

New realities, new relationships for academic and research librarians

The new presidential theme

by Helen H. Spalding

When the ACRL Strategic Plan for 2005 was approved in January 2000, our six strategic directions provided the guide for achieving goals that members identified as priorities to them. Former presidents Betsy Wilson and Mary Reichel's focuses on collaboration, information literacy, and learning communities have facilitated ACRL's accomplishments in these areas and established a strong base and momentum for the 2002–2003 presidential theme, "New Realities, New Relationships."

Upon selecting this theme in the spring of 2001, I had no idea it would resonate so clearly with the experiences members are now having in their personal and professional lives. At the time, we were expecting an overdue upturn of a stock market that had been zigzagging its way down for a year and had no idea what corporate calamities were to come. We were setting ambitious goals in our campus strategic plans, assuming state and private support for higher education would respond to our new visions. Terrorism was somewhere else, far away. Public policy concerns about copyright, database protection, Internet filtering, and licensing rights did not include the implications that a USA Patriot Act might have for our library users. Now, we are all reevaluating our priorities and future plans.

Grounded by values

During these unsteady times, I find it helpful to return to the core values that members identified for ACRL:

- equitable and open access to information;
- service;
- intellectual freedom;
- cooperation, collaboration, and sharing of resources;
- commitment to the profession of librarianship;
- fair use;
- education and learning;
- commitment to the use of appropriate technology;
- knowledge as an end in itself;
- conservation and preservation of knowledge;
- diversity;
- scholarly communication and research; and
- global perspective.

A long list, but each value is uniquely important. In facing continuing and new challenges, we will find direction and optimism by seeking collaboration, holding fast to our values, and focusing on service to our users. ACRL provides a strong network of colleagues working together that allows each of us to contribute and learn from each other. In establishing priorities to address major challenges confronting ACRL members, we can take clear actions that can make a difference.

About the author

Helen H. Spalding is president of ACRL and associate director of libraries at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, e-mail: spalding@umkc.edu

New initiatives: marketing and recruitment

Numerous members have communicated the need for libraries to better market their services and value as the priority of the campus library is being questioned. In response to this, ACRL has been publishing full-page advertisements in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, highlighting award-winning academic libraries, and picturing and quoting students, faculty, and administrators who value what their campus libraries do for them (see "Exciting things happen @ your library" on page 586). We plan to continue these advertisements, customizing them for other higher education journals, including those basic to different academic program areas.

After two years in a general campaign on behalf of all libraries, the American Library Association @ Your Library Campaign is focusing on academic libraries this year through ACRL. The ACRL @ Your Library Task Force, chaired by Ken Marks, is working with KRC, a New York City marketing firm, and sponsor 3M to develop key messages and marketing materials that can be customized to the local level.

The campaign messages and materials will generate visibility for the valuable role that academic and research librarians and libraries play in the lives of our constituents, including students, faculty, researchers, community members, donors, administrators, legislators, and prospective librarians. The scope and quality of the campaign would not be possible without valuable collaboration with ALA and 3M.

Another major concern that is being addressed is recruitment to academic librarianship and to particular research library specialties. (The ACRL Personnel Administrators and Staff Development Officers Discussion Group's Ad Hoc Task Force on Recruitment and Retention Issues has provided an excellent overview in, "Recruitment, Retention & Restructuring: Human Resources in Academic Libraries")

The visibility garnered through the academic library campaign will attract more people to work in academic and research libraries and to select academic librarianship as a career. The ACRL @ Your Library Task Force will be working closely with the new ACRL/ARL Recruitment Committee, which is developing strategies for improving recruitment to academic and research libraries.

Mentoring Spectrum Scholars

Since the inception of the ALA Spectrum Scholar Program, which provides library school scholarships to people of color, a personal goal has been to facilitate exposure of the Spectrum Scholars and ACRL members to the personal and professional perspectives and support they can offer each other.

In 2003, a new ACRL Spectrum Scholar Mentor Task Force, chaired by Theresa Byrd, is designing a program that will pair academic and research librarians with each new Spectrum Scholar. The students will receive encouragement to successfully complete their graduate programs and find library jobs that are a good fit. Both the students and mentors will gain long-term enrichment from the relationships they establish, regardless of the career path each student selects. Spectrum Scholars may be more likely to choose academic librarianship as a career, due to the exposure they will have to the profession through their mentors. Upon the success of the program, ACRL can consider pairing mentors with other library school students, whose success upon entering librarianship is crucial to the future.

New initiatives: repositioning the association

For ACRL members to continue to rely upon the association for resources, publications, staff support, networking, and professional development, ACRL must be positioned for a continually changing environment. The Task Force on the Association of the Future, chaired by Maureen Sullivan, is scanning the environment, gathering input from members, and looking at how other successful member associations are restructuring themselves to remain relevant in a different future. That task force will be making recommendations on how ACRL should be changing, given the new priorities and needs of members, new constraints on and possibilities for revenues, and the increasing cost of providing products and services. Suggestions from members are welcome.

