Subject specialists in public libraries are facing extinction in many institutions.

We will look at ways arts librarians can put their special skills and experience to use beyond their department, so that the pleasure of being a subject specialist can still be experienced.

We will look at unique collections and services that allow you to cultivate groups of users who will advocate for you, your collection, and services when the consolidation/generalization trend rears its head.

We will also discuss the importance of reaching out to other departments & putting your unique art/visual resources skills to use for the benefit of the broader public library mission.
Two parts to this:

1. Be proactive. Get ahead of trends. Prove your value before you are asked to. Think creatively about your unique VR skills and knowledge and how that can be applied to the greater goals of your library and to other library departments.

2. Part two: once you’ve been proactive and come up with great programs that your users can’t live without, and you have made your colleagues dependent on your great store of knowledge, you will be an essential part of the library and will have developed user advocates.

INDISPENSABLE

1: not subject to being set aside or neglected
2: absolutely necessary : essential
So what unique skills and knowledge do we bring to the table?

We know how to describe images; we understand “of” and “about” and have the work a network of colleagues for support.

We appreciate and understand good design and aesthetics; the value of this can't be underestimated.

We know technology; maybe not all technology, but visual arts librarians have a far better understanding digital images and their management and information retrieval than many of our generalist reference colleagues. If we don’t know technology, that should be on the top of our to-do lists—if we know good design and aesthetics AND the Adobe CS4 Suite, that’s a powerful combo.

We comprehend copyright (and are able to advise on digitization projects)

How you can put your arts-related skills to use in your library will depend on the needs of your library and community, but the key is using visual arts skill sets in creative ways to serve the public more broadly and make yourself an indispensable part of the library overall...

We will discuss the following ways that you can make the most of your VR: collaboration within the library, collections, and programs and services.
Take it upon yourself to use your expertise to support the other librarians in your library system in their work. Offer to do displays, or coordinate the Library’s Flickr presence, or advise on graphic design, or to work on the team that is redesigning the library website, or even something as simple as serving as judge for the bookmark contest for the summer reading program in the Children’s Department. As visual arts specialists we are in a position to make ourselves an invaluable member of the library staff, simply by sharing the skills we already have. Many of our survey respondents indicated that they are doing graphic design for marketing materials.

At Brand Library the teen librarian and I have formed a collaborative relationship, which began in 2008 when she was awarded an IMLS funded grant from the California Council for the Humanities to direct a photograph and writing documentary project for teens. Using the grant funds, she wanted to hire someone to teach the teens about photography. She came to me and asked for my help in identifying a likely candidate. I was able to put her in touch with an artist and local photography professor who had been in an exhibition in the gallery and the project was a huge success. The project culminated in an exhibition of the teenagers’ work, and I was able to advise the teen librarian and the students on this aspect of their project.

http://www.calhum.org/programs/archive/myplace/index.htm
http://www.calhum.org/programs/archive/myplace/glendale/glendale_index.htm
The teen librarian and I continue to explore ways that we can work together. Our next collaboration will be a poster design contest for teens held in conjunction with an exhibition we are having in the gallery that features the work of David Byrd, renowned illustrator of iconic posters like Sondheim’s Follies.
Strategic collection building (in addition to promoting unique or unusual existing collections like slides or prints or artist files or clippings).

The size of a public library often has a direct impact on how materials are selected and from what vendors they can be purchased. Smaller libraries, like GPL, likely have more freedom to ferret out interesting materials that users will be excited by. Larger libraries, may have a central collection development department that circumscribes their ordering. I would encourage people who don’t have much discretion as to where they can acquire materials to try to explore and expand their options. Perhaps you have discretionary gift funds that are easier to spend, or you can make an argument that materials from Amazon are less expensive than from the library’s regular vendor(s). At Brand, I am fortunate that I have the ability to order directly from almost anywhere I would like, which allows me to make my collection unique and remarkable. I’ll share a few collections that I think are special, and that have won over dedicated users that would advocate for their library’s art department if it was threatened.

“Pattern books”, DVDs, visual resources, and original art lending collections.
When I speak of “pattern books” I am referring to books that are almost purely pictorial, often depicting patterns and textiles, which have an accompanying CD that includes digital files of the imagery. “Pattern book” is perhaps a misnomer, but I wanted a to distinguish these books with CDs from the old-fashioned “clip art” books and to make them easy to find in the catalog. I consulted with my technical services department and we decided that “pattern books” would be an acceptable genre heading.

In these pattern books, the imagery is often copyright free or has limited restrictions on use, making them very popular with graphic designers, students, textile and fashion designers, and just regular people designing personal stationery, or their website, or wedding invitations.

They are relatively inexpensive – in the 20 to 40 dollar range – so they have a lot of “bang for the buck”.

I began our collection in 2008 and now have 75 titles that are in constant circulation.

