

# Meet the candidates for ALA President

## Vote in the election this spring

by Carol Brey, Robert R. Newlen, and Herman L. Totten

The ACRL Board of Directors posed the following questions to the candidates for ALA President, and *C&RL News* is pleased to publish their responses. Each candidate was given 1,200 words in which he or she could choose to offer a brief opening statement and to respond to the questions; the responses are identified under each of the six questions.



Carol Brey



Robert R. Newlen



Herman L. Totten

### Questions for ALA candidates

**1. What are the two most important issues that will assure the strength of our profession in the future? What ideas do you have to address these issues as ALA president?**

**Brey:** As reported in *American Libraries*, a recent query on the Chapter Relations list found that “members want their [ALA] dues invested in helping the public realize how valuable libraries . . . and their librarians . . . really are.” I believe that *advocacy* for libraries and the people who work in them is one of the most important issues that will assure the strength of our profession in the future. I would address this issue by strengthening the ALA Library Advocacy Network and cam-

paigns such as the Campaign for America's Libraries with its distinctive “@ your library” brand.

The second issue is the importance of literacy and intellectual freedom in our communities. I am currently the director of the El Paso (Texas) Public Library, in a community where 37 percent of our adults cannot read or write well enough to function in our society. Through literacy programs and lifelong learning initiatives, we must assist those who cannot fully participate in our democracy. We must also protect our patrons' privacy, now threatened by the USA Patriot Act and other laws. I support a recent resolution passed by the ALA Council, which asks that Congress “amend, change or eliminate” those sections of the law that compromise our patrons' privacy.

**Newlen:** This question gets at the very reason I decided to run for ALA President by petition at

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the last minute. If elected, I will bring the association's full focus on the number one issue facing every library in America today: funding. Libraries are seeing decreases in every type of revenue they receive. We can only reverse these funding cuts if we immediately strengthen and support the work of our Washington office, both financially and through strategically coordinating the voices of our 65,000 members and millions of users.

Working on Capitol Hill for more than 25 years, I know the value of ALA's presence in Washington and the need to leverage our strength with carefully chosen partners. If elected, I would make supporting these efforts my number one priority because without success in the legislative arena, all of ALA's other efforts on behalf of our nation's library users are moot. I would work hard to mobilize the talents of our members: librarians, library support staff, trustees, vendors, and other friends of libraries and library users to help persuade policymakers.

The second issue I want to address as ALA president is ensuring intellectual freedom for library users. I believe this is best done by building a strong financial future for ALA. Intellectual freedom underlies everything libraries stand for. It is the *raison d'être* of our mission. Without intellectual freedom, there is no value in making information and ideas readily available. ALA has incurred enormous legal bills defending against such threats. As president, I will commit myself to leading a much better-coordinated, ongoing vehicle for building a strong financial base. As an Executive Board member and Endowment Trustee, I have advocated for strategic and business planning for the association, expansion of fundraising and planned giving activities, and development of new revenue sources.

**Totten:** The two most important issues that will assure the strength of our profession in the future are two of the five planks in my platform: 1) cultural diversity and 2) access of information.

Libraries provide services to increasingly diverse populations. We must understand that diversity not only includes ethnicity, but also age, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities.

The need for equity of access—free access for everyone to libraries and information, is paramount. American libraries will play a fundamental role in applying information to the needs of the economic, technical, political, and natural environments.

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**I believe that advocacy for libraries and the people who work in them is one of the most important issues that will assure the strength of our profession in the future.—Carol Brey**

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**2. Academic and research libraries and librarians are not highly visible in ALA publicity, materials, and advocacy efforts. What will you do to generate more knowledge and appreciation of the role academic libraries play in advancing research, education, and civic and economic development?**

**Brey:** I worked in an academic library while in college and worked as a law librarian in my consulting firm, *Visions*. I have also worked closely during my career with many academic librarians in communities all across the Midwest and Southwest. I know that academic and research librarians face many of the same issues as public librarians when it comes to making their communities aware of the services they provide, and educating administrators regarding the importance of libraries within their organizations. ALA is currently working with ACRL to develop a "Campaign for Academic Libraries," which will help our profession draw more attention to academic and research libraries across our nation.

