

Trevor A. Dawes and Debbie Malone

# Dawes and Malone share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring



Trevor A. Dawes



Debbie Malone

**E**d. note: *C&RL News* offered candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Trevor A. Dawes and Debbie Malone, 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 vote in the election this spring.

## TREVOR A. DAWES

### ACRL: Looking ahead

A few recent blog posts<sup>1</sup> have discussed the demise of the academic library. Predictions of the end of the library, like those of the death of paper, are not new, but they seem to have gained momentum recently with the ubiquity of services like Google and Wikipedia. With “everything being online,” or at least the belief by some people that it is, some of our patrons are turning to these services as a research starting point, leaving librarians to wonder about our future and

scrambling to find ways to engage our users as they embark on their information-seeking journeys. One blogger, however, suggested that it is past time we stop predicting our own negative futures, and instead develop means of helping our users to discover—or rediscover—the resources and services in the library.<sup>2</sup> In terms of making the library a place to begin looking for information, some libraries have also embraced the concepts of the “Googles” and “Wikipedias” by deploying Web-scale discovery systems to help simplify the research process for their process for their patrons. This is only one step in helping to bring the user back to the library—or, perhaps, bringing the library to the user. There are countless other examples of positive library outreach.

The discussion about the future of the library and what our users (or nonusers) think about us is directly related to the ACRL initiative of demonstrating the value of academic and research libraries. Irrespective of how our users begin their research process, it is our responsibility, as librarians, to engage them in meaningful discourse that leads to the use of the carefully curated resources we make available. In addition, we need to demonstrate to the academic institutions of which our libraries are a part that the use of these resources can—and does—lead to student success and that the resources contribute significantly to the research and scholarly activities of our faculty members.

But how do we demonstrate our value? Some have written in recent years about ways we can show a relationship between library use and student success.<sup>3</sup> Others have

addressed the impact library use can have on faculty research and scholarship.<sup>4</sup> It is important that ACRL reaffirms the important role libraries play in the academic enterprise. Although there are many areas through which we can demonstrate our value, a focus on literacy, accessibility, and accountability will be the hallmark of my presidency.

### **Literacy**

We have read study after study from sources, such as the Pew Research Center, OCLC, or ACRL members, about students' perceptions of the library; about the fact that the Internet is the first place students visit to begin their research; and about the need to deliver content on mobile devices for it to be consumed.

While these statements may be true for some segment of our population, they are not universally true. We must, however, be thoughtful of our services and the ways in which we provide them, if we expect them to be consumed. ACRL has played, and should continue to play, a role in helping libraries meet their goals of furthering the missions of the institutions of which they are a part. It is, in part, through the countless hours of instruction and individual consultations that our librarians deliver each year that we create an information-fluent society.

Since September 2006 I have been an adjunct instructor at the College of Information Science and Technology at Drexel University. In this role I have gained a broader understanding of the need for library instruction and the librarian's role in developing or enhancing the information literacy and technology skills of the students with whom we interact. This is a critical need, particularly as colleges and universities are being scrutinized with respect to student learning outcomes.

### **Accessibility**

ACRL members have repeatedly expressed appreciation for the professional development opportunities the association provides, as these help us to be more efficient in our various roles on our campuses. However, as we continue to face economic challenges that

often prevent us from participating in some of the opportunities, we need to find ways of delivering the same high quality content, but at lower costs. Already, ACRL successfully offers Webinars, online seminars, and virtual institutes, but some members have expressed a desire for more face-to-face interaction.

I believe, in this respect, ACRL can leverage its relationship with its state and regional chapters. These affiliated associations have long been providing similar programs, and, with the support of and promotion by ACRL, they can reach more people in places where needs exist. Successful models already exist with the ACRL Scholarly Communication Road Show and the use of local members as legislative advocates to enable chapter members to further the goals of the association on both the state and national level.

By bringing more content to the local level, ACRL will not only meet the needs of members who aren't able to participate in national events, but will also have the opportunity to learn more about the issues faced by academic and research libraries served by the state and regional chapters. The current ACRL vice president plans an "Open Innovation Project," where the public (or, I suppose, in our case, librarians) can identify some of our major challenges and also suggest solutions. I argue that this happens regularly at the local level, and we need to connect those with the ideas that drive innovation with each other and with the rest of the library community to better our chances of success.

### **Accountability**

We can't claim success without accountability. We are, after all, accountable to the students and faculty members that we serve; we are accountable to the administration of our institutions; and we are accountable to ourselves. The newly formed ACRL Value of Academic Libraries Committee is designed to help us move beyond the traditional outcomes assessment measures to determining, in demonstrable ways, the true return on investment our campuses make in our libraries. It is important for us to continue this work

to maintain or increase funding, to ensure that academic decisions on our campuses are made with an awareness of the library and its role, and to firmly cement the library as an integral component of the success of our colleges and universities.

