ARLIS/NA Photography SIG Session: Photography and Books Across Boundaries in Art Libraries, Archives and Museum Collections

“Books of Books Rock One Small Library”

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Thanks to the Photography SIG, ARLIS organizing team, Emilie: Dunne & Weirich, Megan Halsband, and Isotta Poggi for including me in this session and being such excellent partners.
Before I finished High School it was clear that doing research and writing bibliographies were going to be some of my superpowers when I headed from my home into the world.
In my early career in New York at The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Costume Institute I created many many bibliographies for curators, to my delight.
In 1996 my name went on the title page of two published works for the first time when my mentor Richard Martin made small editions of two bibliographies we had been working on. *La Belle Assemblée* was a small book of books: greatest acquisitions of the Irene Lewisohn Costume Reference Library in 1995, the year I became a Librarian.
In thinking about the important role that books of books ended up having during my International Center of Photography years, I recalled that this may have been the beginning.
In August of 2001 I started work at a “library” composed of books stored in at least 4 locations and with no catalog. There was a partial shelf list. Each item’s catalog card had a hand-written accession number, author and title and was organized alphabetically by my maker or by organizing body.
My friend and colleague Natalia Rand and I shelved the 4 groups of items into the new library in September of that year in the same alpha order, and students and faculty and staff immediately began to stream in and ask for subjects, genres, etc.
The DIY solution was a series of bibliographies. I tried to select subject experts for each one. The topics were determined by queries we received most frequently. Each one was a 2 column 2 sided sheet of letter size photocopier paper with a cover image and a selection of books with way-finding [the first 2 letters of the alpha location of the book, initially].
Chapter Two: A Library Seeking Friends
The pre-history of this chapter grew out of some things many of us witnessed: the marketplace for art moved first to photography and then to photography books, and one bookseller started to create great bibliographies to inform and tantalize his audience...Andrew Roth at Glenn Horowitz Bookseller.
ED RUSCHA
ARTIST’S BOOKS
(1963-1975)

A complete set of five editions, all signed, from the
collection of the artist.

$15,000
Fugue, Louis-Paul, b. 1954

Editions & Magazines: Editions de Proust, Paris, France. Inquire for:

- La Revue des Poètes, 1974
- La Revue des Arts, 1975
- La Revue des Livres, 1976
- La Revue des Comics, 1977

First edition exhibition: The exhibition included sixty-five works of art, primarily paintings and drawings, by various contemporary artists, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Yves Saint Laurent, and Louis-Ferdinand Céline. The exhibition was curated by Jean-Paul Céline, who is also a noted photographer and writer. The exhibition was held at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, France.

Paintings and Drawings: The exhibition included a variety of works, including portraits of famous artists, still lifes, and abstract compositions. The paintings were mostly impressionistic, with bright colors and loose brushstrokes. The drawings were more realistic, with careful attention to detail and a focus on the human form.

Photographs: The exhibition also included a selection of photographs, which were primarily landscape and still life images. The photographs were taken with a variety of techniques, including close-up shots and wide-angle views.

