

The Serials Policy of ARLIS

Gillian Varley
National Art Library

ARLIS is the acronymic name of the Art Libraries Society, founded in 1969 to encourage art librarians to exchange information and find solutions to common problems. Now called ARLIS/UK & Eire to distinguish it from a number of younger ARLISes in other countries it has a membership which includes most UK art libraries, whether in colleges or polytechnics, in museums or in public library services. Together the members of the Society have established initiatives to tackle the difficulties facing art librarians, such as professional standards, exhibition catalogues, microforms, and of course serials.

One of the earliest ARLIS projects was the creation of a Union List of Art Periodicals, first published under the editorship of Graham Bullock (Humberside College of Higher Education) in 1977 and now about to appear in its fourth edition edited by John Kirby (Sheffield Polytechnic).

The need for access to information on an ever-expanding range of topics presents the student and researcher in art with particular problems; the most recent periodical literature on artists, movements and concepts is required, as well as substantial historical coverage. Also, because the subject boundaries of art are very imprecise, a far wider range of material is needed than that traditionally covered by the Dewey 700s. The model of the self-renewing library is foreign to art, yet accommodation problems frequently make it difficult to retain much of the material needed for generations of users in hard copy. Because of the need for illustration, microform reprints are frequently inadequate substitutes. Particularly where runs of periodicals are being used for visual research and stimulus browsing access is essential. Runs of important journals must be available in several locations throughout the country - reliance on a single location is unsatisfactory. The range of serials available for loan through the British Library Document Supply Centre, with its natural bias towards science and technology, the social sciences and literature, is poor. Another feature of art documentation is the multiplicity of short-lived "little magazines" and ephemeral serials, especially those which escape legal deposit. Often they have

been born and have died before publicity about them has reached interested libraries.

All the more reason then for art librarians to need help from regularly updated union lists which enable them to advise enquirers on locations and centres of excellence, and obtain photocopies and loans. Locations for the first edition of the ARLIS Union List were compiled from those holdings lists which could be solicited from ARLIS members, and which at that date were still far less complete than they have become today. They were selected on a regional basis to give librarians a chance of finding the titles needed within a reasonable distance. The second and third editions (published in 1982 and 1984 respectively) had locations for far more libraries, and the number of titles listed rose in the third edition to over 6,500. Subject coverage increased similarly to cover all aspects of the visual arts, design and applied arts, architecture, photography, cinema, and also (to quote John Kirby) 'a number of esoteric titles on the fringes of art and design'. The fourth edition of the ARLIS Union List of Periodicals will include in the region of 10,000 titles, listing the holdings of UCABEL (the Union Catalogue of Art Books in Edinburgh Libraries) and the current art holdings of the Humanities and Social Sciences Division of the British Library, in addition to the established contributions from ARLIS members. It will also begin the task of adding bibliographical information about the titles listed.

Access to both current and retrospective serials will be improved as the range of the Union List continues to increase, and current editorial policy is to include all data submitted. While it is likely that total comprehensiveness of holdings locations is impossible, and undesirable for very common titles, ARLIS plans in the future that the Editor should call for holdings from all ARLIS member libraries. Also included in ARLIS serials policy is the stripping of individual libraries' holdings from the present database, now on an IBM PC on MIRABILIS software, so that each contributing library can edit its own data more effectively. Many libraries, including the National Art Library, have

not amended their original contribution to the Union List.

ARLIS is also determined to increase the flow of information about art periodicals, and a recent move has been the creation in the ARLIS News-sheet of a column devoted to serials news. Edited by Penny Dade (Hertfordshire College of Art) this regular bi-monthly feature has concentrated so far on reviewing new titles. However once contact is established with the serials librarians of the major art libraries this will enable the content to be expanded to include news of mergers and changes of format as well as of the discontinuation of titles. It is also planned that information about the periodical titles mentioned in the column be fed into the Union List to extend the coverage of the next edition. The News-sheet has already been used to list titles needing location information; any still without locations will be listed in the fourth edition of the Union List with an appropriate note. In addition a list will be submitted to the British Library and the National Art Library inviting them to discuss taking out subscriptions and thus provide locations, albeit of last resort.

Completion of the data for the fourth edition of the Union List has given ARLIS the opportunity to improve national co-ordination of serials retention. We plan to produce listings of titles with unique locations so that their holders can be alerted to the implications of cancellation or discard without consultation with other art libraries. Once identified any such rare or out of print journals will be suggested as candidates to publishers of facsimile and microform reprints in order to achieve preservation of the originals and increase access. In the meantime awareness of the uniqueness of these titles will ensure that libraries wishing to discard them can deposit them with major national art libraries for retention, or with other interested libraries by means of the exchange column run bi-monthly in the ARLIS News-sheet.

