

Letter from the Chairman and Executive Director

Spring 2008

As spring 2008 arrives, ARTstor is being used at 976 institutions, and the Library has grown to 725,000 images. Among the 38 collection releases in the past year are images from the MoMA documentation of installed shows beginning in 1929; 4,700 images of modern and contemporary Latin American art from the personal archive of Professor Jacqueline Barnitz at the University of Texas, Austin, and the complete archive of ART on FILE (professional photographers of contemporary architecture and public art).

The spring has also brought a new and exciting effort launched by the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH), an international nonprofit learned society that promotes the study and preservation of the built environment worldwide. SAH is developing the SAH Architectural Visual Resources Network (SAH AVRN), a bank of richly annotated digital images that will eventually include photographs, as well as other digital media including QTVR panoramas. In addition to focusing on architecture, SAH would like to include images from related disciplines such as landscape design, urban planning, and engineering in the AVRN. Since the SAH members have, for generations, been creating the visual evidence of the built environment that they need for making their arguments in their teaching and research, the capacity of a Web-based environment to host and share these images seems to be an ideal connective fiber for the Society's over 3,500 members. SAH AVRN will be a collaborative effort of SAH, individual architectural history scholars and visual resources librarians (initially from Brown University, MIT, and the University of Virginia), and ARTstor. We are partnering with SAH to develop collaborative tools and technical infrastructure to support ongoing development of the AVRN project. As one of the ways in which we are seeking to work with the community of educational image users to understand its needs (in this case, as collection builders as well as collection users), we look forward to playing a role in facilitating SAH's exciting network.

In general, we continue to reach out to scholars, teachers, librarians, scholarly societies, and others who are defining, by their practices, the elements of an emerging digital infrastructure that is needed to serve educational needs. Whether growing out of a membership organization centered on a particular class of object or improvisational groups brought together by a particular *topos* (as with the Judith and Holofernes collection project described on the back page), such horizontal "communities of practice" are playing evolving and innovative roles. Our intention at ARTstor is to endeavor to be helpful partners to these communities at the same time as we continue to collaborate with the more vertically structured locus for teaching and scholarship that traditional institutions provide. We have long recognized that, should ARTstor pursue a purely centralized approach to providing a useful service, we would encounter all sorts of limitations on how useful we could be. We very much believe in doing what we can to learn from (and if possible, facilitate the work of) those who are innovating and actually practicing in the new modes of scholarly communications.

With all good wishes,

James Shulman, *Executive Director*

Neil Rudenstine, *Chairman*

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