

Williams and Sullivan share plans for ACRL

By James Williams III and Maureen Sullivan

Be sure to vote in the election this spring

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

JAMES WILLIAMS III

Higher education is strategically positioned at the center of the emergent Knowledge Society. The hallmark of the knowledge society will be Web-based instant access to electronic information, in a world where print versions of the body of recorded knowledge are still essential. For ACRL and its member libraries the global economy, the knowledge society, and rapid access to information have already set the parameters within which our vision has been shaped, our mission has been defined, our operations have been planned, and our work on the ACRL Strategic Plan has been charted. The strategic priorities of ACRL are well aligned with our collective vision of the future, they are relevant to the needs of the membership, and they are focused on areas with the promise of an enduring comparative advantage for the association. In order to sustain the value of ACRL to the profession and its disciplines, I pledge a pursuit of the following actions.



James Williams III



Maureen Sullivan

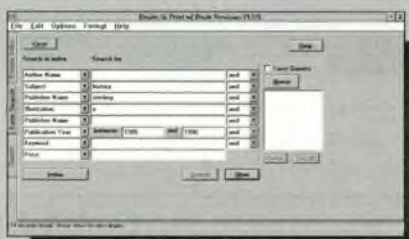
The Council of Liaisons and continuing education

A partial list of external challenges to our institutions of higher education includes: staggering changes in society in general, an economy under siege, the effects of technology on national life, negative public perceptions about higher education, projected enrollment increases, and a changing demography for higher education. Our institutional agendas to respond to these challenges tend to focus on the student experience, maintaining access to our institutions, more productive engagement with our communities, creating a total learning environment that encourages lifelong learning, and redefining our own excellence. In order for society to continue to invest in higher education, however, our institutions must develop more strategic partnerships, embrace technology at a faster pace, re-establish trust through a willingness to change our structure and develop a team approach to strategic planning, and provide the kind of leadership that both enables and requires accountability.

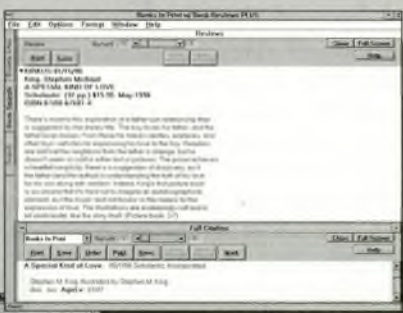
For libraries in this environment, our challenges are similar and our effectiveness as ser-

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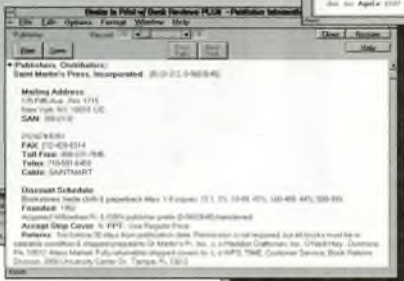


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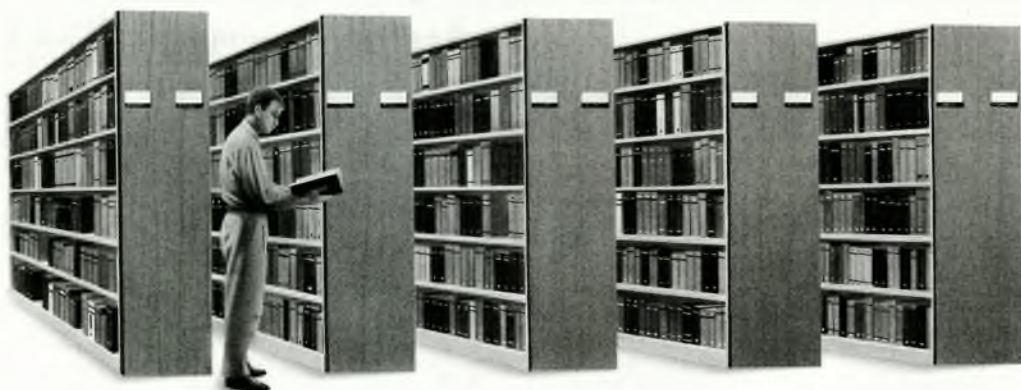
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vice providers depends on strategic alliances, the aggressive application of information technology, creative and open strategic planning, and the development of a culture-of-evidence related to our vision, our dialogue, and our library operations. We also continue to be challenged by changes in public information policy, and by our ever-growing responsibility to provide access to remote resources, to manage internal electronic resources, and to provide integrated access to information resources, independent of time, place, and personal pace. Further, we must perform these expanded functions in an environment of flat or declining budgets, which in turn demand even more economy-of-scale in traditional library operations.