Our collection is probably about $2,500 worth of books--individuals rely on us for this valuable collection because they know they won’t find such a comprehensive selection anywhere else. For the most part, I have been able to purchase for this collection from my regular print materials vendor Baker & Taylor and Amazon.

Some of the main pattern book publishers that I like are

Batsford (UK)
Pepin Press (Netherlands)
Victoria & Albert (UK)
Dover (US)
Rockport (US)
BNN (Japan)
Mundurucu (Netherlands) [tattoo pattern books]
Vincenzo Sguera (Italy)
This is a newer series. Images of textiles in the V&A collections. These do have some copyright restrictions.

My pattern book collection started with BNN—these are the titles I saw in the exhibits hall at RAM Publications table. “Grain” and “Soviet Style” are my favorites.

http://bnn-international.blogspot.com/
And of course there is good old Dover – their series is called Dover Pictura and there are many, many titles.

Pepin Press from Amsterdam is another outstanding resource with a huge variety of titles, as well as a series on ceramic tiles from around the world.

http://pepinpress.com/
Finally, Rockport is another good publisher of pattern books, and they are starting to branch out a bit in terms of the types of patterns they are depicting.

http://www.rockpub.com/
An example of another unique collection comes from the Berkeley Public Library’s Art & Music department. Thanks to Dayna Holz, a librarian in that department for her willingness to share information about the slide collection.

The size of the collection is around 25,000 items, covering the history of art from the 12th to the 20th century.

Users: mainly teachers, generally part-timers at community colleges and adult schools. Some users give occasional talks to groups like seniors or elementary school kids. These are people who don’t have reason to keep their own slide collection (as many regular instructors used to do), or don’t have institutional support for digital image services. People also use them for more personal ventures like projecting behind music performances.

At present, they aren’t doing any particular outreach or advertising of the collection and as Dayna explained to me “word gets out since we’ll see multiple instructors from the same school.” Other people just discover it when they’re in the library.

Dayna: “While not a vital service, it is unique for our area and so people travel from Marin County or the South Bay to use the collection.”
These statistics are significant, and I think show that there is a need in public libraries to serve the community with visual resources.

At Brand Library, while we do have a collection of about 175 slide sets, we also subscribe to ARTstor. ARTstor is extremely inexpensive for smaller public libraries like the Glendale Public Library, and if you can make the time to do outreach to user groups like teachers I believe you could cultivate a core user group that would advocate loudly for visual arts materials and services in the library.
Statistics on how many libraries have circulating collections of original works of art are not available, but based on how commonly the concept is mentioned and lauded in the library services literature, lending framed prints is a common practice which started in the middle of the 20th century. More often reproductions (posters) are lent, however it is now becoming more common for lending collections to contain original works by local artists.

Due to cost considerations (both in terms of the library budget and what value it is reasonable to circulate) the original works of art for loan are often (but not always) multiples such as lithographs, woodcuts, engravings, etchings, photographs, etc.

Libraries with these types of programs tend to treat the materials as they would any of their other materials—as a no charge loan, but with an extended loan period.

**Art-to-Go program at Iowa City Public Library**
- Began acquiring locally made art beginning in 1979.
- Approximately 150 original works of art are cataloged and available to be borrowed.
- Purchase 6-10 works to add to the collection each year.
- Purchases are in large part funded by the Friends of the Library group.
- Selection committee made up of local art professionals (university art faculty, museum staff, artists, etc.) makes selections for purchase.
- Searchable by artist, title, subject heading “Iowa City Public Library Art Purchase Prize”.

http://catalog.icpl.org/search/c?SEARCH=art (catalog)

**Websites**
Based on holdings in Worldcat, I can say with confidence that Brand Library has the best circulating art DVD collection of any public library in the US. We have more than 800 titles. Our patrons are so appreciative of this collection, again, because these are materials they are unlikely to be able to find anywhere else—not even on Netflix or cable television. Often they are films that patrons were not even aware of until they find them on our shelves.

Unlike the pattern books, building this collection has been a challenge, in that I have had to search relentlessly for unusual and lesser known titles. At least 15% of the collection comes from non-traditional library vendors: museum shops, small and niche publishers, and independent filmmakers.

Just a few examples of rare titles – holdings data from Worldcat.

Tara Donovan and Anish Kapoor DVDs from the ICA (Boston)
• Tara: We are the only library in the country with this title.
• Anish: 7 libraries have the title but we are the only public library.

Julius Shulman: Desert Modern from the Palm Springs Art Museum.
• Julius: 6 libraries in the country have this title and we are the only public library.

Theatre de la Mode (Maryhill Museuem of Art in Washington State)
• Theatre – two libraries in the country have the DVD. Kent State, and me, and Kent State is the publisher. (38 other libs have the VHS from 1991)
Beyond ArtHouse and Microcinema, these are a selection of the other resources for interesting DVDs that I have used.

