

ACRL takes up the challenges of scholarly communication

The year ahead for the new program officer

by Susan K. Martin

Spurred by the increasing number of complex issues relating to scholarly communication and the realization that academic and research libraries of all sizes and types would ultimately need to address these challenges, the ACRL Board of Directors last year accepted the recommendation of the ACRL Scholarly Communication Task Force to 1) establish a standing Committee on Scholarly Communication, 2) institute a discussion group on the same topic, and 3) create a part-time position of program officer for scholarly communication, to enable the association to devote significant time and attention to this critical topic.

Action has proceeded rapidly in response to these recommendations. The committee and the discussion group met for the first time at the ALA Annual Conference in Atlanta in June, continuing to define the issues and discuss the highest priority activities for the association. The program officer position was filled in September 2002, and a work plan was defined for the current fiscal year.

The work plan

Following the recommendations of the task force, I—as newly appointed program officer—have worked with the Scholarly Communica-

tion Committee and the ACRL executive director to identify tasks and a time frame for activities for the current fiscal year.

In addition to internal ACRL activities and communications, the focus of the program officer's responsibility is four-fold: 1) educational activities, 2) advocacy, 3) coalition-building, and 4) research. I would like to discuss each of these areas and describe the work intended to take place in each area during fiscal 2003.

• **Education.** Considerable work has been done to provide librarians and faculty members with tools that will allow them to become knowledgeable about and actively supportive of appropriate and needed changes in the system of scholarly communication. Most of this work, however, has been done by and on behalf of large research libraries. While much of these efforts can be used by other kinds of academic and research libraries, the ACRL leaders believe that there is a real and distinct need to address the differing needs of different types and sizes of academic libraries (just how we determine these differing needs is addressed in the section on research).

The major task in the area of education is to develop a Web-based scholarly communication toolkit to support individual library cam-

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pus communications on these various issues, especially for front-line librarians who communicate with faculty, and for faculty themselves. There is no intention of duplicating work already accomplished. Rather, the work done by SPARC and ARL will be built upon to address the broader academic audience and to suggest specific ways faculty, librarians, and administrators might be most effective in promulgating positive change.

In addition, the program officer is working with the Scholarly Communication Committee to develop positions upon which to base papers, briefings, and key messages for ACRL speakers on scholarly communication issues, with a focus on the academy reasserting control over its own scholarly information. The outreach of this program will encompass the training of speakers on scholarly communication issues; facilitating presentations, seminars, and workshops on appropriate topics; and establishing an informal advisory service for librarians who need assistance with or answers to questions as they address these matters on their own campuses, using means such as a Web site, electronic lists, mentors, and one-on-one support.

• **Advocacy.** Probably the most dynamic and fluid of the four focus areas, advocacy will include participation in efforts being undertaken by colleague associations such as ARL, AALL, CNI, and others. Among my first duties as program officer was to coordinate ACRL responses to the Department of Energy's proposal to eliminate PubSCIENCE and to the blue-ribbon committee's report and recommendations regarding the National Agricultural Library (NAL). Because proposed legislation cannot be easily predicted, it is difficult to suggest tasks or time frames; however, those already immersed in these issues believe that 2003 will be a very active year, with UCITA, DMCA, the responding DMCRA, and other legislative initiatives all requiring the close attention and reactions of the academic community.

During the year, the current ACRL legislative agenda will be reviewed in cooperation with the Government Relations Committee, and I will stay in regular contact with staff and committee members as the following year's agenda is being developed. The current operation of the ACRL legislative network will be assessed, and, as necessary, we will formulate strategy and plans for an improved ACRL ad-

vocacy response on legislative issues that relate to scholarly communication. For example, the Science and Technology Section was contacted before ACRL responded to the NAL report, as they are the experts in this particular area. It is expected that other segments of the association will play a similar role as particular issues arise.

• **Coalition-building.** The program officer and committee will review and assess ACRL and its existing liaison relationships with higher education associations and disciplinary organizations in terms of their potential for cooperative action or programming related to scholarly communication issues. In a related effort, I will meet at the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference with the Council of Liaisons and the leadership of subject sections that have established liaisons to disciplinary organizations.

