

Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Julie Garrison

Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Julie Garrison share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring



Lynn Silipigni
Connaway



Julie Garrison

Ed. Note: *C&RL News* offered the candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Lynn Silipigni Connaway and Julie Garrison, 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.

LYNN SILIPIGNI CONNAWAY

I am honored to be invited to stand for ACRL vice-president/president-elect. I have been a member of ALA since I was a master's student at the University of Arizona and became a member of ACRL when I was a faculty member and director of the library and information science graduate program at the University of

Denver. I remember my excitement when I first joined ALA as a student and when I attended my first ALA Annual Conference and ACRL National Conference. I still feel this excitement and believe it is a privilege to have the opportunity to be a part of ALA and ACRL and to help move us forward in ACRL's strategic planning by focusing on the ACRL Plan for Excellence.

Rather than a statement of concern, I will concentrate on the opportunities that we have as an academic library community and share my statement of aspirations, originating from my experiences as an academic, public, and school librarian; an educator in LIS programs; and a researcher. We should leverage the collective power of ACRL to contribute more effectively to the mission and goals of our academic and local communities. Focusing on being proactive instead of reactive will enable us to respond to diverse users' changing expectations and needs in their academic and everyday life experiences. One way we can do that is through continued, skilled curation and management of our institutions' intellectual assets. We also can do more to teach users how to avoid misinformation and how to identify credible sources for both their academic and personal lives to help them make informed lifelong decisions.

I am a strong supporter of the ACRL Plan for Excellence and our Five-Year Goals and Objectives. In the current economic and po-

litical environment, our goals and objectives are critically important. Higher education is being challenged on multiple fronts and is being called upon to provide evidence of its contributions to society. In order to provide this evidence, we must collect data on how academic programs are contributing to individuals' roles within society and how well prepared these individuals are to become critical consumers of information for lifelong decision making. Identifying the value of education on individuals' lifelong experiences is not an easy undertaking, yet academic librarians can be one of the major contributors within the academic institution for measuring and articulating higher education's value to society.

Value of academic libraries: Measuring our impact

This has been a major focus for ACRL with the establishment of the VAL Committee in spring 2011. This is an ACRL goal that I know quite well and promote through my research. As vice-chair and chair of the VAL Committee (2013-15) and one of the authors of the 2017 "Academic Library Impact: Improving Practice and Essential Areas to Research,

I recognize the importance of promoting what academic librarians contribute to the academic and civic communities. This goal encompasses not only the need to articulate, promote, and assess the "impact and value of academic and research libraries on the higher education community," but also to conduct research that will help tell the story of the impact of academic and research libraries in higher education. The literature indicates that our academic communities expect the library to provide similar experiences as those provided by consumer services, such as Amazon, Grubhub, etc. They want to easily discover and access information and expect tracking and delivery of their resource requests. We need to promote and publicize within the academic community what we offer and learn from students and faculty what they would like us to provide and offer.

I believe it is the perfect timing for academic librarians to transition what we have learned in our research into the development of offerings and the management of academic libraries. We can do this by continuing to conduct user-centered assessment of our resources, spaces, events, programs, and offerings, which has been facilitated by the Assessment in Action projects. We need to develop our library services to meet the expectations of our users, which means that we will need to develop relationships with our academic community and continually experiment, adapt, and change.

New roles and changing landscapes: Experimenting and adapting to facilitate change

Students not only need help managing their academic selves, but also managing their personal lives. Recent research indicates that student needs have changed as student demographics have changed. Academic and research libraries are being called upon to provide family-friendly study rooms to accommodate students who are parents or guardians. I believe academic librarians can learn how to continually assess community needs from our public library colleagues, whose funding often is dependent upon meeting the quickly changing needs of their communities. I became personally aware of this when I led the research on a project funded by the IMLS, PLA, and OCLC to identify how public libraries are collaborating with other community services to address the opioid crisis in their communities. Such crises and challenges also exist in academic communities, which provide an opportunity for academic librarians to develop partnerships with other campus departments. This civic engagement can begin with helping students navigate the academic environment by providing information on the campus food pantry, affordable housing, clothing, transportation, financial aid, long-term technology loans, and how to meet with the social workers on campus. Students who most need these services are

students of color and those who qualify for Pell grants.

We, as a profession, have devoted much attention to the ACRL core value of equity, diversity, and inclusion during the past several decades. The development of the ACRL Diversity Alliance is one initiative to address the profession's gaps in diversity. As part of our professional and civic engagement, I ask that we continue to identify and examine our personal attitudes, biases, and stereotypes. As we become more self-aware, we will be better prepared to develop new strategies and initiatives to address equity, diversity, and inclusion for the development of user-centered collections, programs, and events and for the creation of an open and safe work environment.

