

Cannon and Popko share plans for ACRL

Prepare to cast your vote in the election this spring

Ed note: *C&RL News* offered ACRL candidates for vice-president/president-elect, Tyrone H. Cannon and John Popko, this opportunity to share their views with the membership. Although many of the issues facing ACRL are discussed informally at meetings, we want to use this venue to provide a national forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you receive your ballot this spring.

TYRONE H. CANNON

Theme

What an honor it is to stand for the presidency of ACRL, an association acclaimed for its continued dedication to the service of academic institutions and information professionals. As one who has grown with the changes in the library and information field for more than 20 years, I see an imperative to embrace the new resources revolutionizing the cooperative sharing and equitable availability of information.

At the same time, I feel a commitment to safeguard the association's historical strides in communications, diversity, instruction, and leadership—services inherent for continued improvement in the proliferation of information literacy—throughout the academic and community environments using both traditional and technological means. I am a firm believer in respecting the reward of past research while planning the approach to future



Tyrone H. Cannon



John Popko

research. As president of ACRL, I would stand committed to preserving the past and projecting the future.

Preparation

My experiences in library service, including my active membership in ACRL, have equipped me to address the issues of librarians and their relationship with the academic community. I currently serve as chair of the Research Committee and have served on many ACRL committees over the past 11 years, including Paraprofessionals in Academic Libraries Task Force, Policy and Planning Committee, Committee Recruitment of the Underrepresented Task Force, AFAS Chicago Program Planning Committee, Choice Editorial Board, Ninth National Conference Invited Papers Subcommittee, ACRL Nominations Committee, and the Appointments Committee.

About the authors

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ACRL membership represents a widely diverse group of professionals from educational institutions and informational associations. These professionals serve an equally diverse group of users. My background in clinical social work and as head of the social work library at Columbia University, as well as my ALA services on the Standing Council on Minority Concerns and Cultural Diversity, Membership Committee, BCALA, RASD, LAMA, and NMRT committees, has prepared me to anticipate and address the information needs of disparate groups.

I support the establishment of innovative, versatile programs to perpetuate the participation and professional development of these disparate groups we serve; programs that will encompass the broad interests of information specialists and their communities, yet provide within those realms distinct programming that targets the individual needs of library professionals. ACRL programs must develop members' roles both within their own academic communities and within the bounds of the association.

I have served libraries since 1981 at several levels, from social sciences librarian at the University of Texas at Arlington to head of the social sciences division at Oklahoma State University. Because of these posts, as well as my various roles from head of reference to senior associate university librarian to acting university librarian at Boston College, I appreciate the concerns of all levels of administration and staff, educators, and learners. I realize the magnitude of a librarian's role as scholar, as teacher, as leader, and as advocate of continuous improvement and lifelong learning.

All of my experiences in information service, but especially my activities at the local and state level, confirm the necessity of constant evaluation of an organization's performance. Because of my services to the ACRL New Program Planning Committee, NELINET Reference Services Advisory Committee, my office as treasurer of the ACRL New England Board, membership on the CAL/PALS Executive Board and last year's Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium Executive Board, I recognize the benefit of establishing, reviewing, and re-establishing benchmarks. I have also benefited from other affiliations, including service on the OCLC

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Reference Services Advisory Committee and the Blackwell Customer Service Advisory Board.

My association with other educational and information-related organizations has strengthened my conviction regarding the value of diverse affiliations. As a member of American Association for Higher Education, National Association of Social Workers, Academy of Certified Social Workers and EDUCAUSE, I realize the benefit of collaboration between librarians and other organizations committed to the values of learning, teaching, and research.

Because of my varied past positions, and my current position as dean of the university libraries at the University of San Francisco, I understand the apprehension, the anticipation, and the application of blending tradition and technology. However, I also understand the urgency to affirm the status of ACRL's role as the global leader and the exigency of the academic librarian's involvement in academic research. I also know that higher education demands the influence and expertise of information professionals to channel and champion the ubiquity of electronic resources.

Goals

For lifelong learning to exist, we must set goals to support the availability and accessibility of resources to both instructional and non-instructional institutions. We must ensure the propagation of information literacy. We must direct the integration of local, regional, national, and international library resources to form an interrelated, globally available virtual library. To achieve these goals, we must foster and expand the liaison between ACRL and other organizations devoted to the same end. We must collaborate with communities to perpetuate the established liaisons.

Emphasis

I support the existing strategic plan and, as president, I would stress the importance of the library in the instructional arena and increase the awareness of that importance to other members of the academic community. As awareness increases, libraries can more effectively enhance teaching and learning.

I would emphasize the importance of continued data documentation, collection, and assessment of ACRL actions and interests, both past and present. With knowledge of the needs and interests of its approximate 11,000 members, ACRL can more effectively prepare members as leaders to further the educational growth of learners in the communities surrounding higher education institutions and information organizations.

I would encourage the active pursuit and inclusion of librarians from diverse populations, as well as advocate supplementary documentation regarding inclusiveness. As our membership grows more diverse, so do

our opportunities for outreach to those previously overlooked.

I would underscore the continued training and development of academic librarians as communicators, instructors, and leaders. As librarians gain confidence as communicators, instructors and leaders, they can equip others to generate interest in higher education.

Vision

I would promote the development of strategic plans beyond the next ten years, beyond our achievements of increased awareness, reestablishment of the library's role, and the creation of the virtual library. We must envision the needs of the new students who are accustomed to electronic instruction and cyber reference. We must envision the training for the disparate leaders we will have recruited to teach the virtual learner. We must preserve the past, its service to propel us into the present, and project the future of the library's role in information transmission, integration, and dissemination.

