

This issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* publishes texts of selected papers from three conferences which took place in 1995: the ARLIS/ANZ Conference at Sydney, the ARLIS/UK & Ireland Conference at Dublin, and the IFLA Conference at Istanbul. Some papers from Istanbul appeared in our last issue; this time we present papers from the Open Session organised by the IFLA Section of Art Libraries devoted to 'Islamic art library collections' – a session of which Jean Adelman has reported that those attending

agreed that it was the most memorable and emotional as well as useful and informative of any session at any professional meeting in our experience.<sup>1</sup>

The session began with 'a visual tour of treasures in Turkish libraries'; although we can print the text of Nurhan Atasoy's presentation, it was never going to be possible for the *Art Libraries Journal* to do justice to her slides. This was followed by a second presentation which 'addressed the deliberate destruction of Islam's cultural heritage, and efforts now under way to reclaim some of it, in Bosnia-Herzegovina'. Jean Adelman records that members of the audience were 'too moved to be able to formulate questions'. Then the Director of the National and University Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ene Kujundiz, spoke – impromptu? (no text has been released for publication) – of that library's heroic efforts to maintain some sort of service, even after losing much of its stock to fire, even *under fire*. Finally, Deirdre Lawrence 'brought us back to the familiar focus of library collection development and issues most of us readily connect with in our professional lives. . . '.

Notwithstanding the problems and frustrations we encounter every day, and notwithstanding rare disasters – the San Francisco earthquake, the fire which destroyed a public library at Norwich, England, which delegates to the ARLIS/UK and Ireland conference heard an account of at Dublin – most of us can rely on the *familiarity* of our libraries. This is as it should be, and indeed is part of the service we provide: quietness in which to read and reflect; order, in which what is sought may be found; routines which are predictable; procedures which are adhered to. Yet accustomed as we are to a secure

professional environment which we are fortunate enough to be able to take for granted, our professionalism warns us against the temptation to simply carry on from day to day without questioning what we are doing, why we are doing it, whether it could be better done. Such temptation might be easy to succumb to in isolation; it is very much the function of our conferences, and of this journal, to focus and re-focus on the familiar, but from different perspectives, to pose even such seemingly elementary questions as 'what is an art librarian?', and why 'conserve?', or to call (as Gabriel Austin does in a text written especially for *Art Libraries Journal*) for more discrimination in our approach to new technology.

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#### Reference

1. Adelman, Jean. 'Report of the Open Session: *Islamic art library collections*. Tuesday 22nd August 1995. Swissotel, Istanbul, Turkey'. IFLA *Section of Art Libraries Newsletter* no. 37 1995 p.3-4.