

Didier and Spalding share plans for ACRL

Vote in the election this spring

by Elaine K. Didier and Helen H. Spalding

Ed note: *C&RL News* offered ACRL candidates for vice-president/president-elect, Elaine K. Didier and Helen H. Spalding, this opportunity to share their views with the membership. Although many of the issues facing ACRL are discussed informally at meetings, we want to use this venue to provide a national forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you receive your ballot this spring.

ELAINE K. DIDIER

It is a great honor to be invited to stand for the office of ACRL vice president/president elect in the spring 2001 election. ACRL is an organization that has provided significant leadership to and advocacy for academic libraries and librarians. It would be both a privilege and a challenge to follow in the footsteps of so many ACRL leaders who are role models and valued mentors.

There is widespread agreement that academe in general and libraries in particular are facing a time of significant change. You can't open an issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (or any other journal of higher education) without finding articles about new providers of higher education entering the field, or the rise of distance education and the demands of new audiences of learners for anywhere/anytime education and services.

In addition, changes in the patterns of scholarly communication, intellectual prop-



Elaine K. Didier



Helen H. Spalding

erty issues in the digital age, the rise of everything, and the increasing challenge of teaching our users how to access the complex array of information resources all add to the uncertainty of what the academic library of the new millennium will be like.

While the pace and impact of these changes vary with the nature and size of our respective institutions, we all have an enormous need for information and education to help us anticipate issues and provide guidance within our institutional environments.

This is where ACRL, through its chapters, sections, discussion groups, committees, taskforces, and liaisons to other associations, serves to provide a strong foundation and resource upon which all of us can rely and upon which we can draw.

Librarians in all types of academic institutions are in key positions to help their institutions make more effective use of informa-

About the authors

Elaine K. Didier is dean of the University Library at Oakland University, e-mail: didier@oakland.edu; Helen H. Spalding is associate director of libraries at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, e-mail: spaldingh@umkc.edu

tion resources and technology as tools for accomplishing the institution's mission, goals, and priorities. As the world of libraries evolves from a focus on organizing and enabling access to physical objects to an emphasis on teaching and facilitating access to content in any form or location, the role of librarians will evolve, as well. As each of our libraries struggles to address the fast-changing landscape, the president and other leaders of ACRL have a unique opportunity and responsibility to provide leadership, advocacy, guidance, and professional development for all of our members.

Building on accomplishments

ACRL's organizational structure is a major strength, as it provides members with multiple avenues for involvement, and belies the association's status as the largest division of ALA. Each of ACRL's sections, discussion groups, committees, and taskforces offers the opportunity to develop a network of professional connections that span size and type of institution and the nature of one's position.

I continue to be amazed at the wide array of individuals from all types of libraries who I've come to know through service on various committees of ACRL and the University Libraries Section (ULS), on which I currently serve as chair. These talented professionals are a constant source of consultation and inspiration, as well as occasional commiseration, and I treasure these relationships made possible by the breadth of ACRL's programmatic activities and the diversity of its members.

If honored with election as ACRL's vice president/president elect, I believe it is essential to carry on and fulfill initiatives and commitments undertaken by preceding ACRL officers. As I learned during my term as president of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, the president's time in office is far too short to get many programs started, let alone fine-tuned and well established, so the first order of business would be to support programs begun by my predecessors and other ACRL leaders.

These would include implementation of the Strategic Plan, extension of efforts to increase diversity among academic librarians, continuation of the new Institute for Information Literacy and mentoring program, sup-

port for the outstanding national conferences, and enhancement of the ACRL Council of Liaisons to develop partnerships with the broader higher education community.

ACRL also must continue its advocacy for the role of libraries in scholarly communication and information policy initiatives, monitoring national developments such as UCITA, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, national assessment initiatives within the disciplines, and the changing criteria of the regional accreditation agencies that threaten to dilute the quality and scope of library services.

For ACRL to be effective, it is essential that we maximize continuity and consistency across the changing leadership of the association, and plan in terms of broad themes that several presidents and boards will support in succession.

Creating the future

As president of ACRL, I would propose several areas for new or renewed/expanded effort to further extend the reach and influence of the association. Working in close collaboration with the ACRL Board, sections, chapters, and committees to review and refine these ideas, I would advocate:

- *Development of programs to enhance the visibility and credibility of academic libraries and librarians within higher education and the larger public arena.* I will urge active ACRL participation in the ALA "@ your library" Campaign for America's Libraries to increase awareness of and respect/demand for the special expertise academic librarians have to offer users in the digital age. With the fast pace of technological change sweeping our campuses, the academic library is in danger of being marginalized if we do not speak out to assert leadership for the future of our profession by emphasizing that academic librarians provide the essential human touch in a dotcom world.

- *Enhancement of ACRL's recent leadership and professional development initiatives to develop more options for delivering programs and to identify ways to reach more members, particularly via the chapters, to extend our rich program offerings to those unable to participate in national conferences.* Excellent initiatives have been undertaken in this arena, but there is much still to be done. It is imperative that we provide librarians in

all types of academic institutions with the personal and professional competencies and the vision to assume broader leadership roles within their libraries, on their campuses, and within the association and the broader higher education community.

