

EDITORIAL

Ensuring that rightsholders are protected by copyright, whilst still enabling information to flow freely, provides a challenge for art librarians, especially in view of their day-to-day involvement with images. But that challenge is growing with the increase in the implementation of digitisation programmes and the resulting dissemination of illustrated materials to larger audiences within institutions, as well as ever more widely over the web. Despite the large number of countries signed up to the international Berne Convention, one of the problems of this global spread is the existence of different approaches to intellectual property around the world. In this issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* Rina Elster Pantalony gives a lucid account of the way copyright law has developed in Europe and North America, and describes three new models for managing intellectual property which could herald changes in the way we deal with the whole question.

Pantalony's overview of the copyright situation is based on museum experience, since her role is that of Senior Policy Advisor to the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). And the next three contributions in this *Art Libraries Journal* stay with the topic of information in museums, the first being based on the experience of two users, a curator and an educator, both of whom are currently involved with the major re-display of that key area in the Victoria & Albert Museum in London – the British collections. Their article illustrates how the many sources of data in a museum need to be welded together to create maximum value for the visitor. Which of us has not wished, more than once, that it was possible to put a finger on every piece of information about a specific topic in a museum, regardless of where that data was held? Librarians can see the potential for managing all these different resources efficiently in order to provide curators, educators and public – researchers, students, interested (laymen) – with optimum value.

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is one of an expanding number of institutions in which the librarian is regarded as a major player in ensuring effective and integrated access to all the information sources held. Increasingly the role of the museum librarian is becoming that of information strategist, drawing on the profession's traditional skills as well as on newer

technologies, and combining these with practical approaches to data organisation and access to ensure that information is available to all users. Geert-Jan Koot's paper in this *ALJ* urges the need to add courage and conviction to this mix – no room here for the stereotype of librarians seen on film and TV! Ana Paula Gordo reinforces this portrait of the new museum librarian in her description of how, in Portugal, curators and librarians in the Gulbenkian Museum and its Art Library are also seeking organisational solutions which will make their unique collections more widely known and extend them to a global community.

The last article in this *Art Libraries Journal* is the first of a two-part report on art libraries in China, written after Betty Jo Kish Irvine's three-month sabbatical in the People's Republic in 1999, during which she was based at Nanjing Arts Institute as a visiting scholar. The last time the *ALJ* had the opportunity to publish material about art documentation in China was after the IFLA conference in Beijing in 1997, when a selection of the papers presented to the Section of Art Libraries was reprinted (in *Art Libraries Journal* vol. 22 no. 1 1997). It is fascinating to see how much has changed in the intervening period. The second part of this survey will follow in the next issue of the *ALJ*.

And finally, this year's Annual Bibliography of Art Librarianship reverts to its normal position in the *Art Libraries Journal* – preceding the annual index each year. But it should be pointed out that 1999's edition was held over and appeared instead in the first *ALJ* for 2000, although its presence was accidentally omitted from the cover. My apologies! Last year's bibliography was probably the largest which has yet been published and it would be a pity if it were to be overlooked.