

ACRL President Addresses ALA Council in Las Vegas

The following is a revision of the remarks made by ACRL's President Russell Shank before the Council of the American Library Association at its June 28 meeting in Las Vegas.

The Association of College and Research Libraries would like to present a resolution for consideration by the Council. It appears, however, that the presidents of divisions have no authority to introduce such resolutions on behalf of their divisions. As a prelude to invoking a process whereby that resolution can be brought to you for action, I feel obliged to inform you that this and other elements of the present governance of the American Library Association are frustrating the divisions of the association in attempting to achieve their goals within the ALA.

Our frustrations stem from the erosion of authority of the divisions to effect action in matters that are completely delegated to them by the Constitution of the American Library Association. These frustrations in the case of the Association of College and Research Libraries are raising the heat of what has been a long simmering movement to form an independent association for academic and research librarians.

The viability of divisions in the American Library Association is threatened in many ways. Divisions have no direct access to this Council—the policy-making body of the association. Divisions have no role in determining the budgets for meeting programs, hence are foreclosed from influencing the shape and content of programs. And it is these programs that most members and potential members see as the chief benefit of membership. Divisions are threatened with the loss of authority to adopt standards in areas where only their members have the expertise that would give credibility to the content of the standards. And divisions—ACRL at least—have had substantial revenues derived from their publications drained off to support general functions over which they have no control. These are funds which ACRL had hoped to reinvest in expansion and improvement of communications on behalf of academic and research librarians.

There are some among you who have said to me: "So—go it alone and leave the rest of us to do the general issues." We think it would be a great mistake for academic and research librarians not to work within the framework of the American Library Association. What power

is there in the output from any segment of a fragmented movement, each only partially representative of American librarianship?

The divisions' concerns have been derided by some as special and vested. Divisional concerns *are* vested. They are not, however, insidious. They are the concerns of members of the American Library Association that stem from the special characteristics of their working environment. These are issues that require special expertise, special knowledge, special understanding of differing sources of influences. They are best handled by those knowledgeable in the characteristics of the elements of the problem.

Some say that it is not *where* one works but *how* one does the work that matters. There may as yet be insufficient evidence in organizational theory to prove that various working environments require various approaches and different talents and methods of work performance. But there is too little evidence to say that the working environment does *not* have an influence.

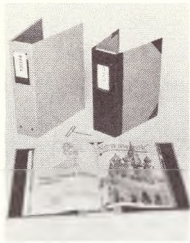
Some say that networks for sharing library resources are the wave of the future and that types of libraries will no longer be relevant. People will have access, they say, to libraries regardless of type. Networking is not, however, aimed at breaking down completely the current governance of various types of libraries by the people who organize them for special constituencies. Type-of-library divisions are not, therefore, likely to be irrelevant for that reason.

Those of us who have worked long in the Association of College and Research Libraries are indeed most concerned about the future of a professional society forum for academic and research librarians. It appears that only slightly more than 6,000 academic and research librarians are members of ALA and ACRL, out of perhaps an estimated 20,000 such people in the United States. I can report to you a strong and vigorous campaign by several other associations

ACRL Membership

September 30, 1973	12,869
September 30, 1972	12,151
September 30, 1971	11,763

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to recruit librarians on the grounds that they can better represent their interests than can ALA. There are now more than 3,000 librarian members in the American Association of University Professors. There is at least one union vigorously pursuing the officials of ACRL, offering great assistance. Apparently the librarians who join other associations feel that their concerns are better dealt with there—that there is more room for relevant, quick, and appropriate action than can be obtained in the American Library Association.

Again, I insist that it is better for us to work together under the umbrella of a large, national and powerful American Library Association. You can help. ACRL urges Council to attend to ways and means of mounting programs relevant to those librarians who are not members of ALA. We urge you to consider the effects of each of your decisions on what you know to be the real issues of libraries, librarians, and librarianship. We urge you not to confirm automatically every issue in favor of generalization and centralization. We must serve the disaffected in librarianship. We must attract the unattached to the American Library Association lest the American Library Association become the Association of Only Some American Librarians. ■ ■

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