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# MALC 1987

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## *The Midwest Academic Library Conference at Illinois State University.*

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**T**he Midwest Academic Library Conference (MALC) does not have a creed, officers, committees, or dues. MALC's organizational structure is so loose, in fact, that we are not even certain about its official name. For example, previous accounts in *College & Research Libraries* by H. Vail Deale referred to the gathering as the "Midwest Academic Librarians Conference."<sup>1</sup> This informality continues the tradition that began in May 1956 at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

One of its few traditions is that MALC has been jointly sponsored by several neighboring academic institutions. For the 1987 conference, Illinois State University (Normal) and Illinois Wesleyan University (Bloomington) cosponsored "Toward Holistic Library Services: Putting the Pieces Together" (May 27-29, 1987), a follow-up on the 1986 conference held at Iowa State University (Ames).

Approximately 175 people, including a visitor from California, gathered to hear such speakers as Congressman Major R. Owens (D-NY), JoAn Segal, (ACRL's executive director), Evan Farber (Earlham College), Michael Gorman (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), and William Nugent (Library of Congress), present and exchange their ideas with participants. Segal, Evans

and Gorman set the pace at the opening session with "Challenges for Libraries," "BI: Past, Present and Future Challenges," and "Technology: The Problem or the Solution." The conference concluded with the presentation, "Putting the Pieces Together: An Administrator's Perspective," by Thomas Shaughnessy, University of Missouri. All of them were provocative!

A pig roast and banquet at the ISU Foundation's Ewing Manor, the estate of the late Hazel Buck Ewing patterned after an English castle with a Japanese garden, were held to provide librarians with an informal atmosphere for hammering out ideas about holistic library services.

Participants were encouraged to tour the Illinois State University Library. Unfortunately, Illinois Wesleyan's beautiful facility was temporarily closed for asbestos removal, a situation that others may perhaps empathize with.

Thomas Shaughnessy summarized some of the problems discussed at the conference in his wrap-up talk. Shaughnessy pointed out that good library habits must be formed in one's student years and that a campus-wide campaign must be mounted to alert students and administrators to the services and information available at their libraries. Currently, he said, university faculty and administrators are trying to resolve a myriad of diverse problems such as "bright flight," student retention, minority recruitment, and training foreign teaching assistants to speak English. Quite often campus planning does not include libraries in these finan-

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<sup>1</sup>See H. Vail Deale, "A Decade with MALC," *C&RL* 25 (November 1964):475-82; and "MALC's Second Decade: Commitment to Communication," *C&RL* 36 (March 1975):143-51.

cially draining endeavors.

Pressure encourages competition, not collaboration, and Shaughnessy strongly believes that the library must promote collaboration. He encouraged library workers to become involved in these campus-wide problems and suggested that a database search of a topic could illustrate interest to university administrators, as would cooperating in a program to help students learn to write more effectively.

In order for the library staff to cope with all of these demands, Shaughnessy feels that staff development should begin on day one of employment. Since its staff is a key to a library's success, Shaughnessy develops a theme each year, such as grant writing, for staff development. Interestingly, Shaughnessy believes that attending conferences such as MALC are costly in both lost work time and hard dollars and benefit individual staff members only—not the institutions that bear most of the costs.

JoAn Segal stated that current library practices contribute to personnel specialization rather than generalization. In order to create a holistic library, administrators must urge library staff to interact beyond their own departments. She closely examined the theme of "holistic library services" and presented an intriguing picture of the library as a system interacting with a web of other systems.

Michael Gorman agreed that libraries are undervalued by faculty and society at large, and that the library's passivity to the outside world contributes to this attitude. Gorman explained that in the last decade there has been little additional money for services that are in high demand. Library managers are now challenged to cope with rising expectations among staff members who are seeking more job responsibility and fulfillment.

Gorman said that although automation has made personnel redeployment possible, he admitted that reorganization is hard to implement. He recommended that administrators redefine staff and library roles, then decide the most cost effective way to enforce reorganization. Professional duties will be encouraged and specific tasks will drift down to the lowest level at which the task can be performed. Eventually these actions will result in more resources for the user, Gorman said.

Evan Farber described the effect that automation and other new technologies will have on the intellectual framework of the campus over the next 15 years. He reassured the audience that students' need for information and assistance in evaluating data will persist.

William Nugent related the Library of Congress's progress with optical disk technology. One optical disk can store several shelves of magazines and can also provide more public access to such items as rare photographs. In addition, mechanized indexing will provide better access to collections and preserve images longer than the printed page. When concern was expressed that optical



*Major R. Owens answers questions after the MALC banquet as author DeLoach looks on.*

disks may only have a lifetime of 10–20 years, Nugent reported that a final verdict had not been reached on disk longevity.

Other conference speakers were Doug Bedient (Southern Illinois University) on video technology; Betsy Baker (Northwestern University) on training end-users in database searching; Linda Piele, Harold Tuckett, and Donna Nicholson (University of Wisconsin-Parkside) on microcomputers; Dana Smith (Purdue University) on computer-assisted bibliographic instruction; Gerald Cole (Illinois State University) on bibliographic instruction in history; Florence Lewis (Sangamon State University) on the instructional services librarian; Judy Rycombel (DePaul University) and Mary Marshall (OCLC) on document delivery; and Tom Dorst (DePaul University), Beth Sandore and Bernie Sloan (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) on resource sharing using the LCS system.

Congressman Major R. Owens, the only librarian in Congress, gave a stimulating speech at the Thursday night banquet (in the same time slot as his son, who plays Elvin on "The Cosby Show"! ). He urged librarians to continually remind elected officials of our contributions to society and the need for improved library funding. He pointed out a number of bills, many that he had sponsored, which are of special interest to academic librarians.

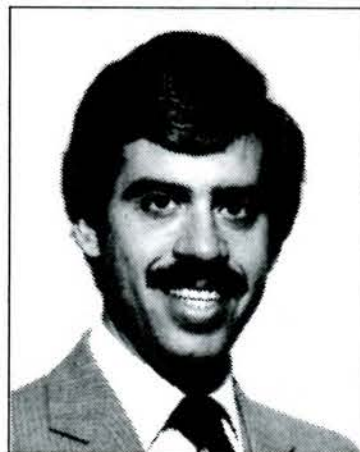
The 1988 MALC will be at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which also sponsored a 1974 MALC meeting. Kansas State University, Manhattan, will host the 1989 program. ■■



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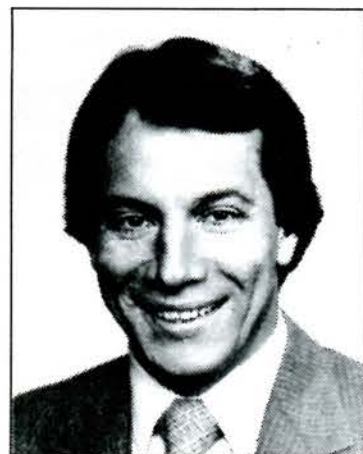
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# LIBRARIES IN AN INFORMATION SOCIETY: A STATISTICAL SUMMARY

by

■ Mary Jo Lynch  
Director, ALA Office for Research

This publication brings together in one place basic statistics about libraries in the United States that describe what libraries are and do, how they are used and by whom, what they contain, how they are financed and staffed, and how they spend their resources. It was compiled, with the aid of a grant from OCLC, for those outside the library community who wish to know more about libraries as well as for librarians and potential librarians who seek a summary of the field.

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