In the area of continuing education, we must consider the unique learning needs of librarians in particular types of settings or specific disciplinary roles, working collaboratively with the sections and chapters to plan special programs. Just as many of our institutions are applying new tools to serve their constituencies, we must expand efforts to apply the new technologies to offer professional development via teleconferencing, the Web, or other means. We also should consider extending the model of the successful Leadership Institutes to plan one- or two-day regional conferences, replicating the program in two or three locations around the country and perhaps abroad.

- *Expansion of ACRL's Institute for Information Literacy to reach more librarians across the country and even international audiences.* As academic librarians strive to redefine their unique contribution to the processes of teaching, learning, and scholarship, ACRL must help its members develop new ways to work with and through their faculties to reach learners at every level. The teaching role of academic librarians will be increasingly important in the future, and we must embrace the new opportunities provided by technology to reach out to our constituencies in new ways.

The evolving nature of the information environment means that some of our traditional approaches to bibliographic instruction are inadequate and must be modified not only to incorporate new resources, but also to eliminate barriers of time and place and apply new tools to maximize our effectiveness in reaching the new generation of students entering our institutions.

- *Development and strengthening of ACRL's strategic alliances within and beyond the higher education community to advance the visibility and credibility of the association and its members.* We should build on the model of the Council of Liaisons to other higher education associations to develop more substantive collaboration and cross programming.

As president, I would advocate continua-

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tion of programs to engage provosts and other higher education leaders in a dialogue regarding the changing nature of scholarship, intellectual property, and other issues facing higher education in the new century. I would pursue the concept of a periodic "summit meeting" of higher education leaders, as has been discussed by the ACRL Board and the Council of Liaisons for several years. As a part of this effort, I propose that programs be developed to enable librarians to serve as "executive interns" or "expert consultants" in the headquarters of an association or foundation. This would enable individuals to explore issues in the broader world of higher education and, for those who may have spent most or all of their career in one institution, it would provide an invaluable opportunity for professional growth.

While the evolution of my career has brought me extraordinary opportunities to move beyond academic libraries into the broader issues of university leadership, policy, and governance, my passion remains for the role of academic libraries as the heart and soul of an institution. The opportunity to serve as the president of ACRL offers tremendous potential to advocate, advance, and enhance the role of academic libraries on campuses across the nation and beyond, and to work with the leaders of AIA and other divisions to strengthen the role and influence of libraries of all types within our society.

Change is a given in the first decade of the new millennium, and ACRL has the history, vision, leadership, energy, and member commitment to prepare academic libraries and librarians to move in new directions and thrive in the years to come.

HELEN H. SPALDING

One of the amazing characteristics of ACRL is its ability to address so well the diverse needs of its members and the variety of issues confronting academic libraries. Like many new members, when I joined ACRL almost 30 years ago, I did not have a clear understanding of the significant work being done in very different arenas by the many committees, sections, and chapters of ACRL.

Experience

As a member of both the ACRL Budget and Finance Committee and the ACRL Board of Directors, and as the ACRL Councilor on ALA Council, I have been privileged to gain a perspective of ACRL as a whole and in relation to ALA. The energy, intellect, creativity, and commitment of our members are impressive. The growing membership, solid fiscal and planning structure, exceptional staff, viable programs, and new initiatives are testament to the ability of ACRL to remain relevant for a changing profession. ACRL's mission and strategic plan set dynamic directions for the association, and I will provide leadership in facilitating the ability of ACRL units to achieve progress toward those goals.

Particular strengths I bring include my extensive experience since 1986 working with the ACRL and *Choice* budgets and on the ACRL Board. I began serving on the ACRL Budget and Finance Committee when ALA and its divisions were finalizing their first Operating Agreement, and have seen this fiscal contract in action over time as it is applied and interpreted. Since becoming a member of the ALA Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC) in 1998, I have gained additional perspective of the ACRL budget within the entire ALA budget, and the fiscal issues we face together.

My experience on ALA Council as the ACRL Councilor has exposed me to the great diversity of ALA and given me an understanding of the widely divergent views and needs of librarians that must be considered. All of us hold passionate values and perspectives, and our ability to marshal our collective energy and talents depends upon our working together in good faith to strengthen our profession and

to achieve those information and library service goals that all of us desire for a free society.

If elected, I already have experience and familiarity with ACRL and ALA budgets, policies, and processes, and will concentrate immediately on the needs and aspirations of ACRL units and on specific initiatives. I have long-term, close working relationships with ACRL and ALA staff and with member leaders, which will facilitate communication and collaboration without the usual time to get to know each other and adjust to each other's style. My experience as a high school English and journalism teacher, as an academic librarian in an ARL library in a college town, and as an academic librarian in a mid-sized urban university have made me attuned to the needs of both traditional and non-traditional higher education students.

