

Sara Kelly Johns and Molly Raphael

Meet the candidates

Vote in the election this spring

The ACRL Board of Directors posed the following questions to the candidates (both are ACRL members) for ALA President, and *C&RL News* is pleased to publish their responses. Each candidate was given 1,200 words in which she could respond to seven questions; the responses are identified under each question.

Opening statement from Sara Kelly Johns

I appreciate the opportunity to answer these excellent questions. I see them as truly those of the profession, evidenced by their direct connections to the new ALA strategic plan. As action steps are developed, the input of ACRL will shape the future of our organization.

As an adjunct professor since 1990, the information literacy course I taught at SUNY Plattsburgh for 16 years was instrumental in my work as a school librarian. To prepare my students for college and the workforce required ACRL information literacy resources. My mantra for information literacy for our district is from educational policy researcher David T. Conley who says in *College Knowledge* (Josey Bass, 2005) that we must prepare our students to not only get into college but to have the skills to get out of college. To me, that starts in kindergarten.

I currently teach for Mansfield University, teaching "Access and Legal Issues."

Opening statement from Molly Raphael

I accepted the nomination for ALA President because of my deep, longstanding belief in the power of ALA to lead our profession and influence public policy in key areas important



Sara Kelly Johns



Molly Raphael

to us all. As an active ALA member-leader for 36 years, I have:

- broad and deep knowledge of ALA and know how to get things done;
- a long record of demonstrated leadership ability and experience;
- extensive experience in working with government officials and the media, both behind the scenes and on the public record;
- promoted our profession's core values of open access, intellectual freedom, and privacy on the frontlines and in ALA;
- advanced our work in diversity; and
- built collaboratives across all types of libraries and community organizations.

I understand the role of the ALA President and have been endorsed by those who know the office best—several recent ALA presidents from different types of libraries.

Sara Kelly Johns is library media specialist at Lake Placid Middle/High School, e-mail: skj4ala@gmail.com, and Molly Raphael is retired director of libraries at Multnomah County Library in Portland, e-mail: molly@mollyraphael.org

© 2010 Sara Kelly Johns and Molly Raphael

Please visit mollyphrael.org for complete information about my qualifications.

1. What do you see as the top three most important issues facing our profession today? What do you see that ALA can do to address them?

Johns: Libraries—public, academic, and school—are part of a continuum of learning and literacy for our society. The top issue facing our profession today is the perception of the role of libraries in the “Age of Google.” It is a challenge to keep the library relevant to the public and decision-makers in light of new information technologies; it’s imperative to market the incredible resources and services available from and in libraries as we face our second critical issue, sustainable funding. We must be seen as indispensable, not expendable.

ALA can increase promotion and provide resources for libraries to do marketing and promotion effectively.

Our economy finds libraries competing with other departments in city governments, school districts, and universities for allocations to maintain staff, collections, facilities, and hours of access as costs rise for collections and formats for materials shift. The requirements for staff skills are changing; recruiting and retention of qualified staff with the needed skills—especially technology skills—often requires additional funding.

The ALA Washington Office can work closely with all divisions to provide leadership for legislation advocacy and ALA can provide resources to enhance local and state lobbying, as well.

Open access to information is a third critical issue. Equal access to information positions libraries at a “tipping point.” Libraries protect the “have-nots,” providing access to information for all. Libraries need to control filters through which information is stored and delivered. In an age where information is power, libraries need to make information available to all.

ALA’s Office of Intellectual Freedom can strengthen positions on filtering and include

it as part of Banned Books Week, to bring the issue to the public’s attention. The ALA Washington Office can continue to lead legislative efforts for intellectual freedom and open access issues.

Raphael: 1. We must demonstrate the value of libraries: libraries must be seen as essential for learning, essential for life. I will seek to increase support for research on the impact of libraries and the role of librarians. An example is ACRL’s recent investment in research on the value of academic libraries (www.ala.org/ala/newspresscenter/news/pressreleases2010/january2010/researcher_acrl.cfm). In addition, we must expand our resources and training to support advocates for all types of libraries. OCLC’s recent writing on “The Ripple Effect” illustrates the effectiveness of this approach (www.oclc.org/us/en/nextspace/014/1.htm).

2. Our profession must embrace the transformation of libraries from spaces that house collections to libraries designed to deliver services for the future. We must be creative in developing and managing the physical and virtual environments that will continue to serve the needs of our communities and institutions. We cannot afford simply to react; we must lead. I will seek to enhance ALA’s continuing education, publications, and resources to help libraries and librarians navigate our rapidly changing environment.

