

EDITORIAL

The theme of this issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* is well represented by the title of Helge Aszmoneit's paper "To communicate design". It is a theme woven of two strands: communication of information to and among professional designers to nourish the design process, and the sharing of information with a wider public. The former topic is dealt with by Daniel Formosa, a designer, in a text which he has developed from a presentation to the ARLIS/NA Conference in 1990, and by Joyce Chidlow, who is involved in the provision of information services to architectural practices, and whose text is a paper presented to the ARLIS/U.K. & Eire Conference this year. The second aspect of design communication is approached, from rather different angles, by Helge Aszmoneit and myself.

As Helge Aszmoneit vividly illustrates in talking about the daily experiences of librarians, we are, all of us, involved with design every day of our lives. If it is functioning well, it assists us in a hundred different ways, and the likelihood is that we take it very much for granted. If it is not functioning well, it trips us up and impedes us. To a large extent, it shapes our environment, sometimes boxing us in, sometimes lifting us up. Even within, but more especially outside, our own homes, and notwithstanding the fact that we all exercise some freedom and creativity in "designing ourselves", design controls us more than we control it.

Thus it is right that "design is increasingly being talked about and has to be talked about", as Helge writes. Design Councils, and other institutions which in one way or another mediate between the design profession and the public, should do more than merely providing a shop window for professional design, or endeavouring to 'educate' a lay public to 'appreciate' the virtues of 'Good Design'. There is a continual need (to quote Helge once more), for a genuinely 'critical public discussion of design', and the Design Council in Britain is to be commended for its advocacy of design *activities* in primary and secondary education – an approach which recognises and seeks to nurture the designing capabilities of all children. For *we are all designers*; even as 'consumers' of design, we – and I mean everybody – should be regarded as capable of contributing valuable informa-

tion to the design process, of being able to envisage how a product or environment could be improved or a new product devised and developed. And thus our two strands knit together.

It follows that design information should be open and accessible and able to flow in all directions. Libraries can help, by liberating information from closed reservoirs and rigid channels; by ensuring that it is available in such public resource centres as school, college and community libraries; by receiving and valuing the information which people and communities can provide concerning themselves; and by networking, thereby facilitating the flow of information between different kinds of libraries and institutions, and to those libraries and institutions which serve the public. Helge Aszmoneit describes the beginnings of such a network, conceived within the former Federal Republic of Germany and now (following a meeting in October 1990) certain to be extended – if tentatively and amid uncertainties regarding the future of specific libraries – throughout the united Germany.

Guust van Wesemael, IFLA's Deputy Secretary General, died unexpectedly, after a brief illness, during the evening of June 5th.

Guust was a good friend to our international community of art librarianship. He gave marvellous support to the IFLA Section of Art Libraries and to the Round Table which preceded it. Often, he worked on our behalf behind the scenes, in ways which were invisible to most of us for most of the time, although a succession of Chairs of the Section are aware of at least some of what he did to help them and the Section. Many colleagues will remember his speech of welcome at the Section's European conference at Amsterdam in 1986. His absence will cast a deep shadow over the forthcoming IFLA Conference at Moscow. He is very much missed.