Karen Munro and Penny Beile

Karen Munro and Penny Beile share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring

Karen Munro

Penny Beile

Ed. note: *C&RL News* offered candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Karen Munro and Penny Beile, 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 forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you vote in the election this spring.

KAREN MUNRO

I am honored to have been nominated for vice-president/president-elect of ACRL. I became a librarian because I believed that librarianship offered a way to shape my career around continuous learning and meaningful work, while helping to improve people's lives. After 15 years in academic librarianship, I still believe this to be true. I also believe that librarians today face a number of "insurmountable opportunities"—complex political, economic, and social issues that render our core professional values more important than ever.

Since accepting the nomination to stand for vice-president/president-elect, I have been considering what my ACRL membership has meant to me and how I might approach leading the association. I joined ACRL in 2002 as a member of the Literatures in English and Western European Studies Sections, and later became active in the Instruction Section.

Over the next few years I served on and chaired many committees in these sections, and built friendships and professional relationships with new colleagues. In 2009 I was invited to cochair a committee focused on sustainable practices for the ACRL conference—an appointment that gave me direct experience working with ACRL's highly professional, competent, and resourceful staff. I have chaired the Literatures in English Section and Sections Council, served as member-at-large for the Instruction Section, and in 2009 was an ACRL Member of the Week.

In these and many other ways, ACRL has connected me with colleagues across the country and around the world, offered me opportunities to try new and interesting work, and supported my professional development. In standing for vice-president/president-elect, I undertake to sustain and build ACRL's commitment to providing membership and leadership opportunities for academic and research librarians.

Standing for office has led me to reflect not only on my own professional oppor-

tunities, but also on those broader "insurmountable opportunities" that surround us. There are many complex issues in modern academic librarianship, but I find myself returning to three in particular. Each is a nexus of challenge and opportunity that I consider particularly important right now, and would prioritize in leading the organization.

Lifelong learning: Building informed, engaged communities

Our work in colleges, universities, and research institutions both relies on and crucially contributes to the development of an informed and engaged polity. The underlying conditions for such a society are currently embattled in many ways, including cuts to higher education and library funding, restrictions on Internet access, challenges to privacy and intellectual freedom, and the recent rise of the so-called "post-truth" society.

Given these conditions, I turn to our core ALA professional values in defense of lifelong learning, democracy, and the public good. Specifically, the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy and ACRL's strategic goals around student learning are now more critical than ever. The Framework articulates a set of fundamental, consistent, and comprehensive tenets for information literacy across the profession—tenets that will help our students and graduates learn to skillfully navigate a rapidly changing world. ACRL's strategic objectives around student learning offer concrete means to expand and strengthen the excellent work that has already been done in this area. I consider these activities more important than ever as we strive to maintain a just and open society.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion: continuous self-improvement

The last few decades have brought an increasing focus within librarianship on the profession itself, with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Demographic surveys show that the profession has remained overwhelmingly white throughout its history, failing to reflect the changing demographics of the population—and that male librarians continue to be disproportionately represented in management roles and at higher salaries.

Diversity is one of our stated core values, as are democracy, professionalism, and the public good. Led by these ideals, ACRL and its constituent sections, interest groups, and committees have developed a range of strategies, including new programs to address our equity and diversity gaps, thoughtful recruitment policies, and initiatives like the ACRL Diversity Alliance. I see great potential for marrying critical inquiry with ACRL's proven adaptability and resourcefulness, to move forward in this area.

Professionalism and value: Telling our story

Higher education and libraries are both under increasing pressure to demonstrate our worth. While this is not an inherently challenging request, it can become so when our funders and partners don't share our vocabulary or our frame of reference. The wholesale threat to IMLS funding in President Trump's 2018 budget shows the urgency of this situation on a grand scale.

