a wonderful match and the executive director and curator realized it in their selection.

=Perception of the library as an important part of the museum's operations; users' satisfaction.

=Ordering new materials for the curators, scientists, and educators.

=Having our collection appreciated; we have some great things.

=Continued involvement with patrons, growing staff usage (adding a new curator position this year).

=Contributing to exhibition research; reading and exchanging ideas about an exhibition as it develops. I helped to do research for our Bonnard exhibition over the past several years. I'm happy to see us gradually emerge from almost no technology to subscribing to a number of databases. Our ability to do

research has been enhanced by access to electronic databases. I also enjoy giving tours of special exhibitions. I get a great deal of pleasure from sharing what I've learned with visitors, and I think it is good for visitors to see librarians in a public role. I've also started doing special behind-the-scenes programs on library and archival research for members and patrons of the museum. Seeing the book collection grow and develop is also satisfying, and making special purchases of books and periodicals that will be part of our exhibitions is exciting.

=Being part of educating people about art and witnessing the growth of the library on all levels (have been a Phoenix Art Museum employee for 13 years).

=Sharing the museum's resources with the public and educating people about the world of art are very satisfying to me personally.

=Working in the arts, interesting materials to look at.

=Helping clients.

=To see a look of appreciation from my patrons when we locate something they are seeking.

=Purchasing, processing and making available to the museum staff, textile scholars, and the public, books and other materials that are beautiful and of outstanding scholarship.

=Calling the shots. Determining the priority of today's work. Answering questions from the public and obtaining books for the staff. Working with students to find what they need.

=The instructional opportunities I have are my greatest satisfaction. I enjoy any opportunity to facilitate people's access to the information they need whether it is finding facts or introducing tools.

=The sense of being able to "play." I call the library my "dollhouse library"—but the sense of being able to try things out, to experiment in a variety of ways, to have the flexibility to experiment, and the extent to which, as a professional, I'm my own boss, all work into it.

=I really like being a part of this organization. The gallery is a real center of activity for the city, right in the middle of things, always active, interesting patrons, interesting questions, never a dull moment!

=Getting automated! I'm pretty proud that I was able to find the funds [through a grant] and to make it happen. I think it will make a big difference in how museum staff use and view the library.

=Finding information when needed, and adding to the resources of the collection.

=Being able to acquire materials on interlibrary loan that we cannot afford to purchase. Working with students (high school, college, and continuing ed.) to help them use library resources.

How do you see yourself and your library changing in the future?

=We will be building a new museum in 2003; it has been very exciting to help plan the new library.

=Develop OPAC; digitization projects.

=Increasing reliance on electronic resources; increased pressure to be more open to the public.

=My part-time position will become full-time. We will automate the library in stages (first books, followed by periodicals, catalogs, artist files, etc.), and there will be computer terminals that the public can use.

=Hopefully, gaining more support from the Director and Board of Trustees to increase staffing and ensure the employment of at least one full-time MLS. We are down [to 1 FTE professional and 1 part-time support] from what was a minimum of 3 full-time staff members 2 ½ years ago, but are still expected to perform the same functions. With an upcoming assessment, we hope to be able to work closer with area and state art libraries (there has been talk of developing a state consortium of art libraries).

=We are slowly becoming automated, and we'll have to move to a new space soon.

=Growth of library's collections and growth of public access.

=The collection focus will probably become more well-rounded, not so heavy on the Russian side of things but more of a European slant. The institution is also planning to build a new facility which includes a new library. The whole institution will be rethinking themselves as well as the library. Who knows??

=Expansion and [further] automation.

=At this point, I am hoping to increase use by the public. I would also like to make the OPAC accessible from the museum website.

=Automation of card catalog; full membership in a bibliographic utility; expanded service to the general public.

=Just changing to meet the needs of changing technologies (as far as our budget will allow), hopefully proactively and not reactively. Hope to continue to expand my knowledge about the various areas of librarianship. The library will probably become even more focused in its subject matter (southern U.S. art) because space is getting tighter and I will have to weed materials to make room for new things.

