

This issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* is devoted to texts of papers presented to the 4th European Conference of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries, which was launched at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and which subsequently continued over three days at Wadham College, Oxford, in April of this year. The conference theme was "The art book: from Vasari to videodisc"; we print here all of those papers which were directly concerned with the printed art book (as distinct from the book as art) and with art book publishing. Some other papers, including two which concerned themselves with "artists' books", will appear in the next or a future issue.

It was striking how many speakers, from different countries, had much the same tale to tell: of a boom in art book publishing in recent decades which, however, has been a mixed blessing – popular, profitable titles have multiplied, to the extent of duplicating each other many times over, while the publication of original material, and of works which cover less familiar ground, remains fraught with difficulty and dependent on subsidies, grants or sponsorship. The art book flourishes, albeit as a commodity in the market-place rather than a vessel of scholarship or a means of education.

Yet it flourishes, confounding those who have forecast the demise of the printed book. Given the traditional book-like format of the *Art Libraries Journal*, we clearly cannot simulate or in any way do justice to the demonstration of multimedia CD-ROMs, by Graham Howard, to which the conference delegates were treated on the final morning. Could anyone have failed to have been impressed by these, the one devoted to a Shakespeare play embedded in all manner (and media) of contextual information, the other a new kind of art exhibition catalogue? Yet it is surely possible now to contemplate such exciting developments without experiencing anxiety symptoms regarding the printed book. The codex format, rather like the wheel which, as we are so fond of reminding ourselves, there is no need to re-invent, has about it too much "Sachlichkeit" ever to be abandoned while civilisation lasts. Within its limitation it has always been a multi-media medium, lending itself (especially as printing technologies developed) very readily to the documentation of art.

More reassuring, perhaps, than its current success as a marketable product, is the fact that artists still find in the idea and form of the book a stimulating medium which it is interesting, if not strictly necessary, to re-interpret; thus, some of the artists' books which Clive Phillpot showed slides of, and books about book-making like those by Keith A. Smith (from the Visual Studies Workshop Press) or Franz Zeier's marvelous *Books, boxes, and portfolios* (Design Press, 1990; first published in Germany in 1983), can do more to confirm and renew confidence in the future of the book than many of today's art books.

Readers of Nicole Picot's paper will be interested to know of an extremely handsome and informative journal launched in the autumn of 1990, *Double Vue: la revue du livre d'art*, which appears three times each year. *Double Vue*, lavishly illustrated, publishes interviews, and reviews of new art books, and has interested itself in artists' books; it leaves one in no doubt as to the health of art book publishing in France. Subscriptions to three issues @ 120 French francs are available from: *Double Vue*, 26 rue Rambuteau, 75003 Paris.

It is with great sorrow that we record the sudden death, peacefully, in his sleep, of Peter Anthony from Winnipeg, who attended the conference at Oxford. Peter was a regular attendee at IFLA Conferences; indeed, two of us, sharing memories in a telephone conversation, could not recall such a conference at which he was not present. Between 1977 and 1981 Peter served as Financial Officer of the Art Libraries Round Table which in 1981 became the IFLA Section of Art Libraries, a task which involved managing accounts in three different currencies. Subsequently he continued to contribute to the work of the Section, quietly and unassertively, through his supportive presence and the gentle humour of his companionship. It was always a joy to see him; by the same token, his absence will be felt at New Delhi and for years to come.