Longer-term, ARLIS would like to see the Union List give increased bibliographical information, publisher details and format (original / microform / reprint), as well as information about the range of publications in which each title is indexed or abstracted. ARLIS policy is to make sure that all those art journals currently being covered by the major art indexing and abstracting sources are acquired and are accessible nationally. The next project planned by ARLIS' Committee for the National Co-ordination of Art Library Resources will be the comparison of the titles listed in the fourth edition of the Union List with those analysed

by these sources. The aims of such a project are two-fold: one is to produce a list of serial titles abstracted and indexed but not held by the National Art Library or the British Library and to encourage these libraries, through the British Library Standing Committee on Art Documentation (on which both are represented), to subscribe. The other aim is to isolate the titles not currently indexed or abstracted and bring these to the attention of abstracting and indexing publishers as potential additions. The first priority will be to provide access to all British art magazines, but access to foreign titles is another area of special concern.

Internationally, ARLIS members are on advisory boards of all the major abstracting and indexing services. Indexing of current art journals is relatively healthy at present owing to a number of recent developments. A new title called Design & Applied Arts Index complements the coverage of Art Index and Artbibliographies Modern in the hitherto poorly-indexed areas suggested by its title. A study into the possible merger of the R.I.B.A.'s Architectural Periodicals Index and the Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals at Columbia University Library is under way, and could facilitate major improvements in coverage by reducing duplication. And in May 1985 two major publications, the Repertoire d'art et d'archeologie (RAA) and the International Repertory of the Literature of Art (RILA), agreed to a merger, thereby concentrating previously competitive energies on a single excellent product; the first issue of the merged RILA/RAA is scheduled to appear in 1990.

Nevertheless retrospective access to serials continues to be a problem. There is no publication covering journals prior to 1910 in sufficient detail for art research, the Avery Index was only begun in 1934 (although it does now cover the complete run of Architectural Review), and design is a positive newcomer to the field. A project completed in February 1989 for the ARLIS National Co-ordination Committee by Jonathan Franklin (British Architectural Library, Royal Institute of British Architects) has gone some way to alleviate this problem. The project surveyed 'in-house' retrospective indexes by means of a questionnaire circulated with the ARLIS News-sheet in order to identify periodicals which had been retrospectively indexed, and to record the content and accessibility of such indexes. Response to the survey yielded 27 separate indexes, covering specific titles (such as the index of the Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism at Goldsmith's College) as well as those

tackling a subject area across a range of journals (like the indexes to black art and feminist issues in art produced by Chelsea School of Art). Apart from publicising the existence of such indexes one result of this project has been to produce a list of journal titles and subject areas not currently indexed which can be brought to the attention of the editorial boards of art abstracting and indexing publications.

Future development of the ARLIS Union List may depend on adequate funding, and sponsorship will need to be sought for extra resources to implement the projects described above. It is quite clear from the work involved in collecting and inputting data to the new edition that desirable developments such as achieving subject and chronological access to periodical titles will need to be entrusted to a researcher who can devote time and energy to these tasks. The Union List data, now on an IBM on Mirabilis software, has fields available for providing this access, but the 'spare' time ARLIS has so successfully relied upon amongst its members in the past is more limited than ever before.

Most of what I have described has been achieved by the co-operative efforts of the members of ARLIS. But the Society also needs to be concerned with any changes in policy which generally affect national access to serials, such as the exclusion from Serials in the British Library of locations other than the British Library's London libraries. Equally, retrospective access is difficult because there is no single general bibliographical and locating tool since the demise of BUCOP.

The ARLIS Union List is, as far as we know, unique within the subject field. The holdings of art libraries in other countries, where they are recorded, have tended to be subsumed into general national union lists. By remaining independent we hope to be able to use the data for a wide range of co-operative projects as described above, but at the same time are open to joint initiatives and co-operation on a broader front.

Communication with other bodies concerned with serials is essential, and ARLIS regards a link with the U.K. Serials Group as a high priority.

Serials available from Microform Academic Publishers

ACCOUNTANCY
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DURHAM RESEARCH REVIEW
ENCOUNTER (LONDON)
JOURNAL OF INSTITUTE OF ACTUARIES
LABOUR PARTY (GB) ANNUAL REPORTS
JOURNAL OF MARINE BIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION OF UK

NATIONAL INSTITUTE ECONOMIC REVIEW
(LONDON)
THE OBSERVER
THE OBSERVER MAGAZINE SUPPLEMENT
PHILOSOPHY
JOURNAL OF ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY
OF ENGLAND
JOURNAL OF ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
STRAITS TIMES
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