Our professional values offer us the strongest basis to make our case to our funders, partners, and communities. Our long-held commitments to intellectual freedom, patron privacy, and freedom of access are powerful assets to help us build support across political and economic boundaries. ACRL offers concrete tools, such as the recently published *Academic Library Impact: Improving Practice and Essential Areas to Research* and the annual ACRL Legislative Agenda, to help librarians do this work at many levels. More strongly than ever, I believe in the importance of these efforts to exemplify both our value and our values. And as we continue to show our worth, we must ensure that academic librarians are well-positioned not only to gather and report data, but to lead thoughtful and ethi-

cal discussions about how and why it will be used.

Needless to say, each of these areas of "insurmountable opportunity" is entwined closely with other vital work happening across the association and the profession. I am excited at the chance to contribute to the many efforts already underway, and to work with ACRL staff and member librarians, and with our peer and partner associations, to advance learning, scholarship, and our core professional values.

Conclusion

I would like to thank the ACRL Nominating Committee for considering me for this role, as well as the countless ACRL member librarians who have inspired and challenged me on committees and projects over the years. I am highly honored to stand for this position alongside Penny Beile, whose collaborative approach to the candidacy has epitomized the collegial spirit of the association.

I encourage all members to vote in this year's election, and I hope to have the opportunity to serve you and ACRL in the coming years.

PENNY BEILE

I am honored to stand beside Karen Munro as one of your candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect and grateful to the Leadership Recruitment and Nomination Committee for the opportunity to give back to an association that has been my professional home for over 25 years. ACRL has provided me with the resources to be an effective academic librarian throughout various positions I've held; positions that led me to seek ACRL involvement and support and gain substantial experience in each of the four strategic areas of the Plan for Excellence.

Prior to accepting the nomination, I thought about what I could bring to ACRL leadership. After all, ACRL has got it right. A responsive division structure that includes sections, discussion groups, and

interest groups ensures every academic librarian a home, and the Plan for Excellence provides a clear direction for all types of academic libraries.

But ongoing review of ACRL member surveys and trends reported in ACRL Environmental Scans, Ithaka S+R Surveys, and NMC Horizon Reports bring me to suggest three strategic areas to further advance the Plan for Excellence. These areas include building a community of practice dedicated to effective communication with campus stakeholders, developing alliances with entities that have overlapping functional interests, and expanding access to professional development.

Communication as advocacy and leadership

The ACRL Environmental Scan 2017 anticipates stagnant budgets across all of academia and predicts that pressures to contain costs may come to bear heavily on libraries. Responses to the 2016 Ithaka Survey confirm that library deans and directors see decreasing institutional support overall, as well. To position for relevance, academic libraries must proactively establish programs that align to the mission of the institution and be able to demonstrate their value to stakeholders. Yet, while dean and director responses to the Ithaka survey acknowledge that student success is a priority and recognize the need to communicate this value, many admitted that they have not articulated how their libraries contribute to this mission. To be effective advocates for academic libraries, we must be effective communicators.

Research contributed by Assessment in Action (AiA) participants and other investigators has led to a growing body of evidence of the library's impact on student learning. While funding for the AiA program is winding down, ACRL has contracted with OCLC Research to create a research agenda and an interactive visualization dashboard populated by library impact

research findings. Along with development of these tools, we should explore creating a community of practice and resources that support effective communication of the value of the library to higher education administrators and stakeholders.

Building strategic alliances

Academic libraries also are responding to a research environment characterized by transparency and stewardship. This involves advocating for open access to publications, data, and learning materials, and assuming responsibility for curation and stewardship of these materials. While we build professional development resources to support these emerging responsibilities, we also must consciously position ourselves to become part of the broader global discussion by engaging and collaborating directly with those respective communities.

ACRL has established successful relationships with a number of higher education entities and implemented a liaison program to disciplinary associations. These programs allow ACRL to pursue relationships with associations that have overlapping goals and be at the forefront of issues that have potential to impact academic libraries. Yet, while professional organizations and alliances have formed to address issues related to openness and stewardship, library representation on these groups does not appear to have been pursued in an intentional way. To further align with associations that have similar functional interests, we should consider formalizing these alliances, possibly by extending the liaison program.