Inquire for price list and availability.
In the early Spring 2002 we hosted the inaugural event of a fledgling advocacy group we called “Friends of ICP Library,” with an evening in the library featuring a presentation by Andrew Roth and Vince Aletti introducing the prospects to the newly published *The Book of 101 Books*, published by Roth and featuring entries by Aletti and many other notable bibliophiles and thinkers.
Roth brought some of the books featured in the book, and we gathered the ones we had in the ICP Library and I learned from the masters...because Roth, Aletti and my boss ICP Deputy Director Phil Block all were well-accustomed to being arbiters and tastemakers to collectors.
The book represented a very tangible transition from collecting photographic prints to regarding photo books as collectible.
What I learned that evening is what ever curator who ever minded an Acquisition Committee already knew: there is a natural menage-a-trois among the dealer/client/museum. The Friends Chair, a Board Member, became a client that evening of Andrew Roth and he became our informal guide and advisor, introducing us to his clients over the years. A number of years later this marvelous Board Member & Chair endowed my position, the only position at ICP to be other than Executive Director.
In my case, I recognized that the library had an exciting role to play as an information source wherein it would be rewarded with much-needed support of all kinds. That evening every prospective Friend was presented with a copy of *The Book of 101 Books*, which Roth and Aletti signed [the Chair subsidized the purchase]. In effect that set a standard both of a signed book entering a collector’s library, and a new bibliography going to a collector. From that meeting forward, we would always have one of those distributed in every meeting.
This Steidl book commemorates an exhibition that started in the Hasselblad Center and traveled to ICP in a version that was curated by Christopher Phillips. This, too, provided an occasion, a publication and increased our Friends group along the way.
In fact, I was already considering how ICP’s lack of canonical photobooks was not an obstacle, but an opportunity for a variety of reasons.
With every successive book, we came to look at our collection in new ways, and truly understand that this enterprise of selecting and telling stories about books was its own reward and the library was a natural place for this to happen.
This dude is Martin Parr. He is hanging in ICP Library, as some photographers do.
Many of the books we celebrated with their authors were books of photography books, including *The Photobook: A History Vol. I* and *The Photobook: A History Vol. II* both by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger;
Martin Parr was a willing, even eager, partner to this librarian. Upon arrival on the evening of his first volume’s launch in a Friend of the Library’s loft, he asked me conspiratorially “What’s the pitch?” “What do you want me to ask them for?” I was caught unprepared, but said that I wanted them to support the library and bring more supporters to the library.
He nodded sagely and then during the talk, he mentioned that it was shameful that the books in his book were not available to readers in New York at a highly welcoming and accessible library like that at ICP. I have never forgotten Martin’s lesson to me.
I think that implicit within this was always the understanding that the library would never have holdings in the six figures, but still wanted to be a truly great and important resource.
Parr and Badger have come out with 3 volumes of this series and in the fall of 2017, Parr announced that the Luma Foundation had funded the acquisition of a collection of 12,000 books to the Tate in London.
*Associations: Inscribed and Signed Photographic Books*, another Andrew Roth publication of “association copies” was drawn from the library of Peter Bunell inspired an evening in Andrew’s gallery with all of the book’s contributors…and Peter Bunnell, who ALL signed just those copies for the Friends of the Library.
Many of these books of photobooks represented works already out of our reach, like *Imagining Paradise*, a gorgeous book that Manfred Heiting and Rachel Stuhlman at George Eastman House put together from a century's worth of holdings at the Menschel Library in Rochester.
My boss and mentor Deputy Director of ICP Phil Block being shown the galleys of the book at George Eastman House by Rachel Stuhlman, the legendary librarian there.
I have always said to ICP patrons that the book represents every book ICP Library did NOT have, as its scope was the pre-history of photography through World War II and ours was from then on.
It is a beautiful and scholarly volume that has not received adequate attention yet, I think.
As I gradually learned that the unique qualities of the ICP Library would not be found in pristine tomes representing the photo book canon, although it had many. What emerged as its niche was a mix of books…“the good, the bad and the ugly;” of patrons…small children through nonagenarians of every level of education and socio-economical class and nation of origin; and of programming.
Every time we made a bibliographic tool for one audience, we immediately worked on adapting it for the rest. We also wanted to make unseen books become seen. The first occasion was the remarkable opportunity to work with Victor Sira to host an exhibition simply called Book Dummies.
What followed…
Before the Latin American Photobook was celebrated in an Aperture publication, we realized that we had friends within ICP who already had the knowledge and contacts to examine that subject in a more granular way. Victor Sira moved right from the Book Dummies into this project, which included Collection Development [with Victor as selector], display and a beautiful newsprint publication.
I did very little on these publications other than provide advocacy and space.
What followed soon after was the Argentinian photobook, curated by Leandro Villaro, who also acted as a selector for the library, curator of a window display and this publication.
I have been thinking that I should warn anyone trying to accomplish this at another institution that ICP was a great medium for this because of its base that was international, creative, and connected! I would never try to reproduce this elsewhere, but I still embrace these key contacts!
There were many activities that were not memorialized with small publications. I remember a project to build our holdings of Hungarian contemporary photobooks gathered by an ICP faculty member who was a Fulbright Scholar in Budapest, which arrived in a weird box, greeted with great curiosity.
The opening of the box became an occasion of its own! To me, this kind of gathering is as much a part of the enterprise as codifying as a bibliography or publication. The ICP Library windows were designed [by Phil Block, the Deputy Director who was my mentor and supervisor] to be open in the back so that all of the displayed books would be accessible, as all of the books in the open stack library are.
A portrait of Daido Moriyama helping us build our holdings of his books by coming in for a signing.
Luis Weinstein came from Chile to curate a window and made a beautiful publication with Leandro Villaro.
A new organization called 10X10 Photobooks created a pop-up reading room in our MFA studios of contemporary Japanese photobooks selected by 10 people who know about them. This is the 10X10 team, ICP’s former Director Mark Robbins, and Curator & bibliophile Christopher Phillips.
My colleague Matthew Carson, one of 10X10’s founders, worked with Nima Behrevan to do a project on Iranian photobooks that opened simultaneously at ICP Library in New York and in a photobook center in Tehran.
Correspondences between
Mohammedena Miret
and
Charlotte Cotton
The culmination was to tap the passion that our Library Friend Dave Solo had for these books of books with a display and publication.
Photo Biblio Mania