Within the context of this background for higher education and its libraries, the ACRL Strategic Plan calls for a strategic defense of the basic tenets of librarianship, while using the plan to a) pursue strategic partnerships in the higher education and information policy arenas, b) firmly establish ACRL as ALA's academic arm, and c) "provide development opportunities for academic and research librarians and other library personnel that enhance their ability to deliver superior services and resources." I firmly believe that one of the most effective means to pursue the broad objectives of the Strategic Plan will be through a redoubling of our efforts with the Council of Liaisons, and through national programming that supports continuing education.

The Council of Liaisons provides an effective platform from which to establish strategic alliances and partnerships, to establish leveraged policy-generation capabilities, and to establish visibility/credibility for ACRL as ALA's academic arm on issues that pertain to higher education and its articulation with other sectors of society served by the academic and research library community. This includes ACRL working with other higher education organizations and associations to do what we do best: assess, with perspective, the implications for higher education, and society in general, the changes that the next round of external chal-

lenges, public information policy revision, and invention will bring.

The nimbleness and responsiveness of ACRL is dependent upon the extent to which the professionals that constitute its membership are also nimble, flexible, and responsive to changes in the emergent knowledge society. The continuing development of both personal and professional competencies for librarians working in knowledge-based organizations will require national programming that supports a broad spectrum of continuing education needs. ACRL must therefore mount such programming, while influencing a re-engineering of the learning environment, to provide anytime-anywhere continuing education to membership. The focus of this programming must be related to the development of personal competencies (skills, attitudes, and values) that enable librarians to work efficiently, communicate well both orally and in writing, take responsibility for personal development and growth through life-long learning, develop a culture-of-evidence and advocacy about the value of their work, and survive in the emergent knowledge society. ACRL's programming must also focus on the continuing development of professional competencies related to knowledge on information resources, knowledge on the organization of information, the means of information access, information technology, the management of knowledge-based organizations, applications research, and the integrated use of this knowledge to provide relevant services in the future. ACRL's national continuing education programming must also address the new roles of academic and research libraries and how those new roles will influence the development of new professional opportunities for librarians. These new roles are being generated by institutional demands that our libraries must:

- 1) meet the individual needs of a diverse population;
- 2) provide institutional continuity for the lifelong learner;
- 3) add value to education through learning outcomes;
- 4) support the information needs of users, independent of time, place, or personal pace;
- 5) provide users with

the tools to create their own means of discovery; 6) provide an environment of collaborative learning and discourse; 7) shift the emphasis from personal to institutional priorities in the acquisition of information resources; 8) support the variety of parent institution alliances and partnerships through library-based consortial and other alliances.

If elected, I will vigorously pursue this type of national programming for continuing education as a follow-up to ACRL's existing agenda.

Infrastructure

ACRL is a diverse membership organization with 17 sections, 20 discussion groups, and 41 state chapters. This does not include its many committees and task forces. If I am elected, I will make a special effort to celebrate this diversity as the real strength of the organization, including a celebration of the value of our diverse programming to the membership. I will, however, request and entertain an effort to involve more partnering in the programming activities of the organization in an effort to leverage the inherent benefits of our diversity while also leveraging ACRL's fiscal resources devoted to programming. And finally, I will entertain the development of a national membership campaign to increase the membership of the association by a factor of 10–20% to sustain and grow the vitality of ACRL as ALA's academic arm.

MAUREEN SULLIVAN

The ACRL Strategic Plan and the many experienced member leaders in this association provide the strong foundation for our organization to move forward to meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond. Recent ACRL presidents have stressed the need for a strong professional commitment to leadership, learning, advocacy, and collaboration. Opportunities abound for academic and research librarians to play important leadership roles in education and learning, the development of national information policy, innovative uses of technology for learning and research, and assuring broad access to the wealth of information and resources now available.

As we move closer to the 21st century, it is imperative that we as individuals and ACRL as an organization embrace the challenges brought about by the extensive changes confronting us. Embracing these challenges requires continual learning. This is our greatest challenge: learning how to become continually engaged in learning what we need to know and what we need to do to provide effective leadership.

Building upon our strengths

ACRL has a strong tradition of service and a deep commitment to the improvement of academic and research libraries. As the largest division within ALA, ACRL has played an active and important role within the association and in the broader library and information profession. As the issues and problems in access to and delivery of information become more complex, ACRL member leaders will continue to be expected to make major contributions to sensible and fair solutions.

