

A landmark publication in the ongoing history of art librarianship was received by the *Art Libraries Journal* just too late to be noted in the 'Annual Bibliography of Art Librarianship' for 1992 which appeared in our last issue. Issue no. 154 of the *Bulletin d'Informations de l'Association des Bibliothécaires Français* includes a 'dossier' entitled 'Vers une bibliothèque nationale des arts', comprising papers and reports from a workshop which took place in Paris in December 1991. This event was conceived as an opportunity for the librarians most directly concerned to share their thoughts with colleagues, and with art historians and others, regarding the project which will create a 'bibliothèque nationale des arts' by relocating several art libraries in the premises which are to be vacated on the rue de Richelieu when the Bibliothèque nationale moves into its new building. Preliminary operations are already under way: the Bibliothèque d'Art et d'Archéologie is moving by stages into the Bibliothèque nationale even before the latter moves out! The third and final stage is scheduled to take place at the end of 1993.

Among the papers which are reprinted, one stands out because of the breadth of its terms of reference. 'Une bibliothèque nationale au service de tous' by Catherine Schmitt hails the creation of a national art library as a unique opportunity, *not* merely for bringing together a remarkable concentration of art library resources in a single location in Paris, but *also*, for activating a national programme and a nationwide network of which the national art library would be the focal point. Clearly, parallels can be drawn with the role of the National Art Library in England, and with the British VALIP (Visual Arts Libraries and Information Plan) initiative which is to be officially launched on March 26th. Catherine Schmitt proposes an 11-point manifesto comprising the following:

1. A national union catalogue, to be developed by means of the automating of art libraries and the linking of databases.
2. The creation of a French language thesaurus for art and architecture.
3. A national programme for recording archival and fragile material on microfilm (etc).
4. Collaborative efforts to improve the indexing of periodicals, since the combined efforts of existing indexing

services still leave much to be desired.

5. A national policy regarding archives.
6. A national policy on the training of art librarians.
7. A national policy concerning information files on artists, culminating in a union list such as that produced by colleagues in Canada.
8. Collaboration with the universities to encourage work on the bibliography of art history.
9. An active contribution from art libraries towards the development of catalogues of works of art themselves.
10. A national policy regarding photographic documentation of art, to encompass a large photothèque on the rue de Richelieu site plus a network of collections of photographs of French art.
11. The provision of a dedicated service at the rue de Richelieu, for handling enquiries sent in from elsewhere.

This is a visionary yet practical approach. It draws inspiration from a number of sources which are generously acknowledged: meetings with French colleagues, an ARLIS/NA Conference, and an article by Clive Phillpot in *Art Libraries Journal*. Yet it is a bold, clear, and – at least in its application to the French situation – original statement which unhesitatingly leads the way forward while repeatedly underlining the virtues and necessity of cooperation and of participation. Not only France but the whole world of art documentation will benefit if Catherine Schmitt's proposals can be translated into effective and lasting action.

With the inclusion in this issue of the texts by Clive Phillpot and Fred Hillbrunner, the *Art Libraries Journal* completes its publishing of papers from the 4th European Conference of the IFLA Section of Art Libraries at Oxford last April. Our next issue will be devoted to papers presented to the Section at the main IFLA Conference which took place at New Delhi in August and September 1992.