**Newlen:** Having spent my entire career in a research library, this question is near and dear to my heart. I understand the challenges academic and research libraries face in the advocacy and public relations arena.

As president, I would more aggressively promote the critical roles academic librarians play in several ways. First, I would work with ALA's fine public information office staff to communicate and cooperate more closely with other associations and agencies who work with the higher education community. Second, having served as ALA Awards Committee chair, I see a number of excellent opportunities to give more visibility to awards related to academic and research libraries. I will also be interested to see how the @your library campaign can focus on research libraries.

**Totten:** Academic librarians play an integral role in the development and administra-

tion of lifelong learning. In my 32 years as an educator teaching academic librarianship, I have and will continue to maintain my affiliation with academic libraries and will emphasize the distinctive capacities and contributions of the academic library—this emphasis will initiate the awareness needed to promote academic libraries as the vehicle to carry the conventional values of library service into the academic community and beyond.

### **3. Do you think the @your library campaign has been effective? What changes would you suggest?**

**Brey:** The Campaign for America's Libraries has certainly been effective, with libraries in all 50 states now participating. It has also inspired "The Campaign for the World's Libraries," which is now operating in nearly 20 foreign countries. I believe we can do more to bring this campaign to the American people. I have been a member of the Library Advocacy Network since its inception, and I have seen advocacy techniques work—with City Council members, state legislators, board members, and other decision-makers. I have been the director of the El Paso Public Library for about 27 years, and in that time we have increased our library budget by nearly 30 percent. We have accomplished this by helping librarians and library supporters in our community find a collective voice in speaking up for libraries.

**Newlen:** The @ your library campaign is enormously exciting because it has put "library" as a concept in front of nonlibrary users where they are: at Major League baseball games, on television ads, and in national advertising media. As it is rolled out for academic and research libraries at the ACRL National Conference in April, it will be important to evaluate how well it translates to the specific marketing needs of the academic community. If it is not successful, we need to explore alternatives. I am most anxious to see @your library move out of the library and into the community-at-large. For example, on the side of dorm buildings, in faculty office buildings, and in the chancellor's office. But fundamentally, I need to hear from you. Does it work in your college and university?

**Totten:** The @your library campaign is still in its beginning stages, however, it promises to be a successful endeavor. Both the ALA Executive Board and the ACRL Executive Board are very supportive of the campaign. I cannot see any necessary changes at this time.

### **4. A majority of librarians are not members of ALA. Is ALA relevant and vital to librarians? How can ALA position itself to provide compelling relevancy to the profession in a different future?**

**Brey:** Our association has doubled in size in the past 30 years and has nearly 64,000 members today—so it appears that ALA must be doing something right. We can build on our past success by continuing initiatives that appeal to our membership, such as the Better Salaries and Pay Equity Initiative, begun by current ALA President Mitch Freedman. I have been a member of the Better Salaries Task Force for more than a year and have helped train librarians and library workers from all over the country to advocate for better salaries. ALA does represent a majority of librarians from some types of libraries, particularly public and academic libraries. This may be due in part to the excellent work that divisions, such as ACRL and PLA, do to reach members.

**Newlen:** That ALA is, in fact, relevant is a proven fact demonstrated by the fact that its membership continues to grow dramatically amidst both a challenging economy and after a significant dues increase. ALA's effectiveness in meeting member needs is reflected by one of the highest membership renewal rates among all professional associations. If elected, I would help ALA better position itself for continuing to successfully attract new members and retain existing members by continuing emphasis on increasing library workers' salaries.

**Totten:** The majority of librarians are not members of ALA because they believe that ALA has not focused its attention on the librarian's welfare. Instead, ALA has promoted the improvement of libraries and library services. However, the ALA Council, in its Mid-winter 2003 Meetings of Council, passed by-laws for the new organization, ALA-APA (Allied Professional Association). This new organization will permit ALA, for the first time in its history, the opportunity to focus its attention on two of the most important issues faced by librarians: 1) certification and 2) adequate salary compensation. (ALA-APA does not place ALA's tax-exempt status in jeopardy by lobbying for certification and better salaries.) Now that ALA has found a way to focus its attention on the librarian's welfare, it is my sincere belief that ALA can and will play a relevant and vital role that will support both libraries and librarians.

