KU Librarian Susan Craig Receives Rare International Award

KU Librarian Susan Craig is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA). The Distinguished Service Award honors an individual of any country whose exemplary service in art librarianship, visual resources curatorship, or a related field has made an outstanding national or international contribution to art information. The award is the highest honor available from the organization, which includes more than 1,000 members.

Craig, the only art librarian at KU, has been a member of ARLIS/NA since its inception in 1972.

“I am overwhelmed,” Craig said. “Throughout my career, my professional home has always been with ARLIS/NA. No matter where I’ve moved, it remained constant. When a body like that says ‘You deserve this award,’ it’s huge.”

According to ARLIS/NA, the award is reserved for those who show outstanding service, research, performance and/or publication in a manner consistent with the highest standards of the field. The award is given infrequently, and fellow ARLIS/NA members nominate winners.

Craig is the author of the award-winning eBook entitled “Biographical Dictionary of Kansas Artists (active before 1945),” which is available free online through KU ScholarWorks (http://hdl.handle.net/1808/1028).

Craig began work on the book in 1981 after seeing an ARLIS/NA compilation of a state-by-state guide to artists that had no entry for Kansas.

“I was appalled,” she said. “Not only because I did not know much about Kansas artists, but because no one did.”

Craig, a native Kansan who was named head of KU’s Murphy Art and Architecture Library in 1981, felt a civic duty to explore Kansan artists and share the information with others. Her resulting work won the Worldwide Books Award for Electronic Resources in 2007.

“I naively assumed I'd spend a year assembling this dictionary,” she said. “Really I worked on it over the next ten.”

Above: Susan Craig discusses her ten-year journey researching and writing her book on Kansas artists with KU Libraries friends and benefactors at a presentation May 14th in Watson Library.

Below: A watercolor by Mary Huntoon, one of Craig’s favorite works by a Kansas artist.