Expanded access to professional development

Finally, much like academic libraries are compelled to demonstrate their value to their home institutions, so must ACRL be seen as a worthwhile return on investment to its members. Results of the executive summary of the 2016 member surveys suggest that members perceive midterm professional challenges to be learning about new trends and developments in the field and expanding knowledge and expertise, yet many members do not have travel expenses paid by their employers and struggle to attend conferences and workshops.

ACRL provides extensive online training and support resources, but conference workshops and in-person training offer a different experience, an experience that allows for discussion, networking, and, often, a deeper dive into the topic. The RoadShows have been incredibly successful, but remain competitive and the number of people who attend relatively small. The challenge is how to build on the RoadShow model to deliver quality programming to a greater number of members. To complement what is currently being offered, we should investigate training trainers who would commit to delivering workshops at the regional level, possibly in conjunction with chapter conferences.

Background and experience with the Plan for Excellence

Being a member of the Education and Behavioral Sciences Section was critical to my success as Education librarian and head of a curriculum materials center. Networking with knowledgeable colleagues allowed me to hone my professional practice, and serving as committee and section chair helped develop my leadership skills. Interest in library instruction assessment led to dissertation work dedicated to developing an information literacy scale for Education students, which has been used "as is" or adapted by researchers around the globe.

Around the same time, a team of librarians at my current institution successfully submitted a white paper proposing information literacy as a campus-wide initiative for our regional accrediting body's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The plan was implemented, and I was appointed to the

university assessment committee. This experience led to serving as principal evaluator for other institutions that had selected information literacy as their reaffirmation QEP. I attribute the reception of information literacy as an institutional goal—at my campus and others—to work that came out of ACRL.

Now, we are seeing a reinvigorated environment for teaching critical evaluation of information and have the opportunity to further elevate our information literacy programs. A faculty member once commented that we were missing the opportunity to relate our instruction to students' epistemologies, asking them how they know what they know and on what basis they form their beliefs. We are well positioned to make these connections with the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.

More recently, I assumed responsibility for scholarly communication, a topic near to my heart but of which I had only a cursory understanding. As the first person to hold this position at my institution, I relied heavily on the ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit and other resources provided by the Research and Scholarly Environment Committee (ReSEC). These resources were essential to helping us build our local services, and I've since become a member of ReSEC. This powerhouse committee responds to policy issues and requests for information, while monitoring pertinent legislation and continuing to advance its charge.

Currently, as associate director responsible for legacy and emerging services, I lead two initiatives. The first, textbook affordability, involves collaborating with instructional designers, university administrators, and faculty, and promoting our work to campus stakeholders.

Textbook affordability is one of several emerging responsibilities identified by the New Roles and Changing Landscapes Committee. Implementing a campus-wide textbook affordability program calls for an expanded skill set, and the addition of the New Roles committee as the fourth goal area to the Plan for Excellence was both timely and needed.

The second initiative I lead is a large-scale library use/student success study, inspired in large part by the ACRL-commissioned Value of Academic Libraries report. Results of this study, like other reports in the literature, suggest that students who used library services had better academic outcomes than nonusers. This work has been well received, and we now are working to roll library interactions into campus-wide student success analytics efforts.

In addition to my professional work, I have served ACRL as member, member-at-large, and chair of section committees; chair of a section; and member and chair of division committees. I have conducted research in each Plan for Excellence goal area and presented and published extensively in library and disciplinary venues. These experiences support and extend my understanding of key trends and issues in higher education and their potential impact on academic libraries, and how we must respond to maintain our relevance.

As I look back on my time as an ACRL member, I see how essential the association has been to my success as an academic librarian, and the success of the profession overall. ACRL has helped enable academic libraries to become full-fledged partners in support of the research and learning missions of their institutions. It has shaped an environment that prepares students to be successful in their academic course work and throughout their professional lives. It has promoted openness so that all have greater access to information and knowledge. And it must continue to stay responsive to the evolving higher education landscape and the changing professional development needs of its members.

I welcome the opportunity to work with ACRL staff, leadership, and members to advance the Plan for Excellence and further position academic libraries for success. ⊅