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# Fradkin and Hisle share plans for ACRL

By Bernard Fradkin and W. Lee Hisle

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*Be sure to vote in the election this spring*

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**E**d. note: *C&RL News* offered ACRL candidates for vice-president/president-elect, Bernard Fradkin and W. Lee Hisle, this opportunity to share their views with the ACRL membership. Although many of the issues and concerns facing ACRL are discussed informally at meetings, this does not provide a national forum available to all members. We hope that providing this forum will assist you in making an informed choice when you receive your ballot next month.

## **BERNARD FRADKIN**

The grassroots participation of our membership, enrolled in 17 sections and 41 chapters, is a major strength of our organization. ACRL faces a dynamic decade of change and growth if we are to lead in shaping the future of the academic library and information profession. A hallmark of a vibrant professional organization is the active participation of many diverse voices in setting goals and mapping an agenda for the future. Our implementation of a Strategic Plan provides the blueprint for our organization and establishes a direction that brings academic libraries together. We must be positive about the future of our organization and leaders in promoting change as well as creating a proactive image and perception of our profession. We are the largest division within ALA and members of the preeminent academic professional organization in the nation. As such, we are mandated to provide information lead-



**Bernard Fradkin**



**W. Lee Hisle**

ership to our institutions. We willingly accept this challenge to assume an activist role and welcome the opportunity to exceed expectations. Rather than being passive conduits in the "trickle down technology" of information storage and dissemination, which is changing the library world of yesterday, we shall be active players in the forefront of the same world's rush to get on the international information highway.

## **Engaging the future**

Coupled with the modern explosion of information and technology, we face the ever-increasing restraints of tightening allocations of library funds. A national academic library schizophrenia grips all of us as we wrestle with the eternal problem of striving to do more with less and less resources. We are asked to *focus* on the *locus* of supplying information technology in the age of the space shuttle on horse-and-buggy-age appropriations. Traditional library standards of accountability and frugality have failed to keep pace with the widening gap between the demand for library services and the limited availability of funds. Out of

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necessity, we have been compelled to revisit old procedures, devise new operational techniques, and reorganize our desks in seeking ways to accomplish our mission. ACRL has provided exceptional leadership augmented by designing new strategic plans for implementing efforts to help each of us, at all levels of the profession, to more adequately respond to the dramatic changes of the last decade.

### **"Every librarian a leader"**

Our ACRL Leadership Center is a national clearinghouse for information on leadership which centralizes and coordinates activities and programs for academic librarians and library personnel. Programs promulgated by the center will promote the future of the vision for "every librarian a leader." The center is currently working toward providing a variety of mentorships for members and delivery support for chapters, as well as a focal point for the teleconference series for academic libraries.

### **Chapters and regional collaboration**

We need to critically examine our practices as an academic community of libraries and establish a viable network on the micro level, working together with community colleges, state institutions, independent colleges and universities, and proprietary institutions to foster collaboration on all levels. ACRL chapter and regional support are primary elements in achieving the high level of teamwork which is essential for our success in every state. It is imperative for ACRL to aggressively foster and support this initiative. Academic libraries are today besieged by what we choose to designate as "nonstudents" (for want of a more descriptive term) seeking access to the cornucopia of information stored within our library facilities. The Internet is bringing nonacademic patrons to our portals in greater and greater numbers. We are pressed to discover new ways of responding to the growing demands placed upon our limited resources.

ACRL is an organization capable of responding to this new challenge by acting as a catalyst and center for information sharing. We urgently need to identify model programs that have met these new challenges and award institutions exemplary mode status to be emulated throughout the nation. We must continue to encourage membership mainstreaming in supporting the participation of academic library personnel on institutionwide committees and national orga-

nizations which seek to address the broad spectrum of issues facing academic institutions. All levels of communication may be enhanced by listing the e-mail addresses of all ACRL members in *CE&RL News*.

