

New students, new expectations = new information infrastructures

The ACRL issues forum at the AAHE National Conference

by Ilene F. Rockman

To Form A More Perfect Union . . . Diversity and Learning” was the theme of the American Association of Higher Education’s (AAHE) National Conference held March 30–April 2, 2000, in Anaheim, California.

Several days of meetings were organized around the thematic tracks of “Ensuring Access,” “Supporting Student Success,” “Creating Inclusive Curricula and Pedagogies,” and “Building a Diverse Faculty and Staff.” These meetings were supplemented by additional sessions aligned with the sequence tracks of 1) Teaching, Learning, and Technology and 2) Service Learning.

An issues forum for provosts

For the third year, ACRL and AAHE jointly sponsored an “Issues Forum for Provosts.” This year’s theme centered on “New Students, New Expectations = New Information Infrastructures,” recognizing that the educational opportunities that the new technologies afford are changing the faces of many colleges and universities.

This year’s program attracted close to 40 participants from two- and four- year institutions, both public and private, as well as sev-

eral American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows.

The forum was facilitated by Linda S. Dobb, interim provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, and attendees were welcomed by ACRL President Larry Hardesty; ACRL Executive Director Althea H. Jenkins; and discussion leaders Marion T. Reid, dean of Library and Information Services at California State University, San Marcos; Julia Gelfand, applied sciences librarian at the University of California, Irvine; and myself.

After introductions, the following issues were identified by the participants as ripe for further discussion: libraries as teaching and learning centers, effective use of digital technologies, information literacy initiatives, the future of library buildings, reaching new student populations, relationships between librarians and discipline-based faculty members, the role of virtual libraries in meeting the changing needs of local and off-site student populations, combating rising serial prices through initiatives such as SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition), and helping faculty members to

About the author

Ilene F. Rockman is deputy university librarian at the university library at California State University, Hayward; e-mail: rockman@csuhayward.edu

understand the complexities of copyright, especially in light of electronic and digital publishing.

Reid began the discussion by noting that traditionally, academic libraries have sought additional campus support for new buildings. Today technology adds new dimensions to these fiscal needs, requiring libraries to build new capacity for access to electronic resources and for expanding physical collections. She posed the following questions to audience members, which led to a brisk and lively discussion of the issues:

- How do we best spend our library materials budgets to provide a reasonable balance of print and electronic resources?
- To what extent do we provide the same information in multiple formats?
- How do we ensure keeping ever-changing electronic material on a long-term basis?
- How do we afford the campus infrastructure necessary to deliver electronic information to all desktops and labs?
- How do we maintain a technology upgrade and maintenance program that is capable of delivering current versions of Internet software and of providing students with the laboratory capabilities they need to produce and deliver their assignments in multimedia formats?

Too much and not enough

Gelfand next led the discussion on strategies for meeting the needs of today's college and university students. She began by providing background information and demographic indicators, which suggest an increase in college-age students from more diverse backgrounds with wide variation in communication and academic readiness skills. One of the challenges of libraries is to meet the needs of these students while helping them to prepare for a global competitive environment in which change is commonplace. Partnerships on the campus—between all types of libraries, and through consortia, virtual communities, and literacy programs—are essential for meeting these challenges.

I picked up on this theme and framed the next part of the discussion by suggesting that the only thing worse than not enough information, is too much of it.

This led to a lively question-and-answer session on the topic of information literacy—

why it is important as a higher education strategic initiative and core mission of the institution; how both the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges have recognized the importance of information literacy in today's colleges and universities; ideas for direct or indirect inclusion into general education programs and co-curricular activities; successful practices to help faculty members incorporate information literacy principles across the curriculum through curricular offerings and revised class assignments; ways to establish campus partnerships with faculty development offices, information technology professionals, and other campus units; and methods to reach distant education students.

Dobb shared current information about intellectual property issues and copyright legislation and practice. She directed everyone's attention to the ALA Web site (<http://www.ala.org/oitp/copyright/home1.html>), which contains excellent copyright material, including "Copyright Libraries & the Public," created by law professor, librarian, and copyright expert Kenneth Crews of Indiana University-Purdue University.

Each attendee received a packet of materials to provide supplemental readings on each of the discussion topics. Included in the packets were the new "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" approved by the ACRL Board of Directors on January 18, 2000 (also see pages 000–00); Larry Hardesty's position paper, "Do We Need Academic Libraries?"; a "Survey of Issues and Network Applications in California Schools of Education and University Libraries," prepared by Jackie Siminitus of Pacific Bell; "Educating the Cut-and-Past Generation" by Lori Roth (published in the November 1, 1999 issue of *Library Journal*); "When Libraries Faced the Future" by Ron Feemster (from the February 2000 issue of *University Business*); Choice Outstanding Academic Titles 1999; and information about SPARC from the Association of Research Libraries (<http://www.arl.org/sparc>).

Althea Jenkins and Linda Dobb thanked the group for their excellent participation, and directed them to the ACRL Web site for additional information about academic libraries, such as the new "Standards for College Libraries 2000" (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/guides/college.html>). ■

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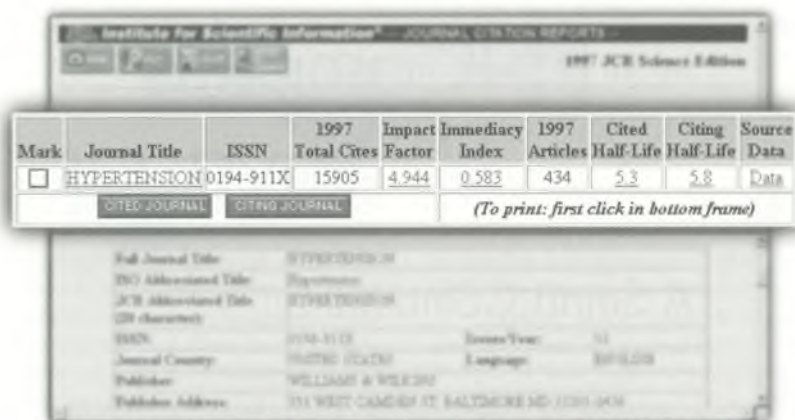
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