### **A vote for me**

You may ask why you should vote for me. I will bring energy, experience, and expertise to the position. My work on several committees and boards of local and national organizations has deepened my knowledge and understanding of working with member organizations and how these organizations can help libraries remain viable. I have come to appreciate more the differences each member of the organizations brings and the value of this diversity of views. In New Jersey, we (the New Jersey Library Association) organized several events and programs in response to the governor's recent proposed budget cut to libraries and, through our grassroots efforts, were able to restore a large portion of the funding. This effort in particular took the coordination of staff and users from all types of libraries across the state to be successful, and its success was not only in restoring the library funding, but also in educating the New Jersey population about the value of libraries.

My collaborative and collegial working style, coupled with my ability to think strategically and act practically, will enable me to lead the association—along with you—in the direction set forth in the ACRL Plan for Excellence.

I am indeed honored to have been nominated for this position. ACRL has a tradition of excellence, addressing needs of the academic and research library community: shaping the direction of libraries, building on existing and developing new partnerships, and guiding academic institutions as they fulfill their missions. I look forward, as vice president/president-elect, to continuing that tradition and welcome your support in my effort to do so.

Please visit my Web site at <http://trevordawes.com> for more information.

### **Notes**

1. For example, A. Tay, "Is Librarianship in Crisis and Should We Be Talking About It?" *Musings About Librarianship* (November 25, 2011), <http://bit.ly/uRegkz> (accessed December 6, 2011).

2. Veronica Arellano, "A Crisis of Our Own Making," *The Formerly Freelance Librarian* (August 24, 2011), <http://bit.ly/tUP7fV> (accessed December 6, 2011).

3. M. Kelly and A. Kross, eds., *Making the Grade: Academic Libraries and Student Success* (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2002).

4. G. E. Strong, "Library Spaces for the Scholarship Process," *EDUCAUSE Review* (July/August 2011), <http://bit.ly/uFodyg> (accessed December 6, 2011).

### **DEBBIE MALONE**

I am honored and humbled to be a candidate for ACRL vice-president/president-elect. I have great respect for those who have served in the past and would like to thank the nominating committee for this opportunity. In this brief essay I would like to share with you my vision and top priorities for ACRL, which include advocacy and member engagement, as well as offer a sense of who I am and what I will contribute to the financial and operational planning of the association if elected.

Among the core strengths of ACRL is its "exemplary service to its members" and its ability to shape "policy and practices of vital interest to higher education." I believe that I have the experience, commitment, and passion to build these strengths and to help shape our future as outlined in the 2011 Plan for Excellence.

### **Advocacy**

Advocacy work that informs research and provides tools to better articulate the evolving roles libraries and librarians play in the fast moving digital world we inhabit today and tomorrow is essential. Our challenge is to turn the goodwill our exemplary services have created on our campuses to effective advocacy for necessary resources, and increased understanding of the role librarians and libraries play in achieving institutional learning outcomes.

The four years I served on the ACRL Board of Directors (2006–10) were extremely rewarding, and I learned much about the valuable projects and programs ACRL supports. One of ACRL's most exciting recent initiatives is the IMLS grant-funded project to work with other higher education associations to create two national summits committed to demonstrating the value of academic libraries. ACRL's work in this area, including the funding of Megan Oakleaf's 2010 research report, "The Value of Academic Libraries," has been immensely helpful to librarians across the country.

The need for these advocacy projects has become clear to me in my work on my own campus. Each year I am tasked with demonstrating how the library contributes to the mission of the university, the basic goals in our current strategic plan and the achievement of student learning outcomes. For a number of years, I have worked to improve my library's assessment efforts and to find ways to integrate the library more fully into the curriculum. ACRL programs, including Webinars on these topics, conferences, publications, and talks with wonderful ACRL colleagues, have all been extremely helpful. However, I am still left with the sense that my staff and I need to do more to make our case. I look forward to the work that will emerge from the IMLS-funded summits on the value of academic libraries. I strongly believe that the new initiatives will provide new tools for librarians to more effectively document the work we do, demonstrate our contribution to our institutional missions, and then communicate that value to our communities, our accreditation associations, and our funders.

ACRL presidents for the next several years will be charged with facilitating an effective dialogue between the Board, a wide range of ACRL core groups, ACRL staff, members, and nonmembers in order to prioritize needs and move forward on projects that provide evidence of the value of academic libraries. If elected, I will actively engage our community in this exciting work to ensure wide participation and a collective understanding of new projects that advance the core missions of our own institutions as well as ACRL.