The Strategic Plan calls for us to focus on four strategic areas: continual learning and development; collaboration with other organizations and associations of higher education; influencing information policy; and ensuring we have an optimal organizational structure and infrastructure. These four strategic directions were carefully selected to help us focus our energy and resources in those critical areas where ACRL can make a significant difference for its members and the profession. The association has made a strong commitment to these strategic directions. Its work is now directed at achieving the vision and goals in the plan. This plan is a platform for change for the association and its members.

Librarians as educators

Librarians play a critical role in the education of students at our colleges and universities. I believe it is librarians who contribute the most to what students learn. The importance of the librarian to student learning will continue to grow as the Internet and other means of electronic access to information become more prominent in higher education. For instance,

This is our greatest challenge: learning how to become continually engaged in learning what we need to know and what we need to do to provide effective leadership.

"Librarian Leaders in New Learning Communities" is a continuing education program that resulted from ACRL's collaboration with the Coalition for Networked Information, EDUCOM, the American Association for Higher Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. This program recognizes the critical role of academic librarians in helping faculty and students use the Internet to enhance learning and teaching.

Preparing for the future

ACRL member leaders recognize the importance of preparing for the future. One has only to look at the program for the 8th National Conference in Nashville for confirmation of this. The overall theme, "Choosing Our Futures," is supported by the five theme tracks of partnerships and competition; funding; changing work, roles, and organizations; learning; and social responsibility, equity, and diversity. We see the challenges and many of us are eager to face them. Our current struggle is how to prepare ourselves in the face of an ever-changing set of demands and expectations from the various members of the academic community, our colleagues, administrators, and ourselves.

The most critical skill: Learning how to learn

I believe learning how to learn is the most critical skill for us to develop in order to meet the challenges of the future. As an association, ACRL has promoted the importance of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration. ACRL President Bill Miller and his successor-to-be, W. Lee Hisle, have recognized the importance of continuing education and learning. Each has called for a renewal of ACRL's commitment to a formal continuing education program. If elected, I would further strengthen their efforts by focusing on an agenda for learning.

Librarians as learners

The pace of unpredictable change and the extent to which we are faced with "wicked problems"—problems that are complex and often require new knowledge and abilities for us to be able to solve them—suggest a critical need for ACRL to develop a comprehensive program to meet the learning needs of its membership. The creation of such a program would require a thorough analysis of current programs and activities; a thorough understanding of the learning and development needs of academic librarians; careful identification of the distinctive of-

ferings ACRL can provide; a deliberate effort to make those offerings available nationally and locally and to assure that members who do not attend national conferences can participate; use of innovative learning models and instructional technologies; an action plan to assure implementation within a short timeframe; and a funding strategy.

This program would encompass a broad range of activities designed to focus in three major areas: preparing librarians for their leadership role on their campus and in the broader higher education community; helping academic libraries to become learning organizations; and fostering leadership, collaboration, contribution, and continual learning within the association. The result would be a strategic plan for the development and continual learning of ACRL members. Such a plan would strengthen the association and the profession as well as prepare individual members. A hallmark of any profession is its ability to meet the professional development needs of its members. ACRL would be positioned to meet this need for academic librarianship.

Leadership for ACRL

The ACRL Board provides leadership and stewardship for the association. The vice-president/president-elect and the president make important contributions to this leadership and stewardship role by guiding and facilitating during their brief terms of office. Recent occupants of this office have recognized the importance of collaborating and seeking common ground with their predecessors, successors, and other members of the Board to assure that ACRL achieves its mission. The current Strategic Plan provides a framework for this collaboration and continuity over a longer term. My interest in "Librarians as Learners" has its roots in past-president Patricia Senn Breivik's theme, "Every Librarian a Leader," and is consistent with president Bill Miller's commitment to continuing education. W. Lee Hisle, vice-president/president-elect, hopes to concentrate on increasing the influence of academic librarians in the national information policy debates and promoting library advocacy.

I am deeply committed to the success of the Strategic Plan and the implementation of each of the 19 actions called for within the four strategic directions. If elected, I will work with the Board and other member leaders to make significant progress in each of these areas. ■

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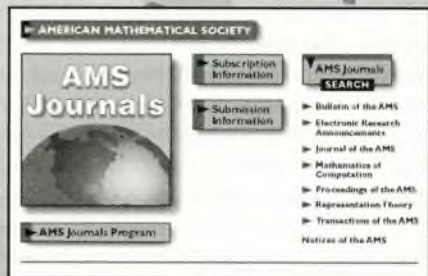
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