Student learning: Preparing students for informed lifelong decision making

The provosts we interviewed for the Academic Library Impact report provided great insights into how academic librarians can become the campus leaders in helping students discover, use, and critically evaluate information to prepare students for informed lifelong decision-making. The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education provides core concepts that can be used to integrate information literacy into the academic curriculum and extracurricular programs.

Our research indicates that students will more likely use the library's offerings if their professors or peers recommend it and if they know a librarian. Offering a personal librarian program has been initiated by some academic libraries, which has been very well received.

Research and Scholarly Environment: Managing and curating the institution's intellectual assets

The current scholarly environment is rapidly evolving. From journal embargos to the demand for open content and access to resources and research data, academic and research librarians are being asked

to investigate and develop new collection and curation processes and policies. I believe the management of the academic institution's intellectual assets provides another opportunity for the academic library to take a campus leadership role. This has become an important area of action as demonstrated by the publication of *Open and Equitable Scholarly Communications: Creating a More Inclusive Future* and the associated ACRL RoadShows.

Relationship building and engagement: Making a difference

ACRL provides us with the opportunities to engage with colleagues so we, as academic librarians and researchers, are able to share our challenges and our successes. The ACRL Assessment in Action program has been a catalyst for collaborative work on our campuses. ACRL is represented at the association meetings attended by academic administrators and faculty. I encourage all of us to become more involved in these associations to represent academic and research librarians and to listen, read, and learn about our colleagues, as well as to present and publish our stories on how we contribute to our universities' and colleges' mission and goals.

Working together as colleagues is a statement of our strength that ultimately will make an impact on our institutions. And building relationships by engaging with students, faculty, and academic administrators is critical for the development of user-centered systems, collections, programs, and services.

Conclusion

Voting in our association elections is one of the privileges of membership and allows us to shape ACRL's strategic plan and goals. In the past ten years, only between 22% and 26% of the ACRL membership have voted in the annual elections. There was a 3% decrease in voting members from 2018 to 2019. I encourage you to vote, regardless of who you choose on

the ballot. Please take advantage of this privilege of ACRL membership.

JULIE GARRISON

When I received my MLIS degree 24 years ago, our field was changing rapidly. Dramatic shifts from print to electronic content were starting to take shape, and the Web was still in its infancy. The pace of change has only persisted and quickened since that time, and we are now in the most dynamic time within ALA and its divisions, within higher education, and within our society at large.

Being connected to ACRL, a proactive professional community that is mindful of the issues, challenges, and opportunities ahead, has been invaluable to me. From early on in my career as a health sciences librarian, to my years in off-campus and more general academic settings, these connections with an association and my network of colleagues have challenged my thinking and offered greater depth to the way I approach my work. I have embraced many opportunities to engage in the complex issues of our profession through service on committees and task forces, and as a board member.

My previous work with the ACRL Board was an especially transformative experience for me. It exemplified the power of bringing together groups of peers to continually improve our practice and envision our shared future. During my four-year span as an ACRL Board member, I played a part in advancing the association's mission on many fronts. We adopted the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, added a fourth goal to the Plan for Excellence to deliberately focus on advancing new roles and changing landscapes in academic libraries, and supported the transition of *College and Research Libraries* to an open access publication. All of these challenged our established norms and required new ways of thinking for ACRL and its members.

As a candidate standing for the position of ACRL vice-president/president-elect, I have been reflecting on the strength of our

association and how it has supported me and our profession more broadly. As we approach the chaotic, blended future that lies ahead, I see ACRL's strength in three vital areas. First, ACRL is able to cultivate strong collaborative networks working to expand the impact of academic libraries. Second, ACRL has committed to sustained investment in fostering a community of "best practitioners," who are prepared to face today's challenges. Third, ACRL recognizes and demonstrates its essential responsibility to continually advance our profession by providing visionary leadership and bringing new ideas to members.

Building toward a more connected future

Society's expectations of libraries and higher education are different than they were even a decade ago. The ways that individuals approach life and learning are blended, and educational content is readily available on the Web. The ways people seek learning and information or engage with libraries have changed significantly. Demands for instant, seamless, free delivery of content, answers, and feedback for a wide range of needs requires constant rethinking of services and service models, collections strategies, and who we partner with to remain relevant to society.