QIP

A.R.T.CO
http://www.artcoinc.com/lucio_bubacco.php

Copernicus
http://stores.lulu.com/copernicussun

Viz Pictures
http://www.newpeopleartistseries.com/

Gnomon
http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com/

L&S Video
http://www.landsvideo.com/vcat.shtml

Illuminations
To say that users can’t live without a service or program is a bit of an exaggeration perhaps, but I think it is a worthy goal toward which we can strive.

The previous presentation discussed digital image projects (OAC) so we will not discuss that here, but I want to reiterate that putting yourself in the thick of this kind of activity is an outstanding way to put your skills to use for the benefit of the broader public library mission. You should be at the forefront of digital image projects—some survey takers said they had nothing to do with digital image-based projects happening in their libraries and I think we can’t let that happen. Local history and special collections will always be an important component of the public library and it may as well be us as working with these visual materials and making them available digitally.

Target programs and services to special populations—they will be your advocates when cuts are on the table.

- independent scholars
- studio artists
- graphic designers

Embedded librarians

Arts/crafts classes in the library [several survey respondents said that they are experimenting with this – we have had printmaking workshop at my library and there are other libraries that are exploring mixed-use facilities where community programs/classes/library services co-exist]

Artist registries that serve the community.

Public art databases/tours/mashups [Beverly Hills Public example, St. Louis example, Fullerton Public Library survey respondent “I [Chaunacey Dunklee] am currently working with our local history curator to get pictures of a building survey conducted by the City. In my spare time (ha!), I am trying to build a Google maps mashup to draw more attention to these buildings - and our library.”]

Displays/exhibitions [also a great opportunity for collaboration]
The idea of exhibiting art in libraries is not new; in 1914, 132 libraries responded to a survey by the Metropolitan Museum of Art about art exhibitions in libraries; the results were published in their bulletin under the title “Pictures in Public Libraries”. 57 of 132 libraries had separate exhibition rooms and 40 displayed art not in a special room but in corridors or multi-use spaces. In the mid-1970s a survey on music and art in libraries was conducted by Walter Allen at the University of Illinois. He found that 75% of the 150 libraries asked to participate offered Art Exhibits as one of their services.

In 2008 I undertook a survey of public libraries in the US and Canada to gather information about CONTEMPORARY art exhibition programs; these programs are thriving in public libraries both large and small.

Giving local artists a venue in which to show their work is a guaranteed way to get the community of artists as well as the public who enjoy the exhibitions to support the art department in the public library.
Maintaining paper files on local artists and arts communities often falls to the public library in a given community. Often these files include a wealth of material not gathered elsewhere. The material can be invaluable to researchers.

The Washington DC Public Library has this type of paper-based file which includes thousands of artists.

In order to make paper files truly useful, we must think about making indexes available online.
A wonderful example of a service I think the public library could provide to their art communities—which would increase your user and advocate base—is the Allen County Public Library’s Fort Wayne Area Artists website, which is a community hub for area artists and those interested in art, offering links to area galleries and artist websites.

ABOUT
Went live at the beginning of 2005.
Searchable by name or location, browsable by media.
Hundreds of artists
Blog

Websites
http://artists.acpl.info/ (form for artists)
http://www.acpl.lib.in.us/ (Library home)
Our survey results indicated that librarians are doing many things to take themselves out of the library building and into their communities.

Targeted Outreach & Embedded Librarians

“we try to cultivate and augment our patron base...with membership in local arts organizations (attending meetings and talking about what we offer)”
“outreach to schools, graduate programs, social networks”
“we took tables at local summer festivals” / “circulation modules at fairs”
“outreach to specific groups (students, creative professionals, etc.) including increased programming”
“speaking engagements”
“making liaisons w/other non-profits”
“author book signings at independent bookstores”
Studio Arts in the Library

"hands-on craft programs"
"starting a craft/art program at the library Saturday afternoons…to teach costume and jewelry design"

The Library & Art Center Model

Greensborough Public Library (North Carolina)

Hemphill Branch Library + Green Hill Center for NC Art
- opened in 2004 / began through a Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services
- Green Hill selects rotating art exhibits and artist-in-residency programs
- ArtQuest program – local artist designed hands-on studio stations such as Fiber Space, Zoetrope: Animation and the Drawing Station.
This presentation is a look on the bright side of the changes that are happening in public libraries. And it is a good segue to the next presentation (Mary Stark, BHPL), which is a case study of her experience at the Beverly Hills Public Library: The efforts she has made to add value to the art collection and attempts to ensure the longevity of the art library.

At this time of fiscal crisis, there will be casualties in the specialized departments of public libraries. Some collections may even die, which is a terrible thing. But there is hope, and if we want to survive in the public libraries as visual arts librarians we must actively seek opportunities to expand our range and put our skills to use in the service of the library's overall mission. At the same time we must continue to provide collections and services that will make our users appreciate us enough to become advocates on the behalf of art departments in public libraries.