

José A. Aguiñaga and Beth McNeil

José A. Aguiñaga and Beth McNeil share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring

Ed. Note: *C&RL News* offered the candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, José A. Aguiñaga and Beth McNeil, 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.

JOSÉ A. AGUIÑAGA



José A. Aguiñaga

We are living through a period of unprecedented change during these social and health-related times, and the 21st century is becoming a period of adapting to change. If you care to know more about my credentials and academic librarian work experience, please read the biographical article in the *C&RL News* January 2022 issue.

Some of you may remember that I ran five years ago for this position. Even though I was unsuccessful, I still believe I can lead ACRL. You might be asking yourself, what kind of leadership do I bring to ACRL? Let me share some things that you may not know about me.

Foundation

Growing up as a first-generation bilingual college student in San Ysidro, California, a suburb of San Diego, taught me many things: that was never to give up, and keep moving forward. My mother instilled this philosophy in me. She is no longer with us, but her moral and motherly support has always made a difference. When I began my undergraduate studies at the University of San Diego (USD), I soon realized that I was unprepared for my courses. After three semesters, I was academically disqualified, which became a pivotal period in my life. Besides being embarrassed by my inadequate study skills, I sought guidance from faculty at the university, and they encouraged me to enroll at my local community college. The following three semesters at Southwestern College enhanced my grades, and then I reapplied to re-enter the university. When I continued my studies at USD, I also got a work-study job assignment at the university library. This became my first experience in considering library school, as the reference librarian encouraged me to think about this career path for my future. Without the reference librarian's encouragement, I may not have entered this profession. After graduating, I relocated to the San Francisco Bay area and worked at Ford Motor Credit as a customer service representative. The experience from this job made me reflect deeply if this is what I wanted to do in my life. My answer was no, and I reached out to my

USD mentor to discuss graduate library school. I applied and was accepted at the University of Arizona. This transformative moment transitioned my path and reconfirmed what I learned from my mom and life experiences. By not forgetting what I had been through, I realized that I am here for students and their future success.

Besides helping students with their academic and career goals, our present pandemic has made me pause to reflect even more. We live in a period where our physical and mental health has become an issue for information professionals and community members. The well-being of our members and the association is paramount to supporting our present and future students. My experience from my personal life, formal education, academic librarian career, and association contributions has refined my transformative leadership style. It's my main objective to bring this level of experience and energy to continue the excellent work of ACRL.

ACRL

In my 27 years of ACRL membership, I have served in various roles at the division and section levels. With that in mind, it's my goal to provide leadership to develop the Board's Core Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, which includes enhancing the development of the Diversity Alliance. Most recently, the Board's approval of funds to support association membership for library workers who serve underrepresented populations, is an encouraging step. As is collaborating with the National Association of Librarians of Color to expand past and current initiatives toward improving the recruitment and retention of academic librarians. Before I continue, I must acknowledge and thank ACRL's Past-President, Jon Cawthorne, for creating the Diversity Alliance. In my current role as cochair of the Diversity Alliance Task Force, our actions have augmented my understanding of this program and the steps needed to enhance it even further. While serving with the task force, I continue my active engagement with the Community and Junior College Libraries Section (CJCLS). Our CJCLS librarians have vast experience regarding the academic librarian profession, and their research and scholarship benefit the entire division. There is a tremendous opportunity to further tap into the collective experiences of community college librarians. As ACRL continues to grow under the leadership of our new Executive Director Jay Malone, our division is ready to embrace the roles in the changing landscape of academic libraries and librarians.

Partnerships

Besides being involved within ACRL, I have also represented ACRL as a liaison with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). AACC is an organization that represents more than 1,000 2-year associate degree-granting colleges. In the last two years, I have also served as a member of the Open Education Conference: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Scholarship Committee. At Glendale Community College (GCC), I served as faculty senate president. As the first GCC librarian to serve in this role, my shared governance experience rapidly increased. Finally, as a member of REFORMA since my library school days, I have served as a member and chair of the REFORMA Scholarship Committee. These experiences provided a brief glimpse of my external involvement with organizations. Collaborating and preparing for the growth of ACRL in the future aligns with the organization's Plan for Excellence.

Plan for Excellence

Since adopting the Plan for Excellence, ACRL has provided academic libraries and librarians an opportunity to engage within the framework of this plan. The four areas of the plan are: Value of Academic Libraries, Student Learning, Research and Scholarly Environment, and New Roles and Changing Landscapes.

Each area continues to evolve and is influenced by our societal changes. There has been excellent progress in the Value of Academic Libraries, but more work is needed to create and contribute from all academic libraries and librarians. Our institutions, faculty, and students need to know how the variety of library modalities influence their academic success today more than ever before. Student learning, in my opinion, is a core value that corresponds with the Value of Academic Libraries. Providing access to academic materials is an absolute necessity. Contributing to the daily lives of students, faculty, and staff enhances their respective information, visual, and digital skills at the institution and promotes lifelong learning. The research and scholarly environment area supports the previous two variables discussed since it encourages open access, open educational resources, and open education pedagogy. We now live in a period of enhancing the educational experience at all higher education levels. Finally, we have New roles and changing landscapes. This last area of the plan has prompted many academic librarians and libraries to re-evaluate their past and present practices and take actions to promote diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility. Will we be the change agents that create agency for our students and institutions?

Our future

I am humbled and honored to stand as a candidate for vice-president/president-elect. ACRL has been my home during my career since I graduated from the University of Arizona. Throughout my academic librarian career, there have been numerous initiatives to increase the number of BIPOC academic librarians. We are still far from achieving the goal of reflecting the respective communities that we serve. I have provided you with my passion and experience. What I have shared with you allows you to understand better what I have done and how I can lead our organization. Thank you for taking the time to read my statement. I appreciate your vote and support and look forward to working with the ACRL Board of Directors and with you to continue with ACRL's excellence.