### **ALA Goal 2000 and the issues**

Our position within ALA as a major player is becoming more crucial as the national debate on authorship, ownership, and usage intensifies. Copyright and transmission rights, issues related to the Intellectual Freedom Committee (IFC), and academic legislative issues are of the utmost concern to all libraries and librarians. These are high priority issues on the agenda of ACRL. We are cast in the role of watchdogs maintaining watch on the watchdogs. As librarians, we have come to recognize that Jefferson's admonition, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," may be expanded for librarians to read, "Eternal vigilance is the price of survival." Academic librarians know from whence we come, know where we are, and must know where we are going if we are to survive the turmoil of this decade.

An action agenda for ACRL geared to addressing the national policy issues affecting copyright and ownership, as well as electronic distribution of information is imperative. We must rethink, reshape, and recast our ideas on the role of academic libraries as mediators and facilitators between private institutions, universities, community colleges, and liberal arts institutions. Library teams with representation from the whole spectrum of personnel working in libraries must be nurtured, encouraged, and represented by ACRL.

### **Keeping ACRL affordable**

Annually, the ACRL Budget and Finance Committee makes a recommendation to the Board about a dues increase. This year, concerns about balancing the budget and having membership dues cover the cost of membership activities and programs has led the Board to take a close look into ACRL's financial status. It seems that strict accountability, a careful review of the feasibility and cost of existing programs, and a tightening of our organization belt may result in short-term savings. Perhaps these measures will generate insufficient funds to ward off projected deficits. Increasing membership dues could be an easy and quick solution to our fiscal problems. Might we not be creative in addressing this issue? I propose that we go back

to the grassroots of ACRL and solicit the support of each member in assisting to ease our financial crunch. Let us all join together in a vigorous national campaign for new members. I challenge each member of ACRL to recruit a new member during the coming year. We are not an elitist organization; we represent all academic librarians. It is incumbent upon all academic librarians to receive our message and to join willingly in maintaining the viability of ACRL. Let each academic librarian who enjoys the many benefits ACRL has earned for the profession share in the responsibility of actively participating in ACRL. A ten to twenty percent increase in our membership is well within our grasp if we each reach out to our colleagues.

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### **W. LEE HISLE**

Librarianship is at a watershed point in its development; the advances in information and communications technologies that are used to store, access, and transmit digital information are forcing a reevaluation of our profession. Moving into this uncertain future, ACRL must vigorously defend the basic tenets of librarianship while, at the same time, using its Strategic Plan to provide clear and valued direction over the next several years. In order to continue the pivotal role ACRL plays in our profession, I encourage the following actions.

#### **Increase the ACRL voice in national information policy debates**

When ACRL and its publication *Choice* donated a combined \$100,000 toward the \$1 million goal of ALA Goal 2000, ACRL appropriately signaled its intention of being a leader in the development of information policy at the national level. Reflecting and building on Patricia Breivik's current presidential theme of "Every Librarian a Leader," I propose a theme of "Every Librarian an Advocate." With our strengthened ties to the ALA Washington Office, ACRL now has the opportunity to enable its members to influence the development of national information policy. Advocacy training like that provided by the Library and Information Technology Association (LITA) for the Librarians on the Information Superhighway Advocacy Network (LISAN) is needed by academic librarians in every region and state. We must step forward and take responsibility for our information future. Advocacy training will begin to provide the skills

### **A positive foundation**

Through my years of service as an ACRL Board member I have acquired an abiding respect for the dedication and commitment of the people, elected and employed, who contribute so much to the success of ACRL. I want to build on their accomplishments and move forward with a positive energy and direction to meet the challenges that confront our profession. As a member of ACRL, I share the same needs, questions, and aspirations all of us have concerning the future. If elected vice president/president-elect, I pledge to devote myself to moving our organization forward with relentless determination in implementing a Strategic Plan for building on our past accomplishments and preparing for an even greater and grander future.

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necessary to be effective at influencing our local, state, national, and institutional leaders.

#### **Resolve financial issues that could weaken our ability to achieve goals**

ACRL is operating with a deficit budget in the current fiscal year. Although we have operated at deficit before, and balanced the budget at the end of the year, we must be careful that true deficits are not built into our operations. Although we have a healthy fund balance, even in excess of our ALA-mandated reserve, continued deficit operations would erode our fiscal health to the point of impeding our ability to meet the needs of members.

