

EDITORIAL

This issue of Art Libraries Journal features art libraries in Denmark, and ARLIS/Norden, in anticipation of the IFLA Conference, to be held at København at the end of August, which will be the occasion of the annual meeting of ARLIS/Norden and of meetings of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries. When IFLA last gathered at København, in 1979, the art librarians' group, then a 'Round Table', was in its infancy; sadly, it failed to make contact with, and perhaps knew nothing of, those art librarians working in Danish public libraries who had formed a subsection, Kunstfaggruppen, of the Danish librarians' union. Some years later, the meetings of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries at the IFLA Conference at Munich inspired Norwegian delegates to launch ARLIS/Norge; some years after that, ARLIS/Norden was founded to represent art libraries and art librarians in all the Nordic countries. I was privileged to be present at early annual meetings of both ARLIS/Norge and ARLIS/Norden; on another occasion, while on holiday, I attended a meeting of Kunstfaggruppen and visited two of its members' libraries. It therefore gives me especial pleasure to continue my personal association with Nordic art librarianship through this issue of Art Libraries Journal, one of the last which I shall edit.

Sadly, even while art library associations flourish, specific art libraries and librarians remain vulnerable. Eeva Viljanen wrote her contribution to this issue of Art Libraries Journal during her last days as Librarian at the Museum of Applied Arts at Helsinki, following an earlier decision to abolish her post. Thus the Museum's library is no longer in the care of a professional librarian. Also in Helsinki, the Nordiskt Konstcentrum (Nordic Arts Centre) was closed at short notice, without explanation or consultation, last December; staff were made redundant, and the future of the library and its collections of books, exhibition catalogues, journals, clippings and slides is uncertain. The Nordic Arts Centre, in its historic accommodation on the island of Sveaborg, was a significant site in the history of Nordic art librarianship; those who were present will cherish the memory of its snow-lit and, later, candle-lit white spaces, which graciously accommodated the 1987 annual meeting of ARLIS/Norden. The library had a vital and perhaps unique international role in documenting contemporary art of all the Nordic countries; let us hope

that it will be re-opened, and its librarian reappointed, with a minimum of delay.

There may be little or nothing that 'outsiders' can do on these occasions. However, whereas years ago the closure of an art library or the loss of an art librarian's post might have passed relatively unnoticed, that is no longer the case. Those responsible for the policies and decisions which affect art libraries should realise that even the smallest or remotest art library contributes to a worldwide resource, and that an international art information community is taking notice. I would like to think that the Art Libraries Journal, along with the IFLA Section of Art Libraries, has a part to play in this process. Libraries which are threatened may have previously been recognised in these pages. Perhaps the Section's Newsletter should include as a regular feature a report of closures of art libraries and the loss of art librarians' posts? (It might also note recalled art books? – see Gordon Moran's letter in this issue of Art Libraries Journal – but that is another matter). We cannot interfere. But we can at least make our concern known and palpable, and, who knows, this might be enough, sometimes, to make a difference. To paraphrase John Donne: No art library is an island, entire of itself; every art library is part of a larger whole . . . The closure of any art library, the loss of any art librarian's post, diminishes us all, because we are involved in art librarianship worldwide.