

EDITORIAL

Several contributions to this issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* mark the launching of ARLIS NORDEN, a most welcome event which has written a new chapter in the history of art librarianship.

In fact, the foundation of ARLIS NORDEN has an extensive and complex *prehistory*. Following the first international art librarians' conference held at Brighton (U.K.) in 1976, Yvonne Frenzel, head of the library of the Nationalmuseum at Stockholm, called a meeting at Stockholm to discuss the formation of an ARLIS Sweden. It was decided to send out a questionnaire to test whether there was sufficient interest; this was done, and another meeting took place, in 1978. This did not result in a formal organisation, although art librarians in Stockholm in particular have worked closely together on an informal basis.

It was several years later that ARLIS Norge came into being, as a result of the initiative of three Norwegian art librarians who participated in the IFLA Section of Art Libraries programme at Munich in August, 1984; ARLIS Norge was in being before the end of the year and held its first annual meeting on 25th January, 1985.

However, some years before either of these initiatives, a number of librarians in Denmark had dedicated themselves to the provision of a dynamic art library service, including picture lending, as part of the public library system; they organised themselves as a distinct body (Kunstfaggruppen) in 1972, and produce their own newsletter. ARLIS Norge has also published a newsletter of its own, and the first issue of *ARLIS NORDEN INFO* has recently appeared.

Nordic, rather than merely national, co-operation, has been pursued by librarians from colleges concerned with design, crafts, and applied arts, who have met informally on several occasions beginning in 1978; all the Nordic countries have been represented. Latterly, some financial assistance was given by NORDINFO on the understanding that more libraries would be involved (such as the Kunstindustrimuseum of Copenhagen).

When ARLIS Norge members went on a study tour to Stockholm in January 1986, plans for an ARLIS Sverige were once more in the air, and the possibility of some day organising an 'ARLIS Skandinavia' was, inevitably, also discussed. But there was no hint of the speed with which things were to develop, with the wider concept actually overtaking the idea of a Swedish association.

The inspiration to establish ARLIS NORDEN came from the IFLA Section of Art Libraries Second European Conference at Amsterdam, shortly after which, on 1st November 1986, some thirty art librarians from all the five Nordic countries met at the Konstbiblioteket in Stockholm. This was the beginning of ARLIS NORDEN; a steering committee was formed, and the first Annual Meeting took place on March 27th of this year (the first day of a two-day conference).

What is striking, in retrospect, is that on no less than *three* occasions a major initiative was preceded and stimulated by an international art librarians' conference; on two occasions the initiative quickly resulted in the formation of a new association. This is surely a tribute both to the enthusiasm and commitment generated at our international gatherings, and to the ability of our Nordic colleagues to translate enthusiasm into effective and lasting action, setting an example which it is to be hoped others will follow, too.

Congratulations, ARLIS NORDEN! We wish you the success which your initiative deserves.

Note

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