Librarian as leader: What role for me?

By Deborah J. Leather

Join your colleagues at the 1996 ACRL President's Program

This year, ACRL president Patricia Breivik has promoted the theme "Every Librarian a Leader." She fervently believes that all librarians must take an active role as leaders on campus and in pertinent state, regional, and national ventures to advance information management principles and the transformation of learning initiatives.

During her tenure as president, Breivik has fostered this idea through four major undertak-

ship has to do with influencing what goes on beyond the formal library structure, and that all professionals can find a leadership niche if they so desire. The questions that will be addressed at the conference are: what does assuming a leadership role personally mean? and how do I find my role as leader in my institution or in off-campus activities? This will be accomplished through a four-part program that will examine how librarians determine their own leadership skills, identify leadership roles and opportunities, and prepare specific plans to realize their own leadership objectives.

This year's President's Program is unique in that there will be a number of sessions threaded

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throughout the entire Annual Conference focusing on the "Every Librarian a Leader" theme. Breivik and the 1996 President's Program Committee felt strongly that a single program would not allow suf-

ings: her personal presence at a large number of ACRL chapter meetings; the monthly column in *C&RL News*, "Every Librarian a Leader," which, over this past year, has given readers a number of excellent practical examples of leadership roles for academic librarians; a special session at the 1996 ALA Midwinter Meeting which explored leadership opportunities available to academic librarians in the wider academic community; and for the finale, a very special ACRL President's Program at the 1996 ALA Annual Conference in New York.

The President's Program
The New York program was framed by Breivik and the 1996 ACRL President's Program Committee on the beliefs that the essence of leader-

ficient time and opportunity to think about and cultivate ideas and interests as they relate to leadership skills development.

The many aspects of leadership
The first module will be presented on Saturday, July 6, 2:00–4:00 p.m., and will be the opening keynote address, "Every Librarian a Leader." This session will be led by Dadie Perlov, a longtime consultant to ACRL on planning and development issues. She will give a thoughtful presentation on why librarians must be information leaders beyond library walls, how the preparation for librarianship provides the basis for leadership roles, and how professionals can easily enhance their individual leadership potential. Perlov will relate librarians'

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leadership roles in higher education to a number of traditional and nontraditional environments: academic institutions in transition; the 21st-century leader; leadership roles, rights, and responsibilities; leadership myths; and behavior styles. She will use lecture, group interaction, case studies, and a leadership self-assessment tool to explore the many aspects of leadership and to initiate a process in which the participants access their own leadership skills, identify opportunities to serve as leaders, and begin a planning process for personal leadership opportunities.

A specially designed workbook will be distributed at this session and will be used throughout the program modules. It will include general leadership information, an outline of the information and sessions to be covered throughout the conference, self-assessment and other developmental tools, and planning guides.

A distinctive conference event

The second module will be offered on Sunday, July 7, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. This will be a very unusual program and a distinctive conference event. The thought-provoking and entertaining three-hour session will be conducted through small group activities. The targeted exercises will provide immediate insights on professional and personal practices as they relate to leadership opportunities. Long-held beliefs will be challenged, and ways to enhance requisite skills and communications will be addressed. Led by experienced facilitators, the participants will:

• review and assess current beliefs to develop personal approaches to leadership performance;

• determine ways to value diverse opinions and use those differences to take a leadership role;

• increase their understanding of how one's individual skills can contribute to participating in change endeavors;

• learn to use language in new ways to improve communication;

• develop creative problem-solving approaches; and

• discuss how leadership roles can satisfy and motivate rather than increase stress or be a negative experience.

Leadership-related programs

Module 3 will be an array of conference sessions formally identified in the ALA Annual Conference Program as leadership-related programs. Individuals will use the workbook received in Module 1 to address particular questions or perceived areas of leadership development as they participate in these additional conference programs.

Module 4, the closing session, will be held Monday, July 8, 2:00–4:00 p.m. During this program, participants will review their conference experiences (surprises, revelations, and newfound interests, in particular), share thoughts about potential leadership opportunities, and refine individual leadership plans. The program facilitators will provide a recap of leadership principles and spend time discussing how individuals can avoid organizational sabotage to leadership interests and performance.

A year-long focus

This conference program is the culmination of a year-long focus on "Every Librarian a Leader." The 1996 ACRL President's Program Committee hopes that by providing a wide range of experiences at the ALA Annual Conference in New York, it will help academic librarians find new ways to influence the larger academy and better affect professional and public policy.

Give us your ideas

If you have any suggestions before or after the 1996 Annual Conference, please contact any member of the 1996 ACRL President's Program Committee. The members of the committee are:

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Lost in cyberspace?