an exhibition of books about photobooks

Oct 20
Dec 14

ICP Library
Dave exemplifies the ideal of a museum/library friend. He is a passionate peer and also a scholar. I learn a LOT from him and so, as great friends do, he is one of the architects of the ICP Library.
Chapter Four: The Medium We Were Swimming In

Of course, we were not the only people experiencing the books of photobooks BOOM!
Some of these had very direct relationships with ICP...
Steidl, ICP’s publishing partner for 6 years, who published twice annually a hard cover catalog.
Maia Joseph
New York, USA

Growing up is hard. Children who escape their parents’ scrutiny by going out at night and looking for trouble in the streets are often considered delinquent. Those who are encouraged by their parents to perform well academically are considered model young people. Yet both groups of children are subjected to the same social pressures and expectations. In this sense, the two sides of the same coin are often found in the same family. The artists featured in this section of the exhibition, including Maia Joseph and Bernice Blake, are often forced to navigate the worlds of Counterculture and mainstream society, the only two available to them. But Joseph’s work is different. She uses collage and mixed media to explore themes of identity, power, and the complexities of living in a society that values conformity yet celebrates individuality. Her work often features images of women in positions of power, challenging traditional gender roles and expectations. This exhibition aims to bring attention to the unique perspectives and experiences of these artists, who use their art to create new narratives and challenge the status quo.
COLD
BEER
BEAUTIFUL
GIRLS.
2 faculty members of ICP with a profound love of the photobook: Ed Grazda and Jeff Ladd, founded Errata Editions, which created 1:1 books of books that were loved and critiqued. I am in the former camp, and think that these volumes will be more thoughtfully appreciated in the future, as often happens.
I snapped this at the Detroit Institute of the Arts for Ed and Jeff to demonstrate one of the neat uses for their book. A handling copy in a photography exhibition to bring the viewer of Walker Evans prints into a more complete idea of the way that they were transmitted.
The Photobook Review by Aperture loved what we loved and started to be bundled with Aperture. They recognized what we did: the audience for photobooks.
Although MANY photographs of classic photobooks in the Review were made from ICP Library Books, it was only in 2018 that I agreed to guest edit an issue…on the library and the photobook in the wake of the new of Martin Parr’s collection being embedded at the Tate!
10X10 Photobooks, whose Board I am on, continues to publish and host pop-up reading rooms, and their latest book on Contemporary Latin American Photobooks is available in the Exhibits Room at Arthur Fournier.
At a recent salon, Frederique Destribats presented the first 2 volumes of Photographers References, books that end with a visual map of the books that were influential on the photographers.
To me, though, the culmination of all this energy and attention developed into many exquisite outcomes.
Victor Sira and his wife Shiori Kawasaki founded bookdummypress with publishes and sells photobooks.
The project that may have started this all, an examination of the book dummy as an imaginary studio finally became a book in 2016.
Published by Book Dummy Press this is a complete record of all of Victor's book dummies.
Leandro Villaro continues to explore books and create beautiful books of books, this one for Paris Photo.
In 2016 he organized an exhibition and publication in Argentina that resulted in a great donation to the library in La Plata.
The Book as a Museum

Introduction

Books are objects. They are made to be handled and examined at close range. They are made to be opened and closed, to be read and reread, to be passed on from one generation to the next. They contain stories, images, ideas, and emotions. They are not just for reading, but for touching, for looking, for listening. They are not just for the mind, but for the body.

What is it about books that makes them so compelling? What is it about the way they are made that makes them so special? What is it about the way they are read that makes them so powerful?

In this book, we will explore the history of the book as a museum. We will look at how books have been collected, displayed, and celebrated over the centuries. We will explore the ways in which books have been used to tell stories, to teach, to inspire, to entertain, and to challenge.