**5. As ALA president, you will preside over ALA Council. How can Council best spend its time together in the best interest of the association? What issues are and are not appropriate for Council discussion and debate?**

**Brey:** I have been a member of ALA Council for nearly six years, first as chapter councilor from Illinois and currently as a councilor-at-large. In that time I have seen Council enact a number of changes to help its members work together more effectively. The Council electronic list allows members to discuss issues and review draft resolutions prior to coming to Council sessions, which helps us to make better use of our time once on the Council floor. A new parliamentarian was hired this year, Eli Mina, who is teaching Council members ways to use parliamentary procedure more effectively to accomplish the work of Council.

I believe that any issue related to libraries and the work of library stakeholders is appropriate for Council discussion and debate, particularly those issues of greatest interest to our members. As chair of the Council orientation committee, I have been encouraging Council members, particularly councilors-at-large, to develop a constituency that can provide them feedback on Council issues and actions.

**Newlen:** Council should focus on the big ticket items that impact our profession and association. Less energy should be devoted to "house-keeping" activities, which consume an enormous amount of time. Two strategies can facilitate effective use of Council's limited in-person meeting time. First, use online discussion before an issue reaches the floor. Second, use the committees to thoroughly vet resolutions and proposals. The passage of the APA in Philadelphia is one example where both strategies worked well.

**Totten:** The only appropriate issues for Council to discuss and debate are policy issues. My abilities as a skilled parliamentarian enable me to keep the Council agenda focused on policy issues. I believe that James B. Stewart, library director of the Victoria Public Library in Victoria, Texas, said it best when he wrote a tribute for my ALA candidacy Web site (<http://www.unt.edu/totten/tributes.htm>): "Over the years I have known Herman, I have often agreed with him, but I have also disagreed with him on association matters. As a rule, I agree and disagree strongly. Herman can handle disagreement, debate ideas, and remain a colleague

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**Intellectual freedom underlies everything libraries stand for. It is the raison d'être of our mission. Without intellectual freedom, there is no value in making information and ideas readily available.**

—Robert R. Newlen

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and a friend. I think this is extremely important in a leader for the ALA."

**6. What can ALA do to address/facilitate member participation during this period of reduced professional travel opportunities?**

**Brey:** There are a number of ways to address the issue of involvement in ALA during this period of reduced budgets for professional travel. ALA has been exploring different ways to involve members, through such means as videoconferencing, Webcasts, and electronic meetings. Another possibility might be regional meetings such as those conducted by the Texas Library Association (TLA). The state of Texas is probably about the same size as New England, and TLA has divided our state into regions to facilitate more opportunities to network with colleagues. Each region holds its own annual meeting, and in my region of Texas we meet with the Border Regional Library Association as well, which represents southern New Mexico, El Paso, and Cd. Juarez in Mexico.

**Newlen:** There are many opportunities for involving members virtually, and we need to identify and market these more aggressively in ALA membership information. A great example is the opportunity I had as Awards Committee chair where many of the members I appointed never met in person. Instead, they communicated via e-mail and conference call. The Washington Office is especially skilled at involving members virtually, but for Legislative Day there is no substitution for in-person contact. If elected, I am committed to exploring new ways that we can bring more of our members to Washington, D.C.

**Totten:** ALA must provide more virtual workshops and conferences. I recently attended a Parliamentary Procedures Workshop devoted entirely to parliamentary procedures for virtual meetings

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of legislative bodies, boards, task forces, and committees. I know from experience that virtual meetings are a viable alternative for face-to-face meetings.

**7. As ALA president, how will you address the recruitment and retention of librarians in the profession? How might retired librarians be encouraged to remain involved in the work of ALA?**

**Brey:** I believe that initiatives such as the ALA Spectrum Initiative are extremely important to the growth and diversity of our profession, and should receive even greater support. We can work together to create local initiatives as well, such as the “Grow Your Own Librarian” program we have at El Paso Public Library, which encourages support staff to pursue a master’s degree in library and information science through tuition reimbursement and other incentives.