JOHN POPKO

An ecological analogy

From an ecological perspective of the natural world, scientists have recognized the existence of an ecotone, a transitional zone between two adjacent ecosystems or communities, which contains species characteristic of both as well as other species occurring only within the zone. Thus, where two ecological zones, or communities, converge—for example, where fresh water and salt mingle in a marsh or where meadow meets forest—there often emerges a new zone, or community, characterized by diversity and complexity that exceed either of the originals.

In our professional worlds, we live and work at just such convergences of competing and complementary ecosystems. The number and variety of adjacent zones is many, but would certainly include:

- the scholarly communication system and information marketplace;
- the pedagogical community, committed to the art and science of instruction, especially new modes of teaching, learning, and assessment;
- educational institutions seeking to revitalize or re-invent themselves to remain mar-

ketable, respected, and productive in the face of competition from the for-profit sector;

- professional associations struggling with demographic, economic, and occupational trends that threaten to dilute mission, reduce membership, and minimize influence;
- an increasingly complex and contentious legal and legislative environment in which principles and issues of access and privacy, of national security and personal liberty, of contract law and copyright law, of intellectual property and intellectual freedom compete for advocacy, support, or protection; and
- a technological environment of accelerating developments and increasing sophistication, offering both great promise and some peril.

A rich fabric of relationships binds together the diverse interests, needs, and aspirations of ACRL and its members. Their convergence has resulted in a complex, healthy association that is creating and shaping these complex environments.

The challenge: build capacity, unleash potential

In this integrated, highly evolved system, what might be the needs and aspirations of the

association and its members for the near future? It is tempting to cite our high-profile or high-value accomplishments, affiliations, and initiatives, to declare support for current activities, and to try to predict the most significant topics on the horizon. We can be proud of our principles or our accomplishments in the areas of information literacy, diversity, public policy advocacy, scholarly communication, and leadership development. However, as potential president of the association, I tend to approach its future agenda from a slightly broader, conceptual perspective, considering the context in which these individual initiatives emerge and the means by which we might continue to succeed. Such an approach will prepare us to act assertively wherever we identify the greatest need and to respond effectively to any challenge presented to us.

My view of our challenge? To perpetuate the current successes of ACRL, to survive in and to continually enrich the many zones of convergence in which academic and research librarians operate, we need to build our capacity and unleash our potential.

The dynamics and power of membership

We all share serious concerns about the maturing of our profession, eroding applicant pools, competition from the non-library technology sectors, and evidence of a declining interest in librarianship among high school and college students.

What can we reasonably hope to do about these conditions? In the absence of any signal event that might stimulate general public interest in the roles and value of librarianship, perhaps we can only expect modest incremental gains in entrants to the profession. These gains are likely to result from individual, personal contacts, the influence of current librarians on potential ones. In this context, former president Larry Hardesty's efforts to promote job-shadow days among academic librarians and president-elect Spalding's efforts to recruit ALA Spectrum Scholars to ACRL are worthy and necessary.

We can look optimistically to the work of two new ALA special task forces on librarian status and salary to make our profession more visible and respected and our salaries more attractive. Imaginative joint degree programs between our accredited library and informa-

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tion schools and other graduate programs in those institutions might draw individuals with strong academic credentials and orientation to our professional ranks. More ambitious internships and field experiences among those programs and the wide variety of academic libraries in their geographic regions could convince new graduates to pursue the rewards of applying their skills in the evolving academic library setting.

Our own association membership, although large, has not grown appreciably over the past decade, fluctuating in cycles linked to our national conferences. We need to work with ALA in its investigation of alternative models of membership and benefits. Many of our colleagues have found a primary professional home in other associations or other ALA divisions. We need to explore creative and persuasive methods to bring those librarians, their experience and their interests, to ACRL through a shared and mutually beneficial relationship with those other ALA divisions. New members help build our capacity for action, and ACRL can help those librarians develop and unleash their potential.

If we're successful in increasing the number and diversity of ACRL personal members, we must make additional efforts to keep them. We'll be successful in retaining members if we consistently deliver top-quality programming and publications they can't get anywhere else, provide exceptionally cordial and rewarding experiences working with association colleagues, and offer multiple opportunities for them to flourish by living out their professional potential. Our publication program must integrate with our educational programming and professional development efforts, encompassing print, audio, video, elec-

tronic, Web-based, and video-teleconferencing. Our organization, governance, and communications structures must maximize productive and rewarding opportunities for every member to contribute to, and to benefit from, the work of the association.

A large, dedicated, and talented membership needs financial resources to realize its highest aspirations. As a five-year veteran of the ACRL Budget and Finance Committee, I have had more opportunity than most members to understand and to plan for the association's fiscal condition. ACRL is fortunate to operate from a position of financial strength. Money is our means, not our end; we must be careful that we don't merely sit on our assets. We can build and maintain a long-term investment account substantial enough to provide security for the association in the event of an emergency. We can also develop a schedule for withdrawing a portion of the long-term investment proceeds to use for association initiatives or other purposes. At the same time, we must also look closely

and creatively at categories of membership, benefits, and dues to ensure we can fund regular association services and activities from regular association revenues.

A place to flourish

Even as we celebrate our active commitment to the important themes that have characterized ACRL, we need to think and act beyond them in order to integrate them even more powerfully for the perpetuation of a strong association. We should look toward an ecology of academic and research librarianship in which those themes and principles have been wholly absorbed by our policies and our practices, have become an inherent expression of our ethos. There should be at least one place where academic and research librarians can turn to engage the important issues of the day, to develop their expertise, and to contribute to a rich and dynamic professional environment. That place should be ACRL.

This is the perspective I will bring to the position of ACRL's vice-president/president-elect. ■

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