=It will grow and become better known to outside researchers. I will have to have an assistant to handle cataloging and requests.

=Greater use of technology for public access to the library collections; greater integration between library and other museum programs; increased visibility and participation in the regional library community.

=Being that we're a new, specialized library, it's been a grass roots operation. Getting remote catalog access is imminent and will be a significant piece in generating research business. Eventually, I'd like to link our library collection to our permanent art collection (EOSi has software to do this) but I'm not prepared to do it yet and organizationally it may not be what administration would like to do. Remains to be seen. Virtuality of information is a reality and it will be interesting to see how it impacts the mission of this museum and thus the library.

=We hope to increase our use of technology (e.g., online research databases, online exhibitions of artists' books), more and more email interaction for reference requests.

=I am hoping to be able to promote the archivist and the library clerk to full-time in the next few years. We are also talking about building an extension for the entire museum, including the Library and the Archives. I am thinking about replacing some of our current reference sources, like periodicals, directories, and indexes with online ones.

=Until the building is expanded (which is way off), we will not have more space, and we will have to be very creative to get more shelves, so the collection will not get much larger. Perhaps a younger person will be hired who will get the grant and do the database. With a more active group of volunteers, we could have more open hours. I would like the docents to make more use of the collection.

=I will need to become better aware of the ever-changing technologies and resources.

=With a new space and a new Center for the Study of Modern Art, I think that everything will change dramatically. We will have more space, staff, resources, and be much more accessible to the public as well as to visiting scholars and artists. I hope that the library will be the heart of the new Center and be an arena for the exchange of ideas.

=More collections will be automated. More electronic subscriptions. More administration and more staff.

=Personally, I plan to increase my knowledge of art and technology. The library is already changing rapidly as we convert to electronic data and envision a digital project.

=Me: becoming more aware of special collections specific to art libraries. Library: growing in staff and services to match the growth in our collection.

=New librarian is taking over, also part-time; the biggest change is that museum will most likely not be able to retain a librarian long-term until a commitment is made to fund more library staff (previous librarian was here for over 20 years).

=Someday the library collection may go online or at least have an in-house electronic card catalog.

=Our space must expand to fill our present and future needs, so that we will be able to offer people who are interested in textiles, rugs, costume, design, and ethnography a pleasant, convenient, and comfortable place to pursue these interests. I anticipate that the Library will become more widely known throughout the world, as is The Textile Museum. I also anticipate that the staff will increase so that I can concentrate in particular areas and do not have to do everything as is now the case.

=We need badly to have more control over circulation. Currently the only method of checking books out is to write your name on the card in the back, which is fine with the staff and docents but dangerous with students who have no reminders from a greater poer that they should return the book. This is the main reason for getting the collection on the SABIO system.

=I dream (don't necessarily see clearly yet) that the library will work more vigorously to develop a holistic approach to the information resources of the museum, that a continuum of information will demand more of the library and the library will give more to staff, students, and the public.

=We are working on finalizing a redefinition of the Library and my job into an Information Resources Department, with my job title as Curator of Information Resources. Not yet clear if reporting structure will change. But it's a recognition that ca. 60% of my time is spent dealing with virtual resources—the Gallery's collection management system (I'm system admin.), the Gallery's website (I'm webmaster), issues around rights & reproductions, etc.

=Barring budget cuts, we will continue to grow and serve our staff and public in a timely and economical fashion.

=I hope to see more use of the library by non-curatorial staff. I hope the OPAC will help with that. I'd also like to see the library taking more control of the archives, which are pretty neglected right now. I'd love to see an archivist on staff, not necessarily "under" the library. The current Ass't Librarian is now in library school. When she graduates, I'd like to upgrade her position to a professional one, so she can be paid what she deserves. I'd REALLY like to have a collection development policy someday.

=The library is in a state of flux right now and we are defining the future role of the library within the museum and within the community.

Any other comments about the administration of a small art museum library?

