Introductory remarks were made by moderator Betsy Peck Learned (Associate Dean of University Library Services, Roger Williams University, Bristol, Rhode Island).

Demonstrating Library Value in a Period of Retrenchment

Jeanne Brown, Head, Architecture Studies Library, Art Librarian, Assessment Librarian, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Brown outlined self-proven strategies to communicate the worth of library resources and services, which is especially prudent for avoiding and minimizing budget cuts. She provided links to organizations that have created tool-kits to this end; described types of data, such as institutional versus peer data; methods of collecting data, such as Libqual surveys; and pros and cons of quantitative and qualitative analysis. She emphasized the importance of tailoring presentations to the audience, by aligning with an interest group, selecting a spokesperson, and choosing an appropriate format (noting, for example, that donors respond well to stories). Qualitative and quantitative expressions of worth not only promise to provide a fuller story to administration in the context of annual reports and accreditation processes, but they empower librarians to make informed decisions. Her how-to presentation drew on personal experience but was also situated in management theory. Ultimately, Brown's advice was to "be ready, be strategic, document worth and value, and make sure the right people see your case".

Revolutionary Models for Managing and Sharing Image Collections: What's Our Future as Image Professionals?

Jolene De Verges, Images Librarian, Rotch Library of Architecture and Planning, MIT

De Verges preceded her assessment of the ARTstor initiative Shared Shelf with a dire recap of the position of visual resources collections in the current economy. Although administrative decision makers often misunderstand the role of VR, VR professionals face an ongoing identity crisis of sorts, and closures and layoffs abound, the increased use of images across disciplines for both teaching and research bodes well for the profession. ARTstor stands out as an ally by offering Shared Shelf, which will integrate local collections with existing ARTstor collections. After discussing its origins and intended benefits, De Verges raised critical questions about the viability of Shared Shelf. She considered the implications for specialized collections, niche vendors, redundant archiving, the continuation of VR-developed standards, subscription dependency and open access. She urged the audience to be actively involved in the development of Shared Shelf, to protect the interests of the VR profession and to ensure a positive experience of co-dependency.

Questions

Jean was asked which audiences she has presented to and with what effect. She has presented to the head of the research and education division and the dean, who has been convinced of the library’s integral role as a result. She also shares students’ feedback with the student population in general.
Jean was asked about the LibQUAL survey, which was one of her methods of data collection. She noted that it did suit her needs, since she could customize it by adding questions (she did not feel the need to develop an alternate survey, as music librarians did). She noted the importance of looking at other institutions conducting analysis of the library’s worth by discipline.

A comment was made about the Queen’s College CUNY Friends of the Library and Student Friends of the Library providing valuable testimonials. Jean noted that she has a student advisory committee, which serves this purpose.

Jolene was asked if she had done any work relating to risk management. She responded that she is concerned about giving control over to vendors, that outsourcing is very new for the VR profession compared to libraries, and that management and repositories will still be needed locally. She added that local sharing could be beneficial but that collaboration has traditionally been slow to proceed because of copyright concerns, although they seem to be declining. She asked if all VR professionals will effectively put up closed silos by restricting access to their collections, which would cause unfortunate redundancy in collections.

A comment was made that preservation will be the main task on a local level, with which Jolene agreed.