

To see in new ways: ACRL's Strategic Plan and you

By William Miller

Integrate the plan into your thinking

One of my favorite *Star Trek* episodes involves a primitive, warlike culture in which one of the tribesmen ousts the reigning leader (called the "Tiere") and takes over; after having done so, he unexpectedly finds himself shedding his more primitive urges and exhibiting the behavior of a statesman and leader. When he is taken to task by a friend for this change in his behavior, he thinks for a moment and replies, "Perhaps, to be a Tiere is to see in new ways."

There was a time when being a librarian meant being a follower, not a leader. However, that time has passed, as we acknowledged last year by accepting the theme of Patricia Breivik's presidency, "Every Librarian a Leader." I suggest that it is crucial for the "tribe" of academic and research librarians to try to lead by thinking in new ways. One important way to lead, in the coming year, and to be innovative, is to look again at ACRL's Strategic Plan (which you can find in the September 1995 issue of *C&RL News*, and at <http://www.ala.org/acrl.html>).

Reviewing the plan

The plan is the product of years of consultation, focus groups, and consensus-building within ACRL. It thus represents what you, collectively, have told us are the major priorities that ACRL should accomplish. The plan calls for the units of ACRL to refocus and concentrate on several strategic areas (not all of which are applicable to every unit). There are four main goals in the plan:

- 1) to provide developmental activities for academic and research librarians;
- 2) to collaborate with other professional organizations in higher education in order to promote mutual interests;
- 3) to become actively involved in information policy at a national level; and
- 4) to ensure that ACRL operates efficiently.

Each of these goals is fleshed out with a number of "Strategic Directions" which suggest specific kinds of activities that the units can carry out to move the plan forward.

The purpose of this plan is to position ACRL as a more central leader in higher education and as an important voice on national issues, while at the same time ensuring that we continue to serve our individual members fully. I cannot stress strongly enough that this Strategic Plan was not dreamt up in a dark room by half a dozen people; it is a compilation of what *you* the members have told us is most important for ACRL to concentrate on.

Refocus your activities

To concentrate on these four major goals requires a refocusing of thought and effort. While, in many cases, units of ACRL will end up doing substantially the same things they now do, it does not necessarily follow that all units should just continue to do as they have always done, without reexamining their priorities. All units, if they have not yet done so, should engage in a process of rethinking their goals and activities in light of the Strategic Plan. Stretch your minds, exercise leadership, "see in new ways," and consider activities that could extend your participation in the overall goals of ACRL.

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sponsored by the International Environmental Association (IEA). Topics covered include ecological agriculture, corporate environmental policy, environmental literature searching, and incorporating multidisciplinary environmental topics into the curriculum. \$30.00. IEA/Kantaris-Hickey, Assumption College, 500 Salisbury St., Worcester, MA 01615.

Le Corbusier: The Creative Search, by Geoffrey H. Baker (320 pages, March 1996), examines the formative years of one of the 20th century's greatest architects and translates his letters and sketch notes into English to document how he developed his creative approach. Highlights of his study tours to Italy and Eastern Europe are detailed, along with the many pencil drawings and watercolors he made, to show how these early experiences contributed to his design concepts. A richly illustrated volume that should prove instructive to students of architecture and design. \$64.95. Van Nostrand Reinhold, 115 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003. ISBN 0-442-02128-3.

The Uncertain Retirement: Securing Pension Promises in a World at Risk, by James H. Smalhout (366 pages, 1996), offers some history, statistics, and suggestions on how individuals and businesses might cope with the worsening crisis in private pension plan failures. Opening with a summary of the risks to workers that led to the Employee Retirement



Income Security Act of 1974, and why they were not completely addressed by this legislation, Smalhout discusses the differences between a plan's actuarial soundness and its financial solvency. He also looks at how other countries have secured private pension promises from the risk of underfunding and termination, and provides a roadmap for policymakers to follow to regulate businesses reasonably. The author's points are well argued and the data presented with maximum clarity, but this book is still not for reading at the beach—unless you have just been laid off and cheated out of your golden retirement years. \$32.50. Irwin, 1333 Burr Ridge Parkway, Burr Ridge, IL 60521-0085. ISBN 0-78630-799-4.

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I urge you all not to simply plug what you are already doing into the goals and Strategic Directions, using the plan as the justification for all current activities; rather, you should look at the four major goals and see if you can usefully refocus your unit's activities toward these goals—and perhaps even discontinue less important current activities. In this way, all the units will be moving in concert, and helping to move ACRL's overall agenda forward.

The Board has made a commitment to treat the Strategic Plan as a living document, with minor changes and additions made each year, and a major overhaul considered every five years. We will focus on the four major areas of the plan in this year's *C&RL News*. Meanwhile, I urge all of you to exercise leadership in your individual areas of ACRL activity, and to integrate the Strategic Plan into your thinking. ■

What Plant Where, by Roy Lancaster (256 pages, November 1995), offers the budding landscape designer choices of perennials, climbers, shrubs, conifers, and trees for nearly every garden situation. If you impulsively purchase a fiery rock rose from a nursery, this book will advise you to plant it in a rock garden, raised bed, or scree. If you want a climber for shady walls or fences, a conifer for heavy clay soil, or a tree with autumn-to-winter fruit, Lancaster will suggest one. Or if you live in an urban concrete-and-asphalt jungle and just want to see what clematis looks like or find out when nasturtiums bloom, check this out. More than 1,200 color photographs and drawings will give you planting ideas for every North American garden, regardless of soil, size, or exposure. \$24.95. Dorling Kindersley, 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. ISBN 0-7894-0151-7. ■