Meet the candidates for ALA President

Vote in the election this spring

by Michael Gorman and Barbara Stripling

T he ACRL Board of Directors posed the fol-
lowing questions to the candidates for ALA
President, and *C&RL News* is pleased to publish
their responses. Each candidate was given 1,200
words in which he or she could choose to offer a
brief opening statement and to respond to the
questions; the responses are identified under each
of the six questions.

Opening statement

Stripling: Libraries fulfill a valuable public
trust by providing a forum for the interchange
of ideas—an "information commons"—in
which every individual has equitable and con-
fidential access to diverse viewpoints and the
world of information. We who work in librar-
ies create communities of learning that answer
the needs of our local constituents and em-
power individuals of all ages and backgrounds
to engage fully in the world.

Such empowerment depends upon impor-
tant values: intellectual freedom, the right to
read, and equitable access. Although these val-
ues undergird the democratic process in our
society, they cannot be taken for granted. ALA
must support and champion the power of li-
braries to build community.

As president, I will work to defeat legisla-
tion that restricts or diminishes free and equi-
table access, like the USA PATRIOT Act and
its progeny. I will provide positive examples
of libraries building the strength of their

Michael Gorman   Barbara Stripling

school, academic, special, and public commu-
nities. Further, I will build our professional
community by coalescing ALA efforts to re-
cruit and provide scholarships for diverse indi-
viduals to work in libraries by including all
library workers in association work and pro-
gramming and by expanding collaboration
among ALA units.

Under my leadership, ALA will move for-
ward positively as we build community both
locally and professionally.

Questions for ALA candidates

**1. Why do you want to be President of
ALA? Which skills and abilities do you
bring to the role?**

Gorman: I have a deep commitment to,
and affection for, ALA and want to play a part,
in a new capacity, in advancing ALA's goals
and mission. I have been president of LITA

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and chair and/or member of many ALA and ALA divisional committees over the last two-plus decades. I am in my second term as a member-at-large of the ALA Council and my first term as a member of ALA's Executive Board. I have been an academic library administrator since 1977, and previously worked for a national library and two public libraries. As a result of these experiences, I believe passionately in the transforming power of libraries and in the core values of our profession—service, preservation of the human record, intellectual freedom, equity of access, and the advancement of literacy.

As President of ALA, I would continue to advocate these values that have been the hallmark of my career. I believe I have the communication skills to represent ALA effectively in any forum. I am the author of a number of books and hundreds of articles on various aspects of librarianship and have delivered scores of papers at library conferences here and abroad. I believe I am qualified to be President of ALA by experience, skills, and dedication to the ideals of our profession.

Stripling: I am running for ALA President because I believe I can provide the positive leadership that will unite us behind our messages of equity, diversity, access, and empowerment. Through my career in school libraries, I have learned that protesting against what is wrong is only half the battle. It is also important to bring people with diverse ideas together to create new, synergistic solutions.

I bring a thoughtful approach to issues—I ask questions, I probe, I seek diverse opinions, I listen to others. Through such careful deliberation, I lead groups to consensus.

I also bring good communication skills to ALA. I will speak for the association with passion and commitment. I have long used writing to provoke my own thinking and clarify issues for others. I listen carefully and provide opportunities for individuals and groups to express themselves and exchange ideas.

2. ALA conference structure is often perceived as too large and unwieldy. What are your views on the effectiveness of the conference structure? What, if any, changes would you like to introduce?

Gorman: I have attended almost every ALA Annual Conference and Midwinter Meeting since 1975 and am more than familiar with the com-

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plexities and vexations of these gatherings. I am also aware of the attempts that have been made, with some success, to arrange the meetings into "tracks." We need to face the fact that a large complex organization with myriad units, divisions, round tables, interest groups, etc., will tend to have large, complex meetings that its members will navigate with varying degrees of success. Devices such as mentoring and orientation for new attendees are already in place and I would like to see these strengthened. I would like the conference schedules to be user-friendlier in terms of layout, typography, organization, and indexing.

By these and other means we can make the conferences more manageable, but we cannot, and should not, seek to reduce their inherent multidimensional, complex, and diverse nature.

Stripling: I believe that the ALA conference structure serves the unique interests and needs of ALA members quite well by the variety of programs, exhibits, meetings, and public forums offered. I recognize, however, that conferences can be daunting and somewhat unwieldy. Organizing conference programming into strands helps attendees make their individual conference plans.

I would like to see the conferences become more interactive, so that members have more chances to meet new colleagues and talk about issues of common concern. Increased opportunities for live and virtual participation should be pursued: Web streaming of selected programs, live chat sessions during membership meetings, facilitated discussion groups peppered throughout the conference, and opportunities to connect with a conference mentor.

