

Scott Walter and Irene M. H. Herold

# Scott Walter and Irene M. H. Herold share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring



Scott Walter



Irene M. H. Herold

**E**d. note: *C&RL News* offered candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Scott Walter and Irene M. H. Herold, 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 forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you vote in the election this spring.

## SCOTT WALTER

“Why should I join ACRL?” We talk a lot in our libraries about the “elevator speech”—the brief, but compelling, narrative that one tells to a student, a colleague, or (on a good day) a campus leader or donor about the work librarians are doing and why it matters—and I’ll wager that many of us have a speech prepared for any time we’re asked about the value of the academic library in terms of its impact on teaching, learning, and scholarship in higher education. But, do you have an elevator speech for ACRL? Do you have

the pitch that will encourage a new librarian to join or an experienced colleague to lead? I do. Because, for me, ACRL is not about the publications or the programs, and it’s not about the standards or the service opportunities. ACRL is about the people.

Over and over, whether in member surveys, conference evaluations, or assessments of major initiatives, people tell us that the most important benefit to being a member of ACRL are the members themselves and the programs that we build for the association. According to ACRL’s “Plan for Excellence,” the purpose of the association is “[to] lead academic and research librarians and libraries in advancing learning and scholarship.” But, the association, by itself, cannot lead us into a future where librarians are at the heart of the higher education enterprise; that’s our job. The question is how can ACRL help us to do that job? How can ACRL maximize the most important benefit of membership by maximizing our ability to work together? How can ACRL provide us with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to become the leaders the academic community needs during a time of transformational change? These are the questions I would pursue if elected ACRL vice-president/president-elect.

## Change? “Yes, and . . .”

“Open with a joke!” That’s the advice you hear when preparing for public presentations. We take that advice to heart in my hometown of Chicago, which is the birthplace of improvisational comedy and the cradle of comics

who went from *Second City* to *Saturday Night Live*, *The Colbert Report*, and *The New York Times* bestseller list. But, we librarians are serious people; rather than open with a joke, we prefer a metaphor. And, for as long as I have been a librarian, that metaphor has had something to do with “change.”

We are not alone in our love of metaphors or concerns about change. The leadership literature is replete with studies of the use of metaphor in organizational development and of metaphor as a component of the “symbolic leadership” often associated with transformational change. It is no surprise that librarians appreciate symbolic leadership, given that we would not have gotten far, as a profession, without a strong appreciation for symbols, whether those were scratched on clay, painted on scrolls, printed on the page, or composed out of pixels. For years, my go-to metaphor for change has been “the crossroads.”

The crossroads is where we academic librarians have found ourselves, time and again, as our work and the environment in which we pursue it have faced continuous change. Most careers have been affected by the rapid evolution of technology over the past 25 years, but few have changed as much as ours. Whether the topic is information literacy or digital citizenship, digital content creation or digital preservation, data services or digital humanities, shared services or the collective collection, we repeatedly find ourselves at the crossroads (or in the crosshairs) of two ancient institutions facing unprecedented change: the library and the university. Our ability to meet the challenges inherent in this time of change defines not only our individual careers, but also what we need and expect from our professional associations. ACRL, as “the higher education association for librarians,” provides each of us with the community of colleagues we need to make informed choices about which path to take every time we reach the crossroads because, again, ACRL is about the people and what we can learn from one another.

In recent years, ACRL has developed and refined a strategic plan designed to identify the challenges facing academic libraries and librarians during this period of unprecedented change as well as the opportunities that this environment provides for us to work with colleagues to choose and make progress toward a vibrant future for libraries in higher education. As part of this plan, ACRL has embraced a fluid approach to organization allowing members to identify emergent areas of interest and to use the organization to establish “communities of practice” that bring people together to collaborate on approaches to working in these new areas. From a scripted endeavor in which each of us played a defined role in a task force, committee, or section, ACRL has evolved into more of an improvisational enterprise prepared to respond creatively and effectively to whatever challenge comes to it. To do that, ACRL has embraced the concept of “Yes, and.”

“Yes, and” is the philosophy at the heart of improvisational comedy and an influential approach to management. Improvisers trained in the “Yes, and” philosophy are committed to collaboration, to taking their colleagues’ ideas and building on them to meet the goals of the scene. In an environment of constant change and opportunity, a commitment to “yes, and” promotes innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and collegiality; it promotes a culture where all voices are valued. In a library, “yes, and” allows us to see new ways of working together to meet a challenge; in a professional association, it allows us to ensure that services are best suited to meet the needs of the membership.

