Public Librarians SIG

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Leadership:
Lori Salmon will be the new SIG Coordinator.

SIG Activity
In November 2017, the SIG conducted an online survey to identify ARLIS/NA members interested or already involved in the Public Librarians SIG. Announcements of the survey and deadlines were posted to the ARLIS_PublicLib listserv and to the ARLIS-L listserv. There were 23 respondents, most of who currently work in a public library. Only 8 respondents were already subscribed to the listserv, and most of the others didn't know it existed. Only 4 of those subscribed had ever posted a message to the list.

Respondents indicated what topics they would like to see discussed on the listserv. Most popular in descending order were:
- What our colleagues are doing in this specialized public/art librarian community
- Ideas about public programming
- How to get people outside of my department interested in art book collections (outreach/marketing/exhibits)
- Working within a system that may not prioritize art books in the same way I do
- The “special challenges” of working in public libraries
- Book distributors and collection development issues
- Other: Class systems perpetuated within public institutions

Several respondents indicated that they were interested in participating in the SIG by:
- Organizing or participating in a future conference session about public libraries
- Bringing up topics for discussion on the listserv
- Helping to create a directory of art librarians in public libraries
- And a handful of respondents were interested in:
  - Maintaining a blog with news and resources
  - Contributing to another blog on behalf of the SIG
These will be areas that the new SIG Coordinator, Lori Salmon, and the group will be able pursue to create a more active and relevant community of art librarians working in public libraries. Some suggestions for identifying additional art librarians in public libraries included: reaching out via local chapters, making contact with the Public Libraries Association, and working with a library school intern to conduct a survey.

**ARLIS/NA Strategic Directions**

**Leadership and Advocacy**
The Society shall speak and act on behalf of its members to advance, validate, sustain, and advocate for the profession and the value of art libraries, as well as train its members to be advocates within their individual context.

Art subject specialists in public libraries are being phased out in favor of generalists at libraries all over the U.S. This is a critical time for professional advocacy and collaboration among art librarians in public libraries and the Public Librarians SIG seeks to remain a nexus for the exchange of information and ideas among professionals in this specialized area of art librarianship.

Our **ongoing action plan** is to: 1) maintain the Public Librarians SIG listserv (arlis_publiclib@arlisna.org) as a way to communicate with colleagues for support, idea-sharing, and outreach; 2) meet as a group at the annual conference; and 3) act as a resource for librarians new to the area of art librarianship in public libraries to learn about this specialized field from colleagues.

**Activity:** 1) November 2017 survey distributed and discussed on listserv, survey results generated more awareness of the listserv, and encouraged new subscribers. 2) The SIG met at the New Orleans conference, 9 members attended.

**Diversity and Inclusion**
The Society shall promote diversity and inclusion within the profession including the makeup of its workforce, the design of services and programming, the development of intercultural fluency skills and competencies, and the practice of inclusive collections building.

Public librarians constitute only a small number of total ARLIS/NA members, yet lend to ARLIS/NA’s representation of a diverse range of institution types and specialized areas of art librarianship.

Because art subject specialists and art collection selectors in public libraries do not often identify professionally with ARLIS/NA, it is the intent of the Public Librarians SIG to identify potential members at institutions in North America, to inform them of our group within ARLIS/NA, and to invite them to join a list of institutional contacts for the Public Librarians SIG to enhance our professional network. The idea for this action item was proposed at the 2015 Public Librarians SIG meeting at the Annual Conference, and reaffirmed at the 2016 SIG meeting, and supported via member survey results. This is a **pending action item** for 2018, and beyond.