3. Given the current political and economic environment, how can ALA be more effective in educating our local, state, and federal governments about the crucial role libraries play in our society?

Gorman: I think ALA's recent "@ your library" campaign has been very successful, as have the many things (some good, some bad) that have raised the profiles of libraries and librarians in this period. We must never forget that we start with an immense reservoir of goodwill in all sections of society and we should not shrink from exploiting that fact. Those majorities of people with goodwill to libraries are voters, and we need to be politically savvy in marshalling support from that potentially powerful pool. ALA, its Washington Office, and its chapters can work wonders in the political arena by lobbying, advocacy, and education on all fronts.

I am a university librarian who has weathered the "Why do we need libraries when everything is on the Internet?" storm and have been effective in securing financial support for the university library; making a new library building the number one campus priority; and achieving a general recognition on campus of the importance and centrality of the library. We need to advocate and educate at all levels and in a cooperative manner that recognizes the value of every type of library.

Stripling: Government officials do not want to hear platitudes about the value of libraries; they want to hear specific examples of contributions that libraries have made to the lives of their constituents and their communities. Our message resonates when it is delivered locally, based on local experiences.

ALA must facilitate the education of our public officials by providing a strong public voice for intellectual freedom and equity of access; developing a coherent legislative agenda and mobilizing frontline library advocates across the nation; building partnerships to extend our reach; fostering research to improve practice and provide evidence for our public message; recruiting and supporting a diverse library work force; helping local libraries create forums of public discussion and civic participation; supporting culturally rich programming and collection development in all types of libraries; helping librarians enhance the 21st-century skills of their constituents; and collecting the success stories from every type of library and sharing them widely.

4. What do you see as the major issues unique to academic and research libraries and how can ALA offices and publications address them?

Gorman: Let me count the ways! The major issues facing academic libraries are (in no particular order) the slow death of the scholarly journal and the inability to discover a viable economic model for electronic article distribution; the library instruction/information competence crisis as we struggle with a rising tide of a-literacy and extravagant expectations of electronic resources among college students; the pressure to do more with fewer resources—human and financial; constant technological change necessitating more and more expenditures at the expense of other aspects of library service; the huge cost of new and remodeled academic library buildings; the pressure to raise funds, court donors, etc.; preservation of the electronic human record; new graduates of LIS schools lacking education in the core skills and core values of our profession; the aging of the profession; and the need for greater diversity in academic library professional staffing (as discussed in my response to the next question).

ALA publications play a key part in informing the profession about current issues and proposed solutions, as do all the many conferences, workshops, and other continuing education opportunities afforded by ALA and its units. ALA's offices (such as those for Diversity, Intellectual Freedom, and Information Technology Policy) can also be of great assistance in their areas of expertise. In addition, ALA/APA can play an important role in the certification of continuing education opportunities for academic librarians.

Stripling: The major issues for academic librarians include recruitment and continued education of academic librarians, information literacy, the impact of technology on services and research, changing modes of scholarly communication, declining funding, and the role of the library in the academic community. All of these issues have similar iterations in other types of libraries, but they play out uniquely in the academic setting.

Connections across ALA units and offices can be extremely helpful in moving academic issues forward. For example, recruitment efforts across the association should be brought

together into a focused and strategic plan. OITP is currently pursuing the concept of the library as an "information commons," which blends such academic issues as use of technology, equitable and open access, and the library as a builder of information communities. The new ALA/APA offers a valuable opportunity for advanced certification of academic librarians in specialized areas. I have spent my career leading efforts to promote information literacy, and I have incorporated the development of an association-wide action agenda around 21st-century skills into my presidential platform.

5. Diversity—it's a long-standing issue for our profession. What new initiatives would you introduce to advance our goal for the demographic of librarians to more closely reflect the demographic of the population?

Gorman: It is imperative that we achieve a profession that looks like America. There are many forces at work against that goal. Some of them are societal forces that are beyond ALA's power to solve alone—for example, inequity of funding in public education weighs heaviest on the disadvantaged and minority groups. Others are within our grasp and can and should be tackled. Among these are the provision of more scholarships; effective advocacy of librarianship as an attractive career for all; and, above all, major reform of library education. I am a strong supporter of Spectrum scholarships and other initiatives. I am a strong supporter of ALA's advocacy for our profession as inclusive, diverse, and exciting.

I am a strong proponent of a complete reform of library education based, in large part, on bringing library education to more, and more diverse, students. Reformed library education would have several elements—access irrespective of geographic location; a nationally agreed core *library* curriculum, *library*-oriented faculty and research programs; and strong affirmative action recruiting. If we are to have a truly diverse profession, we must have truly professional education available to all who desire it.

Stripling: The seed to bring diverse individuals to library work is planted from the moment toddlers come to the library and recognize themselves in the people and stories they find. Culturally rich collections and programming are fundamental to all types of libraries.

