Statement of Support for Art Information Workers

Drafted by ARLIS/NA Advocacy & Public Policy Committee

At a time of great economic uncertainty related to the COVID-19 crisis, the ARLIS/NA Executive Board in partnership with the Advocacy and Public Policy Committee, Management SIG, Art Librarian Parents and Caregivers SIG, ArLiSNAP, and the Professional Development Committee expresses solidarity with and support for art information workers who are being impacted by layoffs, furloughs, pay reduction, and lack of new professional opportunities. Furthermore, we recognize the disproportionate impact these staffing decisions are already having on paraprofessionals, contingent staff, women, and Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other workers of color as we work towards greater racial equity in the art information fields.

This statement is intended as one of compassionate solidarity that acknowledges the financial challenges many of our member institutions are facing and, in particular, the disproportionate impact on institutions in rural locations, having solo or small numbers of art information professional staff, and/or that serve marginalized communities. With that in mind, and given the potential long-term consequences to the art information field if workers are not prioritized in this moment, we urge those charged with making staffing decisions to:

- Prioritize equity in all staffing decisions, such as ensuring there are no disproportionate harmful impacts on Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other workers of color;
- Be transparent and communicative when making decisions that impact staff by involving them in the decision-making process;
- Advocate for and seek COVID-19 relief funding for art information institutions and/or reallocate existing budgets and endowments, prioritizing use of financial resources to retain staff;
• Consider creative alternatives to layoff and furloughs such as work sharing and temporary pay reductions at the leadership level;

• Delay reopening plans until staff health, safety, and wellbeing can be ensured, and provide compassionate solutions, accommodations, and scheduling flexibility to staff who are parents/caregivers, have health conditions, or who otherwise face barriers to returning to the workplace during the pandemic;

• Proactively extend contracts for those in term-limited positions set to end during the pandemic to help create greater stability for contingent staff;

• Ensure paid positions are not replaced with unpaid internships;

• Avoid disruption of healthcare benefits during the pandemic (for institutions in countries where healthcare is employer-provided).

As stated in the Society's Core Values, ARLIS/NA believes that lives are enriched by engagement with the visual arts, design, and cultural heritage. We maintain that it is only possible to serve the needs of our many audiences by ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of art information professionals through sustained and stable employment.