The Provenance Special Interest Group (SIG) was established in February 2013 to keep ARLIS/NA members informed of current issues and activities related to provenance research. The group will act as a forum for provenance-related projects and will seek to contribute to future ARLIS/NA sessions and workshops, when appropriate.

Activities over the past year (April 2013-March 2014):

The first meeting of the Provenance SIG was held on Friday, April 26th, at the ARLIS/NA conference in Pasadena. Eleven ARLIS/NA members attended the meeting, which focused mainly on the group’s mandate, communications, and future projects. It was agreed that the group would maintain a broad perspective on provenance rather than focusing exclusively on art and other cultural property looted during the Second World War. Present: Louis Adrean (Cleveland Museum of Art); Virginia Allison (L.A. Louver Gallery, Venice, California); Meg Black (Metropolitan Museum of Art); Christina Carlos (L.A. Louver Gallery); Philip Dombowsky (National Gallery of Canada); Erin Elliott (Sotheby’s Institute of Art, New York); Caroline Gabrielli (Jasper Johns Catalogue Raisonné of Drawings, The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas); Erika Hauser (Metropolitan Museum of Art); Anna Helgeson (Christie’s, New York); Karen Maguire (Christie’s, New York); and Jessica McIntyre (Minneapolis Institute of Arts).

In addition to those who attended the first meeting, fourteen ARLIS/NA members expressed their support for the group in the months following its formation, through emails to the coordinator. An additional fifty-five ARLIS/NA members have joined the group since August 2013 through the ARLIS/NA membership process. At present the Provenance Special Interest Group has eighty-two members.

After discussion with members in the weeks following the Pasadena meeting, it was agreed that the Provenance SIG should submit a proposal for a workshop on Second World War provenance research at the upcoming 42nd annual ARLIS/NA conference to be held in Washington, D.C. The proposal, which outlined a workshop led by Nancy Yeide (Head, Curatorial Records, National Art Gallery, Washington, D.C.), was drafted by Philip Dombowsky (Coordinator) and submitted to the program committee in June. The workshop was recommended by the Program Committee in August and approved by the Executive Board at the mid-year meeting on September 26th-27th.
Following the approval of the workshop, discussions were held with Nancy Yeide regarding speakers and content for the workshop. The end result was a four-hour workshop scheduled for May 5th, 2014, with instructors including, in addition to Nancy Yeide, Victoria Reed, Sadler Curator for Provenance, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Chris Naylor, Director of Textual Records, Research Services, National Archives and Records Administration; Megan Lewis, Reference Librarian, Library and Archives, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Marisa Bourgoin, Richard Manoogian Chief of Reference Services, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; and Barbara Aikens, Chief, Collections Processing, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The workshop is designed for art librarians and archivists, and will present practical and specific information regarding a broad range of provenance research resources, including online sources such as the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR) and the Munich Central Collecting Point databases. Key archival collections, including those held by the American Archives of Art, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), will also be covered. An email encouraging participation in the workshop was sent to Provenance SIG members on February 20th.

The annual meeting of the Provenance SIG has been scheduled for Friday, May 2nd, in Washington, D.C. (Washington Board Room, Grand Hyatt) and an agenda for the meeting will be posted on ARLIS-L in early April. A LinkedIn group has been established for the Provenance SIG and will help keep members informed of new developments.