=Taking over a library that was run by volunteers for many years is a challenge.

=You really have to speak up to be heard. The other museum departments are larger (and louder) than mine, and I sometimes feel left out of the big picture.

=Highly recommend working in an art museum library. It is very stimulating and challenging. I love the museum environment.

=Staffing and space are always limited or threatened.

=In my experience, it is an avenue with many different potentials among which the practitioner can choose, if given the opportunity (i.e., sufficient support staff) to structure the position and avoid the daily workflow becoming a strictly “fire-fighting” regimen.

=It’s occasionally helpful to be the only one who knows what’s going on in the library; but more often, it would be helpful to have librarian colleagues to consult with and share ideas with. Email discussion groups help with this somewhat.

=I’m very familiar with being “chief cook and bottle washer.” You have to be able to do it all, but if you need help, you have to be able to ask for it or formulate a proposal.

=We rely quite a bit on volunteers and interns.

=This is a challenging, but highly rewarding career.

=We have the position of Head Librarian on hold until June 2003; I am a catalog librarian by profession and was hired for that purpose; however, I am now Acting Head Librarian, a position for which I have neither training nor experience. This is the sort of circumstance that I would suspect many librarians in small libraries find themselves in. Also: you did not mention anything about exchange programs; this is a significant function we carry out.

=This job allows me to meet a great variety of people and learn more about fine arts.

=I think you must truly love the subject in order to enjoy your work and to have a good rapport with the library’s patrons.

=Other than the cramped quarters, limited budget, and lack of advancement I can’t think of a job I’d rather have.

=I’m not sure there’s one right answer about who the Librarian should report to—this will vary from institution to institution—more important is the personality mix, and whether it works within the museum’s structure.

=If there is something that you’re not particularly fond of doing, you don’t have to do it for long! Don’t plan on keeping your hands clean, there’s lots of active work to do in the small staff library!

=One thing that makes my library unique is that I, as Head Librarian, do not have any collection development responsibilities. Amazing but true. The long-standing procedure (since the dawn of time apparently) is that the curators do all the book selection for their areas (Asian curator picks all Asian books, etc.). We give them a budget (that we break down from the larger book budget) and provide them with approval plan slips and other selection materials, and they do the selection. We order, catalog, process, etc. My only responsibility is for the reference collection, which has a small budget.

The system actually works surprisingly well. When I first got here, I tried to create a collection development policy. It was greeted with such strong resistance that I fled. (“We don’t ever have enough money to buy the books we want, so why should we write down what kind of books we would buy if we ever had the money”—direct curatorial quote). I’m guessing that in the past there was some movement toward “taking away” the book ordering responsibility from the curators, which freaked them out considerably, and they seemed to view the creation of a collection development policy to be just another tactic in such a campaign. The whole thing is so fraught with peril that I’m going to continue to lay low for a few years yet. Then one day The reason I mention this is that I believe this is what has enabled me to succeed without any art history background. If the position required strong collection development skills, I would recommend more of an art history background than I have.

In the 21st century art library, traditional practices are affected/changed/combined with new technology. Please comment on these issues in light of your current situation.

=THANK YOU. No!!! No.

=I think this issue has always been a reality for librarians since the days of Dewey and probably before! Perhaps the faster speeds at which a technology obsolesces give contemporary practices a particular urgency. "In light of [my] current situation," as you say above, our future migration to an automated collection catalog (and hopefully, full membership in one of the national utilities) should obviously expand access to our collection and introduce traditional practices such as interlibrary loan into our workflow. And as our whole museum moves toward a more integrated collections management system, the "baby steps" we're taking now, such as integrating museum archives records into the library catalog, take on a broader significance. I do worry about the library profession attracting qualified cataloging personnel in the future.

