



Annual Report 2006 ARLIS/NA George Wittenborn Memorial Award Committee

Submitted by the committee chairperson:

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2006 Committee members:

Amy Trendler, Ball State University
Annette Haines, University of Michigan
Rebecca Price, University of Michigan

Miranda Howard, Western Michigan
University
Marsha Stevenson, University of Notre
Dame

Meetings and Activities:

March 2006 – Finalized committee roster and received approval from ARLIS headquarters.

May 2006 - Incoming committee met with outgoing (2005) Wittenborn Committee chairperson Barb Prior at the annual ARLIS/NA conference. Barb supplied all relevant documents after the conference.

September 2006 – Committee tasks were identified and divided. Received notice from Headquarters that the annual budget request was denied. The budget had been used for two purposes, to ship winning books to the conference and to treat authors attending the conference to dinner.

October 2006 - The Call for Submissions (in English, French and Spanish) was mailed from Headquarters to publishers. The Call for Submissions was also posted to ARLIS-L, VRA-L, and other relevant list-servs.

November 2006 - January 2007 – Submissions were received, checked, and acknowledged. Committee members began independently reviewing submissions.

26 January 2007 - The full committee convened for an all-day meeting to select the award winning publication(s). 87 submissions were received from 36 publishers of which 84 were eligible. After a lengthy discussion regarding the submissions, the group had two clear winners and 4 possible honorable mentions. The committee decided to let the 2 "clear cut" winners stand alone and not select honorable mentions this year. Various other issues regarding the presentation and dispersal of books were discussed, and the committee finished the meeting on schedule.

February 2007– Notified award winners.

March 2007 – Made first pre-conference announcement of award-winning titles to ARLIS-L. The change in tradition had been approved by the chair of the Awards Committee and the Executive Board and was intended to allow more time to celebrate the award winning books and to allow publishers slightly more flexibility in advertising their award. Publishers were asked to wait until after the conference to issue a press release, but they were encouraged to incorporate the Wittenborn award designation in their Spring advertising. The award winning titles will be on display during the entire conference in the exhibits hall, not just post-convocation (the former practice meant the books were on display less than 24 hours.) The change in tradition was not without controversy, so it will be up to next year's Wittenborn committee and the executive board to decide if the new practice will continue.

March - April 2007 -- Members of the committee prepare the display and presentation for the annual conference.

April 2007 –The 27th annual George Wittenborn Memorial Book Award will be presented in Atlanta, GA, at the annual ARLIS/NA conference. The award presentations will be made during the conference convocation and the award winning books will be on display in the exhibits hall. Plan to meet with incoming Wittenborn Committee members at the ARLIS/NA national conference and will forward all relevant documents to the 2007 chair person. A press release will be issued immediately after the conference.

Winning titles:

- *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*. John Oliver Hand, Catherine A. Metzger, Ron Spronk. National Gallery of Art, Washington; Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp, in association with Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, and Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- *American Indian Horse Masks*. Mike Cowdrey and Ned & Jody Martin. Hawk Hill Press, Nicasio, California.

Issues

Pre-Conference Award Announcement

Our major issue has been addressed above, specifically, giving the Wittenborn award winning books more exposure by a pre-conference announcement. Some of the membership expressed disagreement with this new practice, so next year's committee and Executive Board may wish to revisit the issue.

Other issues include:

Publication Date Question

This issue has been under discussion since at least 2004. That year the Wittenborn committee recommended that the Wittenborn guidelines "clearly state that submissions must have a copyright date that matches the Wittenborn Award year." After researching the question and discussing it at length the 2005 Committee could not agree on this or another solution. Our committee only accepted items that clearly showed a copyright date of 2006. This was not a major setback, with only 3 submissions being ineligible. We recommend that a firm decision on a consistent and stated policy regarding the date of publication issue be incorporated into the guidelines for submission for the Wittenborn Award.

Presence of the Wittenborn Award on the ARLIS/NA web site

Our committee felt that a stronger presence for the Wittenborn Award on the ARLIS/NA web site is needed. Perhaps after the convocation, there could be the addition of thumbnail images of the winning publications and/or the winning authors, along with some text about the books, either on the main page of the web site or under the "News, Events" section. Also, the list of winning publications on the web site is in chronological order, and we suggest that it be placed in reverse chronological order so that the newest publications appear first. Links to the winning publishers' web sites might be useful, too, but perhaps only the most recent year or two worth of winning publishers is feasible.

Continuity in committee leadership and documentation

The Wittenborn Award committee is the only ARLIS/NA award committee that has no continuity in terms of membership or leadership. As such, the chair person depends heavily on the documentation of previous committees and the advice of the both the outgoing chair and the chair of the umbrella Awards committee. Our committee wondered if two issues should be considered: 1) have the outgoing chair serve as ex-officio to the next year's committee and 2) post documentation on the web site that would aid subsequent committees in their work. The annual report and submission guidelines are useful, but there are other timelines, list of tasks, and "recent practices" documents that might benefit future committees. The 2005 chair started a "Recent Practices" document and collected sample forms and letters for the 2006 committee. There is very little direction passed from committee to committee, which these documents hope to alleviate.

Remaining Issues:

These are issues that were brought up by the 2005 committee but are not yet resolved. They merit consideration by future committees:

Advertising versus Mailed Solicitations

The 2005 committee discovered that an ad in *Publishers Weekly* would cost about as much as mailing solicitations to 300+ publishers. Since we are not getting books from known publishers (often art museums?) one wonders if the current system is effective. The current practice of maintaining a publishers database is a lot of work. There was discussion about which trade journal / scholarly journal would be the best place to put such an ad (Art Bulletin? Art Newspaper? Chronicle of Higher Education? Museum News?). The 2005 committee felt a letter mailed to a publishing house would have more of an impact than an ad, but there was also concern that with the high turnover in publishing and among museum staff many letters may go unnoticed. The issue wasn't resolved, but the idea of purchasing advertising was seen to have merit and warrant further consideration if future committees are so inclined.

Logo

The 2004 Committee also suggested that ARLIS/NA "re-design the Wittenborn award logo and produce the new logo as a digital file only." Because "Stickers are expensive, obsolete, and no longer of much use to publishers." This issue has yet to be addressed, although our committee has been asked by winners if stickers are available.

Certificates

There are currently no guidelines for printing the certificates for award winners. Future committees would benefit from guidelines regarding for whom the certificates should be printed.

Respectfully submitted,

Terrie L. Wilson

March 21, 2007