BETH MCNEIL



Beth McNeil

It is a great honor and privilege to be nominated for vice-president/president-elect of ACRL. My thanks to the Leadership Recruitment and Nomination Committee for the opportunity to stand for election alongside my exemplary colleague and friend, José Aguiñaga.

Throughout my career, ACRL has consistently provided me with professional growth opportunities through its stellar conferences, timely road shows, and other educational offerings. I have valued the opportunities to learn from ACRL programs and the networking experiences that have led to invaluable mentoring relationships and lifelong friends. ACRL has been my professional home, and I look forward to continuing involvement.

ACRL has always been active in legislative advocacy in areas key to the welfare of academic and research libraries, and the past few years are no exception: from federal funding for libraries to the Affordable College Textbook Act to Open Access, to name just a few. Not only do I watch carefully for ACRL activity in these areas, but I also rely on ACRL's expertise and advocacy so that I can stay abreast of the latest work in these areas so crucial to libraries. This work helps inform my own decision-making and discussions in my role as dean.

ACRL has also provided me with many truly impactful leadership development opportunities as a member-leader. My first ACRL committee role was in 2001, when I received an appointment on the Appointments Committee, and, over the past 20 years, I have been an active member (and often chair) of many committees. I have served on division-level committees such as Appointments Committee, which I chaired in 2013-14, served six years on the Budget and Finance Committee, and was elected a director-at-large on ACRL's Board of Directors, serving from 2015 to 2019. I have served on seven national conference committees and cochaired conference committees such as contributed papers, volunteers, and workshops. Shortly after my term on the Board ended in 2019, I was asked to consider the role of conference chair for ACRL's 2021 conference. I was excited about this new opportunity and honored to accept.

"Ascending into an Open Future," the theme for the ACRL 2021 Conference, resulted from the brainstorming of a creative group of ACRL members, members who are strongly committed both to equity, diversity, inclusion, and the ongoing movement to foster open, sustainable, and accessible scholarship. This Open Future that so many of us in librarianship—ACRL members and many others—have been striving towards includes bringing new, diverse voices into our libraries, building collections and services that meet the needs of those we haven't well served, and the continued pursuit of a sustainable and open system for scholarly publishing, deeply resonated with our conference planning members. It was a true privilege to serve as conference chair, plan the conference, and to serve with so many dedicated and talented ACRL members. It was important to the 2021 planning committee members that we adopt an equity statement for developing an inclusive conference program. We also added new submissions guidelines to allow for as many individuals as possible to participate as presenters.

In October 2020, after months of careful attention to the changing situations of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board accepted our conference planning committee's recommendation to cancel the face-to-face conference and to pivot instead to a virtual conference. While this was a difficult and disappointing decision, it resulted in several positive outcomes, including attracting more than 3,600 registrants and exhibitors, more first-time attendees and staff members from all types of positions in college and university libraries than ever before, and others who could not have attended for financial and/or health and safety reasons, had the conference been held in person. The conference was a major success, thanks to stronger than anticipated registrations, exhibits, and sponsorships, and, of course, the excellent programs, presentations, and activities for which ACRL conferences are known. Savings were realized in expenses, first through the careful work of the committee when considering the costs of the host city, and then through the shift to virtual, and, ultimately, the 2021 Virtual Conference was a financial success for ACRL that brought new opportunities for participation and engagement to a wider audience.

I am committed to the breadth of what ACRL represents, both to the varied institutional organizations and cultures of its members, as well as the different types and sizes of college, university, and research libraries represented, and with collective or unique needs and challenges. During my time on the ACRL Board as director-at-large, I learned so much about our association and the excellent work happening throughout the organization.

While serving on the Board, we began conversations with members that eventually resulted in ACRL's Core Commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Since then, ACRL has taken concrete steps and major action in these important areas, including action items by each of the four goal areas in ACRL's Plan for Excellence, the Leadership Council program series, Board statements condemning hate crimes, support for the E. J. Josey Spectrum Scholar mentor program, and the development of an ACRL Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion LibGuide. Of particular mention is providing 50 ACRL memberships to members of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities. Through these initiatives and others, ACRL has put concrete action and effort behind the Core Commitment.

If elected, I would like to build on the excellent work and progress made by previous leaders and members. It may already be obvious from the paragraphs above that one area of specific emphasis for me is the work that ACRL can do to advance equity, diversity, and inclusion in our organization and our libraries. Previous ACRL presidents have focused their presidential programs on this topic and advanced our understanding of these issues. Continuing this important work will be crucial for ACRL's Core Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion as we strive to deeply and thoughtfully permeate these values and practices into our committees, our programs, and our membership. I also believe ACRL has done excellent work toward sustainable and open scholarship. The move to open science/open scholarship will lead to fundamental changes for higher education and our libraries, and I believe that college and university librarians have a role and a responsibility in changing the model. In late 2021, ACRL demonstrated its ongoing commitment to and advocacy for Open Access when it joined other members of the Open Access Working Group to applaud the ratification of UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science. I applaud this decision and believe ACRL can continue to build its support and advocacy in this area.

Because I am so proud of the work our organization does, and find much personal satisfaction working toward ACRL's goals, I want to give back to ACRL, our members, and our profession. Recognizing the power of our collective action, I offer my commitment and energy to leading our efforts to continuing ACRL's important work. I am both humbled and energized by the possibility of serving ACRL as president, and I graciously ask that you consider me for ACRL vice-president/president-elect. ♪