We will examine the many ways in which books have been displayed as art. We will look at how books have been turned into works of art, how they have been used to create new forms of art, and how they have been used to express different ideas and emotions.

We will also look at how books have been used to preserve the past. We will explore the ways in which books have been used to record history, to preserve knowledge, and to pass on traditions.

Finally, we will consider the future of the book as a museum. We will look at how technology is changing the way we read and understand books. We will consider the role of the book in a digital age, and the ways in which it continues to be a powerful force for the mind and the spirit.
10X10 published a book that came out of the reading room that started at ICP, and continues to publish books of books.
There was also a bond with the community that formed around these books of books, and resulted in a great advocacy for the ICP Library.
The Friends of ICP Library become a tireless allies and advocates in everything we did. If we needed to close a funding gap, we had true friends to call upon, and we did.
Victor Sira is now core faculty of ICP/Bard MFA Program, where he teaches about creating books as an integral part of the creative process.
A number of the students have made books of books a part of their thesis exhibitions, as Nandita Raman did with Artist’s Atheneum, a bibliographical installation in the ICP Library.
ICP/Bard Chair artist Nayland Blake.
The last green shoot was the remarkable students of ICP, who also had the impulse to make books of books...while they were working on their theses! I spoke more thoroughly about that in 2016 ARLIS at Fort Worth, but I will mention that a book of books [or more broadly a self-published resource of resources] is part of their curriculum in class I still teach there.
SOME BOOKS I LIKE RIGHT NOW
Chapter Six : Passing the Baton

As an organization metamorphoses, so does its staff. I always knew that, and tried to never think of myself as an end point, but a point on a line, and I have always embraced new ideas and evolution.

Since I transitioned to NYPL, a new generation has stepped up to newly build the library for the future in a new site, and I am looking forward to seeing what a kind of a transformed place it will be in the future. I know it will be amazing.
Within months of arriving at New York Public, Eva Franch i Gilabert from Storefront on Art & Architecture enlisted our participation in a new project...a BOOK OF BOOKS selected by architects marking the best architecture books of the past 40 years! Stay tuned for the pop-up reading room in Art & Architecture Room 300 of NYPL in June during AiA, and a grand event where architects share their favorite architecture books of the past 40 years.
Books of books continue to amaze and inform and nurture librarians and other allied collectors, and the conversation has moved to where these collections will go. The appeal of being able to see what books were kept by Diane Arbus in the magnificent Metropolitan exhibition echoed something many libraries think about...provenance as armature and meta-history. ICP was made up of the libraries of photographers and photo editors and we discussed many legacies.
All of this is to say that what I think about now, in a vastly larger institution is much of what I thought of at ICP - real estate - physical collections growing beyond any logical prediction, and the imperative of capturing a responsible sample of everything that is being printed and ensuring that it would be retained for a generation or more.
This tale has not been in any way to suggest that I established or created anything. It has been a story of an eager, motivated, inquisitive librarian who was delighted to exist within a community of makers and readers and who participated in a variety of activities, mostly by making connections among them and acting as a facilitator.
This is my best way of staying true to the 5 laws of Library Science posited by Doctor Shiyali Ramamrita Ranganathan (1892-1972): books are for use, every reader a book, every book a reader, save the time of the reader, and the library is a growing organism.
01. PHOTOBOK PHENOMENON
MORITZ NEUMÜLLER, LESLEY A. MARTIN

02. README NEW YORK
A PHOTOBOOK STUDY ON WILLIAM KLEIN'S
LIFE IS GOOD & GOOD FOR YOU IN NEW YORK
MARIE SCHADERS, FREDERIC LEZI

03. THE COLLECTOR'S VISION
MARTIN PARR'S BEST PHOTOBOOKS

04. THE LIBRARY IS THE MUSEUM
HORACIO FERNÁNDEZ

05. FIVE ASPECTS
OF JAPANESE PHOTOBOOKS
RYUCHI KAKEKO

06. PROPAGANDA
VS. PROTEST BOOKS
GERRY BADGER

07. FASCINATIONS AND FAILURES
ERIK KESSELS

08. CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES
IRENE DE MENDOZA, MORITZ NEUMÜLLER

CCCB FOTO COLECTANIA RM
I learn from everyone who walks into the library. All of these teachers around me tell me wonderful stories and share resources and I do my bit to find ways of proliferating them and hopefully creating some enduring access.
Thanks to all.
Christian Erroi, Photographer of Books

Thank you!

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