A champion of ACRL

I am a devoted mentor, take my commitments and responsibilities seriously, and do my homework. I am open to learning from others, am a catalyst for discussion, and am a strong champion of ACRL. I do not have hidden or personal agendas, and others can count on me being open and direct with them. I will help ACRL celebrate more visibly what its members are doing well, facilitate member initiatives, and solicit from members and potential members how we can continue to improve and provide exceptional leadership and representation of their interests in the higher education arena.

Visibility for our role

Due in part to broad claims of other "information providers," myths about the comprehensiveness of content available through the Internet, and general misunderstandings about the role of academic librarians, the value of academic librarians is becoming blurred in the minds of some of our constituencies. I will help clarify the contribution that librarians make in higher education, scholarly communication, and civic development.

ALA is rolling out its new "@ your library" Campaign for America's Libraries, followed by "mini-campaigns" that will give ACRL the opportunity to focus a public re-

lations campaign on academic libraries. I am concerned with how academic libraries are featured in each of these campaign efforts, and how visible and distinct they are in the ALA Public Information Office and the ALA Washington Office materials and efforts. Our members need training and materials to help them be better academic library advocates and campus and community partners.

The higher education community, let alone society at large, needs a better understanding of the essential role academic libraries play in instruction and in the collection, preservation, creation, and dissemination of scholarly communication, which is a different role than that of school, public, or special libraries.

Practical tools

ACRL members have done impressive work in formulating guidelines, standards, guides, and reports, which provide practical guidance for librarians as they strengthen local policies, practice, and communication with their constituencies. The development of the Institute for Information Literacy, Harvard Leadership Institute, and ACRL/ARL/SPARC "Create Change" campaign are examples of the effort I would like to implement on other fronts facing our members.

How can we help academic librarians become better informed on how pending legislation and public policy will have an impact on their work and the service their library users receive? How can we gain a better understanding of how our on-the-job behavior influences the creation, dissemination, availability, and cost of scholarly work? Concrete support and training through ACRL help librarians make a positive difference in local higher education institutions and communities, and in public policy.

ACRL can be a leader in helping to solve the problems facing higher education, and, in the process, develop solutions for problems facing academic libraries. We can develop our partnerships with other groups to better mobilize our organizations' consolidated energy and talent to advance common goals. I will use my energy and leadership to help ACRL do a better job of demonstrating the relevancy and value of our work in supporting the work of our academic colleagues.

As our campuses are "re-inventing" themselves for the future, do we need to re-invent the structure of ACRL so more academic librarians can see a place for themselves in the organization?

We need to work with them to develop collaborative scholarship, professional development, assessment, and instructional tools and programs.

Communication

Within ACRL, we also need to knit more closely the various units of the association for their mutual benefit. The unit leaders have newsletters and the ACRLLEADS electronic list by which they can share celebrations and concerns, but we have not used these or other means to the extent that we could to consolidate efforts behind common objectives. We need to explore the potential that evolving technology offers us to perform our work more successfully, and to involve to a greater extent members who cannot attend ALA or ACRL conferences.

When I visit section meetings at ALA meetings, I always find discussions and plans for significant and valuable activities in which the larger membership, if informed, would benefit and want to participate.

As ACRL Councilor, I kept the ACRL membership informed of ALA Council discussions and decisions through their unit leaders, and I will strengthen two-way communication and strategic planning between ACRL and ALA. Greater cohesion will result in a mobilization of resources and attention to concerns of particular interest to academic librarians. The recent election of more academic librarians to ALA Council will contribute a broader perspective to issues of concern to all ALA members. Certainly recruitment to the profession and improving library school education are of vital interest to all of us.

Recruitment

ACRL demonstrated its commitment to diversity within academic librarianship and provided a strong start to the ALA Spectrum Ini-

tiative with a significant financial investment to provide library school scholarships to minority students. Although three classes of students have received scholarships, we have not made a strong effort to expose them to the field of academic librarianship and to encourage them to consider it as a career. We should match academic librarians as mentors with Spectrum Scholars and other library school students as soon as they begin library school.

At the same time, we need to be actively involved in library school education and accreditation, changing and improving education for the profession. I also would like to re-involve former association leaders and active retirees, whose energy and wisdom can continue to inform and strengthen ACRL's efforts on behalf of academic libraries.

Taking a fresh look

We must take a fresh look at ACRL to determine if we are responsive and relevant to current and potential members. As our campuses are "re-inventing" themselves for the future, do we need to re-invent the structure of ACRL so more academic librarians can see

a place for themselves in the organization? Does the current organization of the ACRL sections allow all academic librarians to find a fit where they can gain from and contribute to professional development and networking? Are the motivations and expectations of new librarians different than those of our past and current members, requiring us to offer different kinds of membership or organizational benefits? Does technology offer us new ways in which to communicate, offer programming, and provide participation by those who formerly could not? Others hold many of the same values and goals as academic librarians. Is there a way for them to contribute to and benefit from ACRL membership? The beginning of a new century is an inspiring time to re-imagine how we might organize ACRL if we were to do it all over again, positioning ourselves for the future we foresee.

I am honored by the confidence of the Nominations Committee and the colleagues who have encouraged me to stand as candidate for vice-president/president-elect of ACRL. If elected, I look forward to working with ACRL members on advancing their strategic plan. ■

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