Another new task force will be reviewing and revising the 1992 "Guidelines for the preparation of policies on library access." Equitable and open access to information remains one of our strongest values. Technology, public policy, attitudinal, budget, and environment changes require us to frequently revisit our policies to ensure that they provide the strongest support possible for those who depend upon us.

The new ACRL scholarly communications initiative begun by Mary Reichel during her presidency, will be a high priority as we seek to create new models for scholarly communication through education, advocacy, coalition building, and research. Ray English chairs the ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee, which will coordinate these activities.

Professional development and collaboration

Unique professional development opportunities this year also encourage members to examine new realities and build new relationships. The April 10–13, 2003, ACRL National Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina, has an exciting and diverse mix of speakers, workshops, programs, and learning community formats. The Toronto site for the ALA Annual Conference in June 2003 has inspired the ACRL sections to partner with Canadian library associations to generate an unusually creative group of 21 programs that feature Canadian librarians, faculty, authors, and other professionals in presenting new perspectives on transborder interests and concerns. These programs and the ACRL President's Program promise to bring a more global perspective than would have been possible at a U.S. location. I encourage members to make every effort to participate. You will not be disappointed.

This year, we also will be working more closely with others in and affiliated with ALA. ACRL and the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) are meeting regularly and focusing on the K–16 goals we share. Stronger relationships with affiliates such as Black Caucus of ALA, Chinese-American Librarians Association, and Reforma will help us in recruitment to the profession, in providing service to our increasingly diverse faculty and students, in making ACRL more relevant for the future, and in mobilizing our common strength to see our common values reflected in public policy, library funding, and library service.

Exploration

To flesh out the variety of member experiences and issues reflected in the "New Realities, New Relationships" theme, this column will be written by different ACRL members, with each entry exploring a different facet of change and collaboration. Possible topics include: What are our new realities and relation-

ships with students? How have international student campus experiences changed this year, and how will they continue to change?

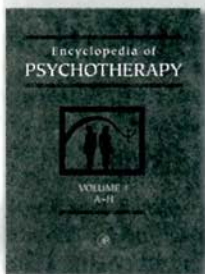
Many of the students we now serve, we never meet, but relate to only remotely. Faculty are incorporating new information technology and learning techniques into their curricula and librarians have new roles in partnering with them. Researchers relate to each other, to the library, and to other institutions differently than they have traditionally, changing our environment, services, and perspectives. How are patron behavior and needs and new means of access to information changing our concept of library space? What are the different Information Commons models and goals, and what new environments and collaborations are created by them? We are discussing anew what services we offer and in what format. International cooperation is providing and archiving collections and virtual reference service. What are the implications for ownership, access, the "haves and have nots," preservation, storage, and migration to new systems? What do political and psychological borders imply for new international initiatives we are formulating? What can we learn from librarians in other countries about how public policy and higher education issues affect their academic libraries? New library and faculty partnerships are being developed with corporations, implying significant changes in traditional higher education policy and practice. I welcome any suggestions you have for future column topics and authors who will reflect upon concerns most important to you.

What a special privilege to be in a position to encourage members to participate in addressing the issues they find most crucial in their professional lives. The new committees and task forces seek to be informed by your local experience and by your ideas for creating the resources that will be the most useful to you and to those you serve. Let them know what you think. The power of mobilizing our energy and ideas to meet the complex challenges before us is what will continue to be the strength and value of ACRL. You are the ones who accomplish all that ACRL does. Let us know where you want attention placed.

Note

1. A new white paper that can be found at <http://www.ala.org/acrl/recruit-wp.html>. ■

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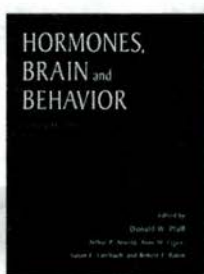
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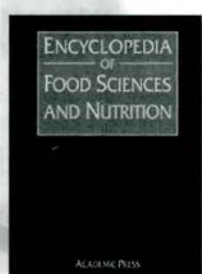
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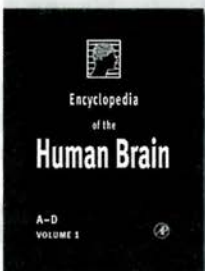
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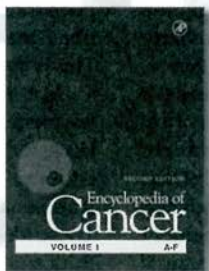
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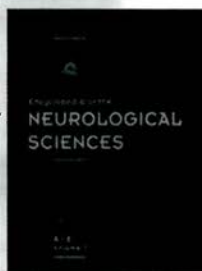
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