Good morning everyone! On behalf of the ARLIS/New England Chapter I’d like to welcome you to Boston and to the first session of the 38th annual conference of ARLIS/NA! We are thrilled to see all of you here and appreciate your attendance during these tough economic times. I’m Betsy Peck Learned, Associate Dean of Libraries at RWU and a longtime ARLIS member. The title of today’s session is “Confronting the Future: Articulating Purpose, Documenting Value” and will feature two speakers who are familiar to many of you, Jeanne Brown and Jolene De Verges. I will be introducing them to you in a moment after a few introductory remarks.

Retrenchment, reorganization, repurposing, retraining, and my favorite phrase from my own institution, reducing redundancies and creating efficiencies. These ominous terms reflect some of the serious ways our institutions are confronting the present economic downturn. Confronting the future, however, requires us to re-invent our traditional roles as librarians and curators and prove our value and the value of libraries beyond our walls. Proving our value requires strategies for documenting and presenting what we do in a language our chief financial officers understand—percentages, capacities, return on investment, value-added, and so on. It requires that we become innovative, collaborative, transformative, flexible, tireless, and willing and ready to take on new responsibilities. Jolene, for example, will soon assume a new position that reflects a transition from Images Librarian at MIT to the library’s new “Specialized Content and Services” department encompassing images, metadata, and oversight of digital projects. How do we, like Jolene,
identify those skills of value that will allow us to remain relevant? How do we document what we do? What models do we see that can help us transition into new roles and services?

The recent 2009 Ithaka survey report published a few weeks ago on faculty perceptions of libraries and publishing refers to the declining use of library services by scientists and makes a relevant point for those in discipline-specific libraries and VR collections (and I apologize for the quote—it is a little wordy): “Few libraries possess the resources to pursue every strategic opportunity they perceive. For this reason, many may face a strategic choice between investing to reengage with scientists and certain social science fields or building on their existing strength with humanists to develop durable services for an increasingly online future, or similar kinds of strategic resource prioritization decisions. In contemplating such decisions, it is necessary to examine the range of feasible services needed or wanted at a disciplinary level. Moreover, many libraries will find it useful to consider unique assets and opportunities on their own campuses in the context of this broad strategic backdrop, perhaps investing in individualized strategy analyses for their own institutions. Certainly, in this environment, academic libraries can benefit from a culture of re-investment, experimentation, assessment, and as necessary, regular re-direction…” Who better to consider unique aspects and opportunities at a disciplinary level than art and architecture librarians and VR professionals like all of you?

Our speakers today will hopefully provide you with some strategies for assessing and transitioning our services, thereby ensuring the enduring role of the library. Before I introduce Jeanne, I’d like everyone to know that we will allow 15 minutes for questions at the end of the session, so please save your questions until the speakers have finished.

Our first speaker, Jeanne Brown, has been the Head of the Architecture Studies Library at the University of Nevada Las Vegas since 1991, where she holds the rank of full professor. Jeanne has served simultaneously as the half-time Assessment Librarian for the UNLV libraries where she works on assessing student information skills, collections, web usability, as well as various human resources assessment projects. Jeanne is a prolific
author, having written and edited many articles, book chapters, and papers on assessment, library standards, and architecture librarianship for ARLIS/NA as well as for the larger library profession. Having had the pleasure of working with Jeanne on several of these publications and conference presentations, I can say with all honesty that she is truly a leader in librarianship today. This morning, Jeanne will be speaking about using assessment tools and data to leverage our administration toward continuing to value libraries. The title of her presentation is: “Demonstrating Library Value in a Period of Retrenchment.”

Jolene de Verges is the Images Librarian for Rotch Library of Architecture and Planning at MIT where she also manages the Rotch Visual Collections. In the next couple of months, she will assume a new position in Specialized Content and Services in the newly reorganized MIT Libraries. Her interests and background include cataloging and access to visual resources in art, architecture, and material culture, digital repositories in libraries, metadata standards, and integrated access to visual content. She has managed and participated in various digital imaging initiatives in museum and library environments. Previous to her position at MIT, Jolene was coordinator of the Bridges to Art project at the Worcester Art Museum and the Digital Imaging Specialist at Smith College where she worked on the design of the Snapdragon collection management system which is modeled on VRA Core 4 and CCO. She is the former secretary of the Visual Resources Association and is currently serving on the VRA Data Standards Committee. She holds a BA and MA in Art History and an MLS from Simmons College. Jolene’s presentation today is entitled, “Revolutionary Models for Managing and Sharing Image Collections: What’s our Future as Image Professionals?”