=A lot of technology seems to depend on big budgets. We cannot at present join the statewide consortium. . . but even if we could, we could not afford to subscribe to any of the databases. At a recent regional ARLIS meeting, a company demonstrated ARTBibliographies Modern online. It's too expensive, and they won't consider letting small libraries buy blocks of searches. A year or two before, someone else demonstrated Art Index Retrospective, which is also too expensive. I think companies could do better in including the small libraries, of which there are many. We can't all join consortia (our public and local university library are not interested in any sort of cooperative venture). The Internet is a wonderful resources, but I'm seeing sites that were previous free become fee-based, such as part of AskArt.com. At least they seem to be willing to sell by the search instead of requiring expensive annual subscriptions. I was amazed but pleased that we could buy an automated system, although it's not fully integrated and leaves a lot to be desired. Many small libraries will be left behind if they cannot automate sufficiently. We looked at [a larger system], and their price was astronomical. The base price would be the same for us as it would be for a large university library (of course a university would pay much more for licensing workstations, etc.). They and other companies should have products scaled down in some way for the smaller library.

=As a library focused to a large degree on materials published in the 19th and early 20th century, the acquisition and cataloging of those materials will continue to be important, though web-finding tools facilitate the process. As the web continues to, in many ways, eclipse paper-based materials, it becomes beholden to librarians to trumpet the usefulness of this material. I also see an important need to develop unique resources at the local level to contribute to the larger world of scholarship through web/net delivery methods. Digital imaging projects, I believe, will continue to be important contributions from the art museum library.

=With the development of more resources online or on CD-ROM, the physical use of the library seems to be on the decline. What once took an actual trip to the library, staff/public now have access to from their own computers. This is frustrating in some ways, as it does lower our statistics (as there is no way to determine who is using what, how many times, etc.), which we rely on to try and convince the museum that we do need more funding/staffing, especially since those online resources still come out of the library's budget. As more reference tools become available online, of course, the staff wants all of them, but then the down side is the reality of "what can our budget afford?" Which ones will/would get the most use? As we know, they don't come cheap either. On the plus side, it does free up more time for us for other projects/work (online resources don't need the dreaded reshelving, which is always looming over us). Online resources are definitely quicker to use; what used to take half a day can now be done in a few minutes--I'm thinking especially of BHA and Art Index in print—could it have been more tedious?

=Our library is slowly moving into the 21st century. We recently joined OCLC and now cards are sent to us (no more typing!). In the future we hope to totally automate the catalog. Users have come to really like the card catalog, but they realize the need for an automated system.

=New technologies have been helpful in that it is much easier to access information, save time, etc. But it's also creating a faster pace in the workplace. It's certainly an exciting time to be a librarian!

=We pushed to get the card catalogue online via the web, hoping to increase visibility and attract users. We shall see if this is true; it just went live. Otherwise, we plug away as usual. We do not feel CD-ROMs are useful to us. We prefer print periodicals for the images vs. electronic. The web has made purchasing out-of-print books, which is about 75% of what we buy, extremely easy.

=The problems of staff reductions, budget cuts, lack of space I do not think are related to new technology.

=One of our most popular programs is the series of Book as Art exhibitions. These exhibitions do not travel, and the books are kept in glass cases. We also have a large collection of artists' books. We would love to use technology to make these books available to more people (via online exhibitions), even though we realize there is no substitute for seeing the books in person. We would also like to do the same for some of our special collections, such as artists' papers and bookplates.

=It seems that the traditional use of paper products are less used as patrons are increasingly used to access online resources in university or larger institutions. There is still a need for traditional practices, although some are being improved through new technologies.

=Having access to databases has made a dramatic difference in some of our exhibition research. It even helped us locate an essayist for one of our forthcoming exhibition catalogs, through finding her dissertation on Dissertation Abstracts and seeing its relationship to the theme of our exhibition.

=Our biggest challenge is lack of funds to purchase electronic resources or subscriptions to them.