I would like to leave a legacy of community building. I will champion library efforts to build community at the local level and use those success stories to spread the word among legislators, policy makers, and the general public about the positive impact of libraries.—Barbara Stripling

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Recruitment to the profession should start in upper elementary school when interested students are invited to serve as library volunteers and given important work to do and should continue through college. Library staff should be offered opportunities to pursue a library education.

We must educate current and future librarians through outreach programs that include online courses, evening and Saturday classes, and support networks. And we must increase the Spectrum Scholarship endowment dramatically. We must not only recruit and train top quality individuals for the library field, but must also support their retention and continuing involvement and development through a mentoring network and opportunities to participate in all aspects of association activities.

6. What are the issues you see that all types of libraries share? How can the divisions of ALA be mobilized to work together to address them?

Gorman: All librarians share the core values of our profession. Library education's crisis affects all kinds of libraries. Other issues that affect us all are: funding shortcomings; inadequate salaries and pay inequity; rising aliteracy and illiteracy; the technological funding crunch; and the USA PATRIOT Act and other assaults on privacy, confidentiality, and constitutional rights. I believe that all kinds of libraries and the ALA divisions that represent them can and should work together.

Academic libraries depend on effective school libraries teaching future college students the value of libraries and how to use them. A knowledgeable citizenry is the bedrock of de-

mocracy—public, academic, school, special, governmental, and national libraries all contribute, each in their own way, to that bedrock.

"Big ALA" and its divisions need to work together more than they do now. As a former divisional president, I have a number of ideas on how that can be accomplished, but they must be preceded by the fostering of a climate of enhanced trust, mutual understanding, and cooperation.

Stripling: All types of libraries rest on the fundamental values of equity, diversity, intellectual and physical access, intellectual freedom, and public participation in the interchange of ideas. By stronger collaboration and connections through ALA offices, an ALA President can overcome the "silo-ization" often seen in ALA. I will provide more opportunities for divisions to work together on common concerns, particularly 21st-century literacy, advocacy, continuing education, technology, salaries, service to youth and special populations, and recruitment.

During 2004, ALA leaders will start the process of developing another five-year action plan. I will ensure that we develop strong collaborative structures to implement the plan.

7. At the close of your term, which legacy would you like your Presidency to be remembered for?

Gorman: I would like to be remembered as an ALA leader who had a vision of libraries and librarianship that reconciled our traditional core values and services with the enthusiastic embrace of innovation—technological and otherwise—and gave all librarians and ALA members reason to be hopeful about their individual and our collective future.

Stripling: I would like to leave a legacy of community building. I will champion library efforts to build community at the local level and use those success stories to spread the word among legislators, policy makers, and the general public about the positive impact of libraries. I will showcase the extraordinary work of academic libraries in building both information and learning communities. I will also build community within ALA by improving the openness and inclusiveness of the association for all library workers and by establishing more cross-association collaboration. I will help librarians across the country to value ALA and react the way one gentleman did after reading one of my Web site blogs (www.barbstripling.net): "Now this is most interesting—an ALA presidential candidate blog. Is it time for me to renew my ALA membership?" The answer is most definitely, "Yes!" ∎

Voices like these, those that join them, and the actions they generate will ultimately provide the final momentum needed to complete the transition to a robust, equitable, and sustainable open-access publishing system.

Notes

1. See, for example, Peter Suber's Timeline of the Open Access Movement.

2. PubMed Central, www.pubmedcentral.gov/about/intro.html.

3. "America's On-Line Pursuits," Pew Internet and American Life Project, December 2003.

4. PLos Open Letter, www.plos.org/support/openletter.shtml.

5. Patrick O. Brown, Michael B. Eisen, and Harold E. Varmus, "Why PLoS Became a Publisher," *PLoS Biology* 1, no. 1 (2003).

6. BioMedCentral, www.biomedcentral.com/home/.

7. SPARC, www.arl.org/sparc/.

8. "A Recommendation from the Council of Public Representatives," copr.nih.gov/public_library_science.shtm.

9. See references collected at www.plos.org/news/pr_2003_plos.html.

10. See references collected at www.plos.org/news/index.html#science.

11. See www.plosbiology.org/plosonline/?request=index-html.

12. See for example www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/timeline.htm, www.plos.org/about/openaccess.html#timeline, and references therein.

13. *Chronicle of Higher Education,* February 9, 2004 on the departure of the Board of Directors of the *Journal of Algorithms* from Reed Elsevier

14. Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "Companies UK: Love Affair with Reed Begins to Cool," *Financial Times,* February 9, 2004.

15. From a letter to UCSF faculty urging a boycott of Cell Press from Professors Peter Walter and Keith Yamamoto ∎