Retired librarians should be surveyed to determine what issues are most important to them, in order to maintain their involvement in ALA. I personally do not believe that any librarian ever truly “retires,” because most of us have devoted our lives to this profession and continue to be dedicated to literacy and information access long after we leave our paying jobs.

**Newlen:** Over the last several decades, ALA has tried an incredible array of techniques to attract new librarians—both new librarians generally and a more diverse workforce in particular. While all of these have met with some degree of success, none has been more clearly successful than the Spectrum Initiative. As I look back on my years on ALA’s Executive Board, I’m proud that I unequivocally supported Spectrum when Martin Gomez brilliantly proposed this initiative. Another very practical recruitment strategy is working for better salaries. If elected, I would carry on the

long-overdue important focus and attention ALA President Mitch Freedman has brought to that area.

In terms of a different approach, I believe we have never marketed the full range of careers that are possible with a library and information studies degree. Thus, potential candidates can’t see the truly wide range of career possibilities an MLS affords. I’m a good example, my library degree opened up a whole range of career opportunities for me and allowed me to go in multiple directions. Finally, we don’t start recruitment efforts early enough. We need to do more at a younger age when children and teens are looking at role models.

As for retired librarians, they bring an incredible wealth of institutional knowledge to the association. There are many ways they can be used, such as grassroots coordinators for legislative efforts and as mentors to new librarians.

**Totten:** As ALA president, I would use methods to recruit and retain librarians in the profession that I have used successfully as associate dean of a library education program for the past 30 years. I would develop a strategy enabling practicing librarians to attend graduate school fairs on major campuses to recruit the brightest and the best into the field of librarianship.

A tried and true retention device is informing prospective library students of the available funds that many academic libraries use to pay tuition and fees in exchange for a two-year commitment of service to the institution upon the student’s graduation.

The ALA Retired Librarians Roundtable really needs to beef up its membership programming to attract retired librarians. Also, as president, since I feel that retired librarians are one of our greatest assets, I would initiate a program for committee appointments modeled after the New Members Roundtable, whereas each committee would have a designated slot for a retired librarian, just as committees now have a designated slot for new members.

**8. What knowledge, experience, and skills do you bring to the position of ALA president? How will you provide leadership to the members and facilitate progress in meeting the goals of the association? How will you provide responsible stewardship of the members’ assets? Is there a particular ini-**

**tiative you want to pursue in support of the ALA strategic plan? What do you hope to have accomplished by the end of your presidency?**

**Brey:** I bring to the ALA presidency more than 22 years' experience as a librarian and library administrator, and during that time have been an active member of ALA and its chapters in Missouri, Oklahoma, Illinois, New Mexico, and Texas. I also have ten years' experience as a strategic planning consultant, and would use my skills and experience to work with members to create a vision for the future of ALA—one that we can work together on to accomplish.

There are many checks and balances in place to ensure fiscal stability for our organization. As president of ALA, I would work with the Budget Analysis and Review Committee (BARC), ALA staff, and the ALA treasurer to make the best use of our members' assets.

By the end of my presidency, I plan to have mobilized our membership to strengthen the Campaign for America's Libraries, which in turn will strengthen our libraries and improve the pay library workers receive. I will also work hard to increase diversity within our association, and in our profession. Libraries are critical to a successful future for our nation, and we must not forget the role we play to ensure a strong democracy.

**Newlen:** I bring three things to the position of President:

- a bottoms-up understanding of ALA and its members having been an active member for over 20 years, serving in every part of the association from NMRT to ALA's Executive Board;
- a strong knowledge of Washington and the legislative arena; and
- a broad knowledge of ALA's finances, having served on the Board and more currently as an Endowment Trustee.

I am a consensus builder, and I hope to facilitate progress in meeting ALA goals by focusing on our strategic plan. I am acutely aware of our scarce resources and the need to stay on track. If elected, I would not start costly new initiatives or pursue activities that distract us from today's critical need for more funds for library operations. Responsible stewardship of the members' assets is central to my platform. I believe that we can meet future challenges and opportunities only if we have a strong

financial base. This means that we must build our endowment, be disciplined in our spending, pursue planned giving, and practice other sound financial practices.

