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The Art Reference Library of the North Carolina Museum of Art

—Thanks to Museum Librarian Natalia Lonchyna



View from the entrance into the library.

Many people have visited the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh. Perhaps fewer have visited the Art Reference Library of the North Carolina Museum of Art—but more should! The Museum Library provides a non-circulating collection of more than 40,000 volumes and selected electronic resources to serve the research needs related to the Museum. Museum Librarian Natalia Lonchyna described the Library, its resources and services recently.

The Art Reference Library had its beginnings at the same time as the Museum itself, housed initially in a secretary's office when the Museum opened in downtown Raleigh in 1956. The library's collection core was originally the personal collection of the Museum's first director, Dr. William Valentiner.¹ Dr. Valentiner passed away a couple of years into his directorship, but he had bequeathed

his personal library to the Museum. His interests, and consequently the backbone of the initial collection, were in German Expressionism and the Dutch and Flemish Masters.² Another factor influencing the early collection was a gift, in 1960, of 75 works from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.³ These works were largely Italian Renaissance and baroque paintings, so the library added appropriate reference books. In addition to providing materials on art history, the collection's holdings reflect the Museum's permanent collection and its exhibitions. Additional print materials held by the Art Reference Library include artists' files, auction catalogs, and a selective list of art history journals.⁴

Access to the collection is provided through the State Library's Government and Heritage Library Catalogue, available online at <http://catalog.ncdcr.gov/>. Use the

Advanced Search to limit location to the Museum of Art Library. Materials are available in English and other languages, including Italian, German, French, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, and Hebrew.

A particular strength of the library's holdings is exhibition catalogues, many of which the library received on exchange. The Art Reference Library's participation in exchanges has dwindled in recent years, but the collection continues to grow also through firm orders. Museum Librarian Lonchyna uses not only large vendors like Amazon, but also specialists such as Worldwide Books or Michael Shamansky.⁵ Sometimes she also purchases materials from the art museums or publishers directly.

Ms. Lonchyna delights in finding those titles that are hard to track down—specific books that can sometimes take years to find and acquire. Of course, the Museum Library

collection growth follows the direction of the art collection, so much of her collection development activity is retrospective. Many of the most-used items in the collection, she says, are those reflecting current exhibitions. For instance, a recent still life exhibition induced use of books on still life and the featured artists.⁶

The Art Reference Library is designed to support research on the art collections, so its primary users are curators, conservators, educators, and members of the public who visit the Museum. Curators who are working on the collection will often research artists or look for information on the provenance of the art piece they are researching. Members of the public most often are either interested in learning more about the art on exhibit or in learning more about a piece of art they own. The Museum Librarian can provide assistance in locating resources on art history, particular artists and works, but the Museum Library policy is not to “authenticate or give valuations of art or out-of-print books.”⁷ Instead, the librarian helps patrons learn about the artist, if known, or can direct patrons to auction prices on similar works or works by the same artist. Patrons needing a valuation should contact an appraiser.

Within the Art Reference Library, patrons may use several electronic resources, including JSTOR, Oxford Art Online, HW Wilson’s Art Index, and those resources provided by NCLIVE. In addition to these subscription databases, the Art Reference Library provides links to several beneficial free resources, including the Bibliography of the History of Art, various sites on the history of art, and several art auction websites.

Museum Librarian Natalia Lonchyna holds a BFA in Print Making and an MSLS from Wayne State University. Her first professional



Ex Libris of the first Director of the North Carolina Museum of Art, Wilhelm Valentiner. The phrase “Onde dall’arte e vinta natura,” is from a poem that Michelangelo wrote to Vittoria Colonna, an Italian noblewoman who also wrote poetry and corresponded with Michelangelo. One translation from p. 96 of Michelangelo’s Poetry: Fury of form (1986)—“and art overcomes nature in the end.” The building featured in the bookplate is the Detroit Institute of Arts where Valentiner was a Director (1924-45) earlier in his career.

position was at the downtown branch of the Detroit Public Library, beginning in 1985. In 1987, she began work at the University of Illinois, first in its Slavic Library and later in the University’s Ricker Library of Architecture and Art. Ms. Lonchyna next worked in the Ryerson & Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago before moving to North Carolina to accept a position as Museum Librarian. With 16 years of experience at the North Carolina Museum of Art, her motto remains “Look and Learn!”⁸

The best way to look and learn about the Art Reference Library is to visit it the next time you can. The Library is on Level O of East Building, the same level as the administrative offices, and is open to the public from Tuesday to Friday between 10 am and 4 pm. Visit soon!

References

- ¹ “Museum Library,” North Carolina Museum of Art, <http://www.ncartmuseum.org/collection/library/> (accessed August 27, 2014).
- ² Natalia Lonchyna, personal communication, August 27, 2014.
- ³ “Collection Overview,” North Carolina Museum of Art, <http://www.ncartmuseum.org/art/collection/highlights/> (accessed August 28, 2014).
- ⁴ “Museum Library,” *ibid.*
- ⁵ “Worldwide Books: Exhibition Books and Catalogues” <http://www.worldwide-artbooks.com/index.php> (accessed August 28, 2014) and Michael Shamansky, Bookseller, Inc.: Importer of European Publications in the Fine Arts,” <http://www.artbooks.com/wc.dll?ab-home> (accessed August 28, 2014).
- ⁶ “Still Life Masterpieces, A Visual Feast from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston” North Carolina Museum of Art, http://ncartmuseum.org/exhibitions/visual_feast_masterpieces_of_still_life_from_the_museum_of_fine_arts_boston/ (accessed August 28, 2014).
- ⁷ “Museum Library,” *ibid.*
- ⁸ “Author Archives: Natalia,” *Untitled*, North Carolina Museum of Art <http://ncartmuseum.org/untitled/author/nlonchyna/> (accessed August 29, 2014).