

It will not have escaped the attention of the careful reader of *A Reader in Art Librarianship*¹ that Section 2 of Part 2 ('Whom we serve: art librarians and library users'), though titled 'Artists and Art Students', actually comprises three essays entirely about art students and not at all about artists – except insofar as art students *are* artists. The reason for this was simply that, as the book's editor, so far as I could discover nothing of any substance had been written by or about the information needs of artists, their reading habits and use of libraries. Our professional knowledge of artists seems to have been derived largely from observation of and interaction with art students (and artists employed as teachers), especially in art college libraries, and there is no reason to suppose that it is any the less accurate for that: the artist, after all, never ceases to be an art student – one who studies the practice of art, continually learning and developing; this learning and developing is likely to resemble patterns already established during student days and to be nourished by the same or similar publications and sources of information as were available then (pointed out, maybe, by a friendly art librarian or an artist tutor). Art college libraries are indeed artists' libraries, developed in response to the needs of a community of artists among whom the students differ only in being youthful, relatively immature versions of the same phenomenon. 'What I find interesting is that artists obviously build up *their own library*' – if not literally then by absorbing what they need from diverse sources and not least from 'border subjects'

. . . which I also find interesting, because I feel the same way myself, that is: I agree with them, I see that 'my' art students are interested in religion, history, fiction of special kinds, poetry perhaps. We obviously ought to build up a small general collection apart from the art books. We need a certain amount of exact knowledge. In your polytechnic I suppose the question does not arise, as you of course have a general, universal library already.²

In fact, the question does arise, because a general, universal library, and a general, universal library *for artists*, are not the same thing. That is to say, the artist approaches different subjects from a particular (and invariably a visually-orientated) point-of-view. It is surprising how zoologists and biologists seem to favour books with relatively few and/

or relatively dull illustrations of the subjects of their studies; the novels which interest artists (including those which make use of typographic or other experimental techniques) do not necessarily correspond with the prescribed texts for a literature course. Polytechnic and similar multi-disciplinary libraries can obviously vastly extend the range of material available to their artist users, but must also be willing to acquire material especially for them not merely on art but on other subjects also.

The artist *creates* his or her own idiosyncratic and usually highly specific information needs. To the extent that these are broadly predictable, a responsive 'art library' can anticipate them; to the extent that they are not predictable, a sympathetic art librarian may be the most understanding and effective information broker from the artist's point-of-view. But unlike the art student, the artist may not have ready or any access to an art library. If some of us have extensive working knowledge of art students and their teachers while others have served artists through the art departments of public libraries, there is always more to learn, and there is room enough in our professional literature for more yet on artists as library users and on their information needs (including their need of certain unglamorous categories of basic information, such as the price and availability of materials and equipment, the properties of materials, safety hazards, the business of art, art law, and so forth³).

One area of mutual interest between artists and librarians concerns 'artoteks' or loan collections of works of art, most usually original prints which, so to speak, lend themselves to this purpose. In Norway, for instance, the Norske Grafikere (Association of Norwegian Printmakers) has been instrumental in initiating a picture loan scheme; this is documented in Anders Ericson's article, updated especially for this issue of the *Art Libraries Journal*, which appears here together with articles on artoteks in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland (where artists were also heavily involved in launching picture lending) which were all originally published in a recent issue of the *Scandinavian Public Library Quarterly*. We are grateful to its editor, Jes Petersen, for his cooperation in enabling us to reprint this material. Clearly the artotek can help the artist (not least the local artist) by bringing his or her work to the attention of a wider

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audience, but of greater significance is the overall potential of artoteks, and of dynamic art departments within public libraries, for closing the gap between 'artist' and 'public' and for contributing to the fulfillment of communities in which everyone is a special kind of artist.

References

1. *A Reader in Art Librarianship*, edited by Philip Pacey. Munich: K. G. Saur (IFLA Publications 34), 1985.
2. Åse Markussen, in a letter accompanying Ørnulf Opdahl's contribution to this issue of the *Art Libraries Journal*, 10th July 1986.
3. The information needs of artists have been considered by art librarians involved in art education who have felt it to be their responsibility to introduce art *students* to sources of information relevant to the practice of art as a career. See for example *User Education in Art and Design: Theory into Practice*, edited by Mike Avann and Kath Wood (ARLIS/UK & Eire, 1980), while it is also relevant to note that one of the most useful manuals on safety in art practice is published by an art college library, that of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Philip Pacey