ACRL will develop contacts and working communications with organizations concerned with scholarly communication issues. In late October and early November, I met with representatives of the Association of Research Libraries, the Council on Library and Information Resources, the Digital Library Federation, the National Initiative for a Networked Cultural Heritage, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, and the Special Libraries Association. These meetings were exceedingly productive, and will lead to fruitful partnerships. It is anticipated that these relationships will continue and that further coalition-building, particularly with higher education associations, will take place.

• **Research.** The Scholarly Communication Program will initiate a review of existing statistical data and research that can document the effects of the scholarly communication crisis on all types of academic libraries, including trends in serials expenditures and number of serials subscriptions, monographic expenditures and purchases, and implementation of less-desirable forms of access to scholarly resources in response to budgetary pressures. When this review is complete, it is expected that ACRL will have in hand a report summarizing these data and informing the toolkit development process mentioned earlier.

As these data are gathered and synthesized, the Scholarly Communication Committee will work with me to identify gaps in the data

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worse is the border between producers of intellectual property on the one hand and the public interest and rights of users of intellectual property on the other. Between the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act (PL 105-298) and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 (PL 105-304), rights of users have been constricted. A renewed relationship between producers and users of intellectual property, especially intellectual property created and distributed in digital form, seems unlikely, especially given the aggressively adversarial stance of the entertainment conglomerates that have influenced the direction of U.S. copyright law in recent years.

Reference service has always involved bridge building and relationship cultivation among information seekers, librarians, information resources, and producers of information sources. The borders have changed over time. Good relationships can build good bridges across new borders.

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available to the profession and will work to articulate and find funding for projects intended to fill in these gaps. In addition, there will be an effort to create case studies of individual academic and research libraries of all types and sizes to document the effects of the scholarly communication crisis in a concrete and understandable (to the lay public) manner. Once these sets of information are available, ACRL hopes to develop a profile of faculty research in liberal arts colleges, medium-sized and smaller universities, and community colleges.

Regional accrediting agencies will be contacted to determine the extent to which accreditation at some institutions may be affected due to deficiencies in library resources. The findings of this survey will be incorporated in the case studies mentioned above, as appropriate, and will be conveyed to librarians and academic administrators for their use in planning.

Conclusion . . . or a beginning

ACRL has taken a giant step in identifying scholarly communication as an issue requiring the immediate and intense attention of its membership and in providing support for a program officer position. With only two months' experience under my belt, it is already obvious to me that it will be tremendously effective to have someone whose responsibility is fully to

What makes a fence or a border good, particularly in reference service? The benefit of the new borders described above (and others) is that each one of them identifies a challenge we need to work on to assure that reference service meets our users' needs in the current wired world. Each of those challenges calls for a bridge built from new relationships.

Notes

1. Steve Jones et al., "The Internet goes to college: How students are living in the future with today's technology." Pew Internet And American Life Project, 15 September 2002, <http://www.pewinternet.org/reports/toc.asp?Report=71> PDF file, p. 12.

2. Ibid., 13.

3. Gloria E. Andzaldúa, "Beyond Traditional Notions of Identity," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 11 October 2002, sec. 2, B11. ■

pay close attention to these issues on behalf of the ACRL membership.

Most librarians who are concerned about scholarly communication—and that accounts for the vast majority, one would suspect—have multiple responsibilities and are not able to give the time and attention to these questions and concerns that they perhaps would like. A few organizations have devoted all or part of a position to scholarly communication; ARL is one of these. But there are not a sufficient number of library advocates to address all the many and various issues that arise constantly in this world of information that is changing even more rapidly than we had projected.

In the role of program officer, I hope to make ACRL very visible within academia and with our colleague organizations as an association with a clear and distinct focus on scholarly communication issues and with sufficient voice to be heard on this continent and potentially worldwide. The ACRL leadership has provided the groundwork; the Scholarly Communication Committee and discussion group are providing the ongoing support and direction. As the task force originally hoped, their recommendations and subsequent ACRL action will allow ACRL to play a prominent national role in shaping the future of scholarly communication in partnership with other groups. ■