=Yes, there are definite changes mostly concerned with combining traditional practices with the new technology. An example is in reference work, where previously I would assist a patron in person; now, more of this type of work is for email and phone queries. There are more phone requests from patrons wanting to know what internet sources are available for them to do their own research, and people seem less inclined to visit the library to perform research. More often people want the information digested for them. Internet access to the library's holdings will increase our presence and make the materials available to a wider audience. Ordering materials is much easier and faster. Utilizing the book companies' online databases for searching materials, selecting, and placing orders is a big improvement over searching microfiche, typing orders, and mailing them.

=New technologies need money, and the library is not a place where the museum wants to put its money at the moment. Also new technologies mean a need for people who can work them; we are staffed by several volunteers who are not computer literate at all and would probably not welcome such changes. Not to say that all older/retired people are techno-phobic, but this can be a problem particular to museums and their libraries.

=We have the old format of a card catalog and card and pocket checkout system. But my cataloging effort is made simpler because of the internet resources available, and I use a software program to produce cards for the card catalog. I also use the internet to collect information on artists. When our internet was down this week due to a change in service providers, it was like having one hand tied behind my back.

=When I joined the museum two years ago, the retiring librarian had worked here for 22 years. The library [in a university museum] was not all that involved with the student population and was run basically for the museum staff. There was also a problem with an ongoing loss of the volumes that

were checked out by students as all they did was sign their name, and if you were lucky, a valid phone number. In order to check books out through the SABIO system, I needed to add the students in to the patron database. This has increased student use of our small library and so far has not alienated the staff who still generally use the card catalog and sign their names. So I have two systems going at once and it seems to be working for now. . . .

=New technologies in the MOA situation challenge the institution beyond discipline. As we seek to enable knowledge sharing and to deliver services that defy traditional practices, integration of new technologies are attractive, though they must be combined with a sustained collection of “old technology.” This is a distinct contrast to my prior experience in News Librarianship where new tech can REPLACE old tech. Yes, new technologies are attractive and desirable BUT (and that’s a big BUT) the specialities of the academic knowledge that drives the institution means we are 1) unprepared for the demands of learning practical technical skills across the board and 2) complicated/conflicted in our embrace of technical practices that have not undergone rigorous critical processes and are not (for lack of a better phrase) ‘intellectually responsible.’ In the 21st century, the museum and its library will have to exercise caution as it at least affiliates itself with, if not wholeheartedly commits itself to, narrow avenues of information (the words and the images, etc.) that technology can exchange thanks to machines. *Deus ex machina!*

=I think the biggest change for me is that the Library is the focus point for dissemination of Gallery information through 1) the website and 2) the collections management system, which will go online shortly. We are involved in discussions with Curatorial, Exhibitions, and Education departments about planning to put fully fleshed information about the collection online; putting resources for teachers (lesson plans) online. We are also in charge of Rights & Reproductions, which means that we are the institutional monitor for copyright compliance, and the ones responsible for assuring that correct rights information goes online. It’s all very exciting. Ca. 60% of my time is now dealing with “virtual” access to collections. [Ed. Note: this librarian is in a university museum and does not do her own cataloging—it’s done by the campus library cataloging dept.]

=We welcome technological advances and have been able to provide better services because of them. There are basic utilities that are out of reach for the small library that are easily and freely available online. There are some areas, especially, I think, for art libraries, where the best resources are the most primitive. Our vertical files seem the best example. They are irreplaceable, tremendously useful, and very labour intensive. There are some bells and whistles that are not really necessary for a small operation like this (or maybe I’m just rationalizing because we can’t afford the stuff). We have tried to be innovative (when you get a general reference question, put the caller on hold and call the public library). Some other low-tech examples: we still use book cards for circulation; it works just fine. We have no electronic security. We do lose some books, but by-and-large, we have a very low rate of theft. It’s probably financially more viable to replace a few missing books than it is to install a security system, at least so far. We do have an OPAC online from our website, and the card catalog is frozen, but still in use.

=Automation will drag our users into the 21st century. They are very paper-dependent now, and see the web as something to print stuff off of. Hopefully, using the catalog online will get them into a less paper-dependent frame of mind. Eventually.

=Technology is too expensive to install and to maintain for a small museum.