# VRA

The Digital Transition: Perspectives from Art Historians

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Introduction

This issue of the VRA Bulletin collects six essays from art historians in a wide range of fields, all concerned with the effect of what those of us in visual resources have come to call “the digital transition.” Does the use of digital tools change the way art historians teach and do research? Does it change the way students learn? Has our professional preoccupation with the creation of (funding of, development of, staffing for, training for) digital tools clouded our view of their ultimate use?

Here is the view from the other side of the podium. The authors were chosen as a representative cross-section of art history, with expertise in many areas and experience in a variety of teaching and learning environments. All were invited to submit essays on any topic they chose, so long as it addressed some facet of the way their discipline has changed with the adoption of digital tools. Professors Leader and Schrader chose to address pedagogical issues; Professors Trowbridge and Johnson, and Ph.D. candidate Gustafson, write about changes in research methods in their particular fields. Ph.D. candidate Williams provides an unexpected homage to the 35mm format. (Perhaps we have abandoned our slides and slide machinery without hearing their intrinsic poetry.)

The thread linking these scholars together is the visual resources collection at the Institute of Fine Arts, through which each of this issue’s essayists has passed at some point in his career. It has been my privilege to work with all of them in a variety of contexts. Many are former student staff members. I have learned a great deal from all of them, about professionalism, about service to the academic community, about scholarship. My deepest thanks to them for their contributions to this issue of the VRA Bulletin.

One last note: in August 2007, when this issue is published, I will have been at IFA for twenty-one years. Let this VRA Bulletin stand as something of a Festschrift.

Jenni M. Rodda, Curator
Visual Resources Collections
Institute of Fine Arts
New York University
New York, May 2007

Jenni Rodda, editor for this issue of the VRA Bulletin, holds an AM in art history with a concentration in seventeenth-century German architectural theory from Brown University. Since 1986, she has served as the Curator of the Visual Resources Collections at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where she has taught generations of new scholars how to change projector bulbs, how to un-jam carousel trays, and how to use digital images in a variety of contexts. She is the recipient of VRA’s 2004 Distinguished Service Award.