At the same time, costs have increased. Members need and desire more services from the organization. Recent ACRL Conferences have not provided the financial windfall we used to enjoy. ACRL publications, one of the most important benefits to membership in the association, currently are supported by advertising revenue and subscriptions. However, there is no guarantee from year to year that that revenue stream will continue. Consequently, the association must review carefully not only its finances, but the programming and services we offer. A dues increase, tied specifically to a program of activities, may be needed in the future to ensure ACRL's fiscal health.

Certainly, ACRL is among the lowest priced divisions in ALA, and other divisions have recently been forced to ask for dues increases. But before supporting such a proposal, ACRL leadership must carefully analyze ACRL operations, programming, projected income, and the

needs of membership both now and in the future. Only when a case can be made unequivocally should a dues increase be proposed.

### **Build collaborative relationships with other professional associations**

Academic librarians have always been skilled at fostering relationships with other groups in order to develop solutions to shared problems (e.g., joint conference programming to address shared continuing education needs). In the future, collaboration is a role which will be increasingly important to academic librarians. Information is no longer available only in our facilities or via online services we control; students, faculty, and staff increasingly are using the power of the Internet and its World Wide Web for information retrieval without the intermediary of a librarian.

Information policy at our institutions must reflect the values we as librarians have long defended: freedom of access to information and unbiased collection development which reflect the mission of our institutions and the needs of our students and faculty.

Collaboration with other higher education associations and with other library associations, such as the Special Libraries Association and LITA, will help us achieve wider acceptance for the values we espouse. The Council of Liaisons, which supports academic librarians' involvement in higher education associations, should be emphasized and strengthened. ACRL should be a leader in setting the agenda for developing information services of the future.

### **Promote National Conferences and strengthen continuing education role**

The next ACRL National Conference will be held in Nashville in the spring of 1997. Planning will by then be under way for the 1999 conference. Our national conferences benefit our profession from the research and publication associated with them, the programming presented to members, and the networking opportunities they present. They should provide a showcase for the best of academic library practice and scholarship. They are a jewel in our crown and should be emphasized. All members can benefit from participating and attending.

Current ACRL president-elect Bill Miller has targeted continuing education as a priority for his presidential year. I hope to build on his leadership in this area. ACRL reduced its emphasis on continuing education some years ago.

I believe it is time to reevaluate that stance and encourage the development of continuing education programs to support the needs of the membership. Certainly, advocacy training would be one area of emphasis. Other areas may deal with information technology topics, collection development in an electronic environment, or copyright issues in the age of the information superhighway.

ACRL continuing education programs should be designed, however, for delivery in innovative ways. Use of teleconferences, if produced well and supported locally, can be a valuable medium for education. Use of the World Wide Web combined with possible video or print materials is an option to explore. These methods could be successfully used in a variety of situations, could be easily transported, and could be updated or revised economically. In fact, using the Web as an instructional development platform is proving to be an increasingly effective tool for distance education. ACRL should be ready to use this medium and model innovative delivery of continuing education programming.

### **Recognize the diverse ACRL membership and support its unique needs**

ACRL is a member organization with 17 different sections, 20 discussion groups, and 41 state chapters reflecting differing types of academic libraries, regional affiliations, subject specializations, and professional assignments. In addition, there are more than 40 committees and task forces, each with a specialized area of concern. The strength of the organization comes in part from this diversity and from the programming our units provide to their membership. ACRL leadership must encourage this diversity, its multiplicity of individual goals, and guard against decisions that would more narrowly define us.

At the same time, we must seek ways to streamline our national conference programming schedule, perhaps through competitive selection or lottery selection of annual programs. Certainly we must continue to encourage collaborative program development among the ACRL units.

Conference programming aside, the important issue is that ACRL's membership diversity gives us strength and should be a part of our future. We in ACRL leadership must always be vigilant in protecting the ability of our units to serve their members. ■

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