I see a deeply interconnected future for our libraries and organizations of higher education. To find solutions that address the complex challenges and opportunities we face today, and those we will encounter in the future, I believe strongly that we need to expand the boundaries of our professional community and extend our conversations beyond academic libraries and ACRL. As a strong, well-respected association, I see great potential for ACRL to forge stronger alliances and build enhanced collaborative networks with other ALA divisions, higher education associations, and organizations dedicated to fostering a learned and informed society. We are still often researching and solving problems separately, or adapting each other's ideas and projects, when we could more

efficiently and effectively work together to build shared approaches and solutions. For instance, we are all communicating our impact and value, working to advance efforts to increase equity and inclusion, operating in rapidly shifting technological environments, and influencing the evolution of scholarship and publishing. Yet, many of our initiatives are still focused narrowly to address only a small segment of a larger issue. By engaging as an interconnected community around our common challenges we can create coordinated and adaptable approaches that benefit from our broader thinking. Our strength is in our diversity of perspectives and talents and the collective expertise we can harness to develop a shared future.

Developing best practitioners

ACRL has a sustained record of success in preparing academic librarians with the tools and skills they need to be strategic leaders and practitioners within their libraries and institutions. The association has invested significant resources to advance initiatives vital to achieving its strategic plan—the Plan for Excellence. The association has created highly respected in-person RoadShows and many online educational programs and supports a wide range of learning opportunities.

Through ACRL, librarians can build skills to develop assessment plans; further diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; implement scholarly communication or data management programming; and expand teaching capacity using the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Though many programs are available, our members also need to be continually building leadership capacity and their capabilities for evolving beyond these readily available tools to effectively navigate the squishy undefined challenges that also await them in their specific environments.

I feel passionately that conversation, professional development, and learning as a diverse community of practitioners remain

essential components of the value ACRL offers its members. The association needs to continue to foster a community that inspires curiosity and serve as a conduit for members to explore new ideas, push boundaries, and share diverse perspectives. ACRL helps members by adding context to emerging topics and growing the profession's ability to evolve our approaches beyond already established standards and best practices. Continuing to focus energy on giving members the skills to be agile, innovative thinkers, leaders, and best practitioners will be critical to ACRL's continued success, and, in turn, our profession's success.

Providing visionary leadership

The Plan for Excellence is quickly coming up on its ten-year anniversary. It has served as a living embodiment of what ACRL stands for and where the association has placed its energy and resources. As an association, we have come a long way in realizing the Plan's goals. The document has changed over time as each ACRL Board reflects on how the association's needs grow and change. I believe we are coming to a time when we will need to examine whether the current goals still represent visionary leadership, transformation, new ideas, and global perspectives as stated in the Plan's Core Organizational Values. Have there been significant enough accomplishments in some of these areas that they have now become part of our operational practices? Does the Plan continue to lead us toward the vision of "academic and research librarians and libraries [being] essential to the thriving global community of learners and scholars?" Alone, I do not have the answers to these questions. The opportunity to lead our association in engaging the membership to address the future collectively excites me. If elected to this office, I will invite all of you to join me in a conversation to define how to build on our last decade of success and envision our next ten years.

What I can bring to this office

I am honored to be nominated to be our association's vice-president/president-elect and feel I have the right set of experience and talents to lead ACRL at this pivotal moment. I have held leadership positions in many different academic environments, supporting diverse communities of users. I directed a fast-paced, distance learning library unit for four years and served as an associate director of a comprehensive university as it underwent tremendous change and growth.

Currently, I am dean of university libraries at a research university that is experiencing a significant transformation. Change has been a constant, and I have grown comfortable at leading groups through uncertainty to envisioning a new future. Throughout my career, I have focused on seeking meaningful connections and developing strong collaborations that further the overall success of the libraries and institutions I have served.

I value building relationships and bringing diverse perspectives to the table to tackle challenges and take advantage of opportunities to innovate and improve.

As a pragmatic person, I approach leadership with a forward-thinking, strategic, and flexible mindset. My own continual learning and improvement are deeply important to me, and I am dedicated to encouraging our collective continual learning as a profession. I will bring my experience, values, and skills, along with my enthusiasm for our profession and our association, to this office.

I am excited by this opportunity to engage in the big, and sometimes thorny, issues of our profession with a network of intelligent, thoughtful, and insightful colleagues. ACRL has been extremely integral to my growth as a librarian and administrator. I welcome the opportunity to serve as a leader in moving our profession forward and building on ACRL's long tradition of excellence and responsiveness to member needs. *~*



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