This is a time of transformational change for libraries and higher education, and the resources that ACRL provides to its members to meet the challenges and the opportunities born of that time have never been more important. But, those resources are only as valuable as we make them. How can ACRL learn the lessons of “yes, and” to become the flexible, engaged, and innovative association that its members need?

## Deeper collaboration

“Yes, and” is, at its best, about collaboration, and “deeper collaboration” was the “unifying theme” guiding the 2014 ACRL report of the “top trends in academic libraries.” It should serve the same purpose for anyone seeking to lead the association during a time of transformational change. “Yes, and” is a philosophy for collaboration on the stage and in the workplace, and deep and creative collaboration is critical to the future of our libraries.

ACRL provides a unique opportunity for librarians to consider the enduring partnerships at the heart of any effort to demonstrate the value of academic libraries to our colleagues, our leadership, and our communities. ACRL has taken the lead from its members in identifying new opportunities for collaboration across the academy in areas such as student success, the evolving research and scholarly environment, and professional development for the changing workplace. ACRL has pursued initiatives to build collaboration among its own sections and chapters, as well as between its efforts and those of other ALA divisions with complementary concerns. With its members in need of coordinated efforts to ensure that membership contributes to success in their own work, “deeper collaboration” across the association promotes the value of ACRL membership in the same way that collaboration with our campus colleagues promotes the value of academic libraries and librarians.

As in any great scene, we all perform better when we work together, and ACRL, for me, has always been the place we can work together the best.

## Every vote counts

ACRL has been my home for the nearly 20 years I have been a librarian, and I have been proud to serve it as a member-leader at the committee, section, and divisional level. Most recently, I have been singularly proud to serve as editor-in-chief of *College & Research Libraries* and as an ACRL member's voice on the ALA Council. As importantly, I have taken the lessons about collaboration

and engagement between a professional association and its members into my work as a leader for state and local consortia in Illinois. During my time in ACRL, I have championed professional development programs, efforts preparing academic librarians to contribute more effectively to campus initiatives, and projects allowing the national association to build upon innovative efforts designed and delivered at the local level. I have seen ACRL commit ever more capably to the idea that the association is only as strong, as a whole, as it is valuable to its members on the ground. ACRL has become an organization increasingly engaged with, and willing to learn from, its member-leaders, and this is a commitment that I would continue to promote if elected.

I am honored to have the opportunity to offer my continued service to ACRL and to you as vice-president/president-elect. I invite you to follow my campaign on Facebook (<http://t.co/TXTrnCo0aI>) or on Twitter (@slwalter123), and I hope that I will have your vote.

## IRENE M. H. HEROLD

When I was a graduate student earning my library science master's degree, I joined ACRL. While I was finishing my last semester, I decided to attend the ACRL conference and avail myself of the placement center's services. That turned out wonderfully! I met my future boss, who encouraged me to apply for her posted position. In addition, I had many other amazing experiences during the conference that set high expectations for me about what it meant to be a member of this professional organization. I attended both theoretical and applied sessions. I met leaders interested in speaking with new members to the profession. I experienced a variety of learning venues from poster sessions to roundtables, and presentations to keynote speakers. The atmosphere of the conference was one of engaged and interesting people. I came away from the conference fully convinced that I had made a terrific career move and eager to begin my journey as a librarian and an ACRL member.

Twenty-three years later I still feel that initial engagement and excitement as a member of ACRL. I have been fortunate in experiencing a variety of roles within sections, on ACRL committees, and as a director-at-large on the ACRL Board of Directors. When asked to consider standing for election to the ACRL vice-president/president-elect position, in addition to feeling honored and humbled, I embraced the opportunity to serve and give back to the organization that has been so influential in my professional development. I cannot wait to serve my colleagues in the capacity of leading our great member-driven organization of caring professionals who comprise ACRL.

I find both the possibilities and challenges exciting. Having the opportunity to serve as a director-at-large for the past four years has given me a broad overview of the full range of activities, successes, and concerns of ACRL members. I have been asked to provide a “statement of concern” about the major themes I see within ACRL, which I have outlined below.

## **Change**

Change provides two directions: opportunity and threat. The opportunity is to create something even better than what is currently in place, while the threat is the potential to damage to what was already good. Managed change helps limit the threat while maximizing the opportunity. This is what a good leader can do. The three major areas within ACRL undergoing significant change are: information literacy, research and the scholarly environment, and the value of academic and research libraries. These are also the three pillars of ACRL’s strategic plan, “Plan for Excellence.”