The goals for my presidency are clearly linked with the ALA Strategic Plan, ALAction 2005: to strengthen and support our work in the legislative arena and to build financial resources so we will never hesitate to defend intellectual freedom and other core values of our profession. By the end of my presidency, my goal is to have built support and made significant progress in pursuing these objectives.

**Totten:** I bring to the table three academic degrees, the BA, the MLS, and the Ph.D. I have 35 years of varied experience: four years as an academic librarian, one year as an academic dean, and 30 years as a library and information studies educator and administrator. My years of experience as a leader have not only allowed me insight into ALA's challenges, but also allowed me time to develop close associations with the incredibly talented members of ALA. Both the insight and the association provide me with the necessary preparation to respond effectively to ALA's opportunities in the 21st century. Many of my ALA offices are listed below.

Many of the offices through which I have served ALA are listed below:

ALA-ACRL President's Program Committee (Orlando Conference), Co-Chair, 2002–04; ALA Council, 1999–02, 1979–83; ALA Resolutions Committee, 1999–00; ALA Minorities Concerns Committee, 1994–95; ALA Planning & Budget Assembly, 1993–94; ALA Library Education Assembly, 1993–94; ALA Committee on Minority Concerns, Chair, 1991–93.

ALA Committee on Accreditation, Chair, 1993–94, 1987–90, member, 1986–87, 1983–85; ALA Library Education Assembly 1987–90; ALA Planning & Budget Assembly 1987–90; Member Interview Panel for the Selection of the ALA Accreditation Officer, Chicago, Illinois, June 3–5, 1987; ALA USDE Accreditation Project, 1984–86; ALA Beta Phi Mu Awards Jury, 1979–80; ALA-ISAD Audio Visual Section, Vice Chair and Chair-Elect, 1976–78; ALA Minority Scholarship Jury Chair, 1976–77; ALA-LED Beta Phi Mu Awards Committee, 1976–77; ALA-President's Commission, 1976–77; ALA-ISAD Nominating Committee, 1974–75; ALA-LED Nominating Committee, 1974–75; ALA-ACRL Ad hoc

Committee to Revise the 1959 Standards for College Libraries, 1973–75; ALA-LED-LOMS, Non-Print Media Committee, 1972–74; ALA-LED Legislative Committee, 1972–74; ALA-LED-LOMS, Reference Statistics Committee, 1970–72; ALA-LED Teachers Section, Media Research Committee, 1969–72; ALA-ACRL Audiovisual Committee, Chair, 1969–72; ALA Awards Committee-Clarence Day Awards Subcommittee, Juror, 1967–68.

My platform corresponds to the goals of the ALA with four of the five planks of my platform. I have used the acronym CLASS to stand for Cultural diversity, Learning, Access, Services, and Salary.

As president of ALA, I would:

- Consistently promote diversity. Libraries must not only ensure that diversity is recognized and accepted, but also understand that diversity includes more than ethnicity—it also includes age, gender, social class, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities.
- Highly encourage and reward lifelong learning. Library workers are known for promoting lifelong learning for both others and themselves.
- Join together throughout the nation and

around the world to ensure effective use of and equal access to information. All libraries will play a fundamental role in applying information to the needs of the economic, technical, political, and natural environments.

- Support the continuation of excellent service. Librarians are expected to serve our diverse communities quickly, accurately, and effectively. I would continue to encourage leadership, literacy, intellectual freedoms, and privacy.

- Embrace the challenges and opportunities surrounding salary issues. Those who provide library services to our communities and educational institutions are exceptional and deserve exceptional compensation—first-class pay for a first-class service.

Providing responsible stewardship of the members' assets is ensured through ALA's competent treasurer and the checks and balances already in place. My initiative is to continue the work of the salary task force and to support the ALAction 2005. I would like to see an equitable compensation plan approved by the ALA Council by the end of my presidency. ■

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