Another lesser known but important ACRL advocacy effort is our longstanding commitment to funding outreach efforts to higher education-related associations. I currently serve as the chair of the ACRL Liaison Coordinating Committee, which supports liaison relationships with 11 higher education-related associations. As defined in the ACRL Plan for Excellence, librarians in these liaison roles find creative ways to "leverage partnerships with other organizations in order to support and encourage local and national team approaches." ACRL liaisons are doing important work within their target organizations.

My experience as the ACRL liaison to the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience and Students in Transition has shown me the efficacy of such collaborative programs. I am currently working on a national survey of information literacy programs for first-year students, which will be jointly published by the Resource Center and ACRL in the fall of 2012. Because the audience for Resource Center publications includes student life professionals as well as administrators and faculty members, this project provides an essential advocacy opportunity to highlight the importance of information literacy training in helping first-year students succeed in their academic work. As ACRL president I will be committed to supporting and expanding these liaison efforts.

## **Member engagement**

In these difficult economic times, it is important that ACRL continue to provide both in-person and virtual opportunities for all members to participate in the work of the association. As ACRL president I will work with member leaders to clearly articulate the multiple ways all of our members can both get involved with the association and interact with colleagues across the country.

I applaud ACRL for its commitment to the Spectrum Scholar initiative as well as the Emerging Leaders program. Graduates of these programs have enriched their own careers as well as energized our organization. In my year as president of the Pennsylvania Library

Association, I made it a priority to appoint newer librarians to committees and taskforces and I strongly encouraged the component groups within the association to include newer librarians on their executive committees and planning groups. I have been delighted with the enthusiasm, creativity, and fine quality of work these new librarians have provided. I will bring this same commitment to continuing ACRL's efforts to keep our organization vital through encouraging and supporting new librarians as they shape their professional careers and contribute to the profession.

That being said, it is important to recognize that ACRL is a large and complex organization. In speaking with members over the last few months, I realized that they are not always aware of all the many resources that are available to them, nor are they aware that they need not attend both annual and midwinter conferences as a condition for volunteering. Our survey data tells us that there are members who have trouble finding a "home" within the association. One way I would address this issue is through increased formal and informal mentoring programs at the national and local level both virtually, through a variety of social networking tools, and in person at conferences, meetings, and workshops.

I was fortunate to find such a "home" within ACRL early in my career. I had mentors who encouraged me to run for offices in my local ACRL chapter. From there I moved on to ACRL Chapters Council, was involved in the College Library Section and other committees where my career interests led me. In return, I often serve as a mentor to new college library directors who participate in the ACRL New College Library Director Program, and I look forward to advancing new initiatives for greater member outreach as president.

### **Why me?**

My career has been greatly enriched through involvement in ACRL, and I view serving as ACRL president as an opportunity to advance the core organizational values of the organization and to help other librarians benefit from the wealth of learning and service opportunities

our association provides. To meet the challenges facing ACRL, I bring broad association experience and strength in the areas of advocacy, member engagement, financial stewardship, and operational planning.

I served on the board of PALINET when we began merger talks with SOLINET, and I continued my Board work when the two groups formed LYRASIS. Those first years were tumultuous as we grew to include NELINET libraries and then welcomed libraries from the West as well. The financial challenges involved in this speedy growth were substantial, and I learned a great deal about trying to manage deficit budgets while finding ways to support important new strategic initiatives for our members as well as the profession. This experience will serve me well as ACRL president, as our association deals with a difficult financial climate yet still forges ahead with the development of responsive programs and valuable new initiatives on multiple fronts.

Legislative advocacy, both local and national, has been an interest of mine for a number of years. I served as an ACRL legislative advocate, Pennsylvania state coordinator for ALA Legislative Day for ten years, and as chair of the association's Legislative Information Committee. I currently serve on the steering committee for our new Pennsylvania Forward advocacy and marketing campaign that will launch in February 2012. This campaign focuses on five essential literacies, which describe the educational role of librarians in support of their communities.

All of these experiences have made me an effective advocate, adept at communicating with legislators, local officials, and academic administrators about the crucial role librarians and libraries play in the life of their institutions and communities.

I look forward to the opportunity to put my diverse skills and passion to work for ACRL. I am excited to contribute to this association by fostering an environment that encourages member participation and proactively addresses the critical issues that will shape the future of academic and research librarians and libraries.

For more information please visit my Web site at [www.debbiemalone.info](http://www.debbiemalone.info). 