## **Information literacy**

The proposed Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education has generated considerable discussion. I embraced the 2000 Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and successfully integrated them into the general education curriculum student learning outcomes of my former in-

stitution. Therefore, I shared initial concerns about possibly tampering with standards that were being adopted and supported by individual institutions and accrediting bodies. As I have come to understand the Framework, this is a change that better aligns the profession with other changes in higher education. Our pedagogy, understanding of learning outcomes, and instructional approaches are constantly evolving with or without a change in our standards. We need to explore whether the Framework supports and facilitates these evolutions. We will do that by evaluating how the Framework is implemented, how we communicate that change and provide support for its application, and our assessment of it, which will be the work of the association in the coming months and years.

## **Research and the scholarly environment**

This pillar of ACRL’s strategic plan supports areas such as a copyright, fair use, publication rights, open access, open educational resources, and data management. I have had the good fortune of being the ACRL Board liaison to the ACRL committee, commonly referred to as ReSEC, responsible for these areas. The Scholarly Roadshow and the proposed Data Roadshow, plus the toolkits, are just a few of the many ways ACRL assists its members in navigating the 21st-century scholarly environment. This committee is consulted on legislative matters, advocates for open access to publicly funded research, and ensures that the academic and research perspective of issues is considered—as does the ACRL staff.

Two forthcoming areas with work already in progress include support of open educational resources and how linked data changes the scholarly research landscape. The former is in recognition of the need for a disciplinary repository for library science and ACRL’s role in supporting open access efforts. The latter is already happening with encouragement of the use of ORCID and other systems, which permanently link an author and their publications with a unique identifying number. Linked data are akin to the concept of authority files but

for digital objects. They will allow the creation of links or URIs to objects within sites, instead of a site's URL. As linked data becomes more prevalent, this will create changes in research approaches, usage rights, and quality assurance. Although the use of linked data is in its infancy, a number of academic libraries have implemented it, so it is a development well-worth monitoring by ACRL to determine how we can best support our members.

### **Value of Academic and Research Libraries**

The Value of Academic Research Libraries initiative has witnessed considerable growth. Changing ACRL's brand to emphasize that we are a part of higher education served as an important strategic step. Engaging in a much more active liaison program to higher education organizations has brought ACRL to the forefront of higher education. We have raised our profile in higher education through the efforts of both ACRL staff and ACRL membership. Staff efforts include Executive Director Mary Ellen Davis attending the American Council of Learned Societies; membership efforts include liaisons, such as Susan Whyte to the Council of Independent Colleges and Sarah Wenzel to the Modern Language Association. A further example is the inclusion of information literacy in other higher education organization's learning standards, such as the American Political Science Association. There has been a marked increase of requests for presentations from ACRL members and staff at nonlibrary-centric conferences as our value has become increasingly noticed beyond the profession.

In addition to our increasing value within other higher education organizations is the awareness of the increasing value of academic and research libraries at their home institutions. Being able to demonstrate the return on investment in libraries through improved student retention because of use of their library and research in library-related factors that correlated to graduation rates provides quantitative substance to our qualitative research. The Value initiative has given us the scenarios and research to help our administrators understand

and appreciate in new ways the contribution academic and research libraries make in the educational endeavor. There is still much work to be done, especially as information access and instructional frameworks change, but ACRL is ready to assist the membership through the foundation established by the strategic planning goal area committees.

### **Leadership**

ACRL has been an integral part of my career. I want to take my place in the lineage of ACRL presidents who work for members at every stage in their career. When I was featured as a member of the week, my three words to describe ACRL were "members, networks, resources." Recently I have been an ALA Connect Mentor to a new-to-the-profession librarian. Vicariously experiencing her journey from finishing coursework to first hire has reminded me of my own excitement when I was a new member of ACRL. At my first ACRL conference, I remember Camila Alire approaching me and engaging me in a conversation at a reception. I did not know who she was, but I always remembered her interest and kindness. Years later she further inspired me through her work with ACRL, ALA, and as one of the faculty in my advanced degree program. She exemplified for me what I valued most about ACRL: it is a place where members can tap into the knowledge of others with similar interests, find resources for growth and development, learn strategies to stretch limited resources, and be supported in making a difference.

ACRL is an organization that provides leadership opportunities for all types of academic and research librarians. It would be my privilege to further the endeavors of ACRL members, shape the direction of the organization's work, and advocate on behalf of the association. The successes of ACRL are due to its extraordinary members. Serving as your next vice-president/president-elect will allow me the opportunity to leverage the talents and vision of the ACRL membership as together we navigate exciting changes on the horizon. *ZZ*