3. Our profession must lead public policy development for our core values, especially open access, intellectual freedom, and privacy. Information technology policy (net neutrality, Google Books, access for disabled), scholarly communication, and taxpayer-funded research are extremely important issues for our profession and our users. ALA and ACRL are addressing these issues, and I pledge to continue to focus resources on these core values of our profession.

2. Please share what leadership skills you would bring to ALA to lead and move the association forward given those issues.

Johns: My leadership style is that of participatory leadership, where input from

all is valued. As a leader, I am accessible and visible and am energized by individuals' thoughts, experiences, and contributions. Information is important when making reliable decisions, and the best way to stay informed is to seek and require access to up-to-date information. Most importantly, I understand when it is time to make decisions and am not afraid to call for a vote. An outcome of participatory leadership is better acceptance of decisions because all are involved and feel as though they have been heard.

I have been president of the New York State school library organization, the American Association of School Librarians, the Board of Trustees of the Saranac Lake (New York) Free Library Board of Trustees, and served for 15 years as the chair of the New York School Library Media Section's Educational Leadership Committee, developing leadership professional development.

I am a connector, an activist, and prefer to lead and work in teams.

Raphael: I successfully directed two large, complex library systems—Washington, D.C., and Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon. Very different demographics, political and cultural environments, library governance, and funding structures required adaptability and strategic, forward-thinking approaches.

My knowledge of ALA is wide and deep. I have served our profession through ALA and its chapters for more than 35 years, including leadership positions in governance (Executive Board, three terms on Council); on major committees (BARC, Nominating, IFC); as president of an ALA division (LLAMA) and on two Boards of Directors (LLAMA and ASCLA); as ALA chapter president (DCLA); and as chair or member of committees across four divisions (LLAMA, PLA, ASCLA, and RUSA). I know how to get things done in ALA.

To be successful in my career and professional service, I had to think and act strategically, be an effective communicator, build collaboratives, inspire and motivate individuals and teams, be accountable,

be willing to take risks, and be culturally competent.

Advocacy, keeping libraries moving forward, and protecting our profession's core values were all part of my work. I led efforts to encourage users to tell their stories about how libraries transformed their lives, which contributed to passage of a funding levy with 62 percent voter approval. As director, I led Multnomah County Library in a rapidly changing environment, anticipating user expectations and managing fiscal challenges. Throughout my career and in ALA, I have led efforts to promote open access and protect intellectual freedom and privacy.

3. Describe your possible presidential initiative(s) and include the impact you hope your initiative(s) might have on ALA?

Johns: As ALA President, I will expand on ALA presidents' advocacy initiatives by taking advocacy up a level to promotion and marketing. ALA must clearly connect libraries and literacy as a learning continuum for the public, showcasing libraries' indispensability with increased public awareness. Also, a task force will create toolkits of resources to easy for libraries to promote and market their programs. Advocacy is most effective from a grassroots level, led by a parent organization who uses its resources to position libraries as a global force for competitiveness. For ALA, increased promotion and marketing will create the core of advocates we all must have.

As ALA President, I will also develop a diversity recruitment toolkit as a presidential initiative by studying successful recruiting practices of other organizations and devel-

2010 candidates for ALA Treasurer

Alan Kornblau, library director, Delay Beach Public Library

James G. Neal,* vice president for information services and university librarian, Columbia University

*ACRL member

oping online recruitment resources for library school educators, library directors, high school and college career counselors, and the public. The Spectrum Scholar initiative and other Office of Diversity initiatives must have expanded support with both resources and fundraising in order to bridge the diversity gap. ALA must provide a targeted recruitment campaign with online resources about the exciting career that librarianship is for minorities. The effect on ALA will be a profession that reflects the communities we serve.

Raphael: As ALA's President, I will build on the advocacy work of recent ALA presidents, with the support of ALA divisions/units and state chapters. My initiatives will focus on:

- strengthening and then disseminating research that demonstrates the value of libraries, based on data-driven, outcome-based measures; and
- building the capacity of our constituents to tell our story by telling their stories about the transformational power of libraries.

Second, I believe it is essential for our profession's future that we continue to raise ALA's investment in recruiting a more diverse workforce. Together, we should focus on how we link recruitment and retention of professionals from diverse backgrounds, not only in our libraries but also in our professional association and its leadership. Through the leadership development programs, notably in ACRL, LLAMA, and PLA, we can ensure that future library and ALA leaders come from diverse backgrounds. ALA should develop toolkits, programs, e-Learning opportunities, and collaborative technologies for members' contributions to move our agenda forward.

4. What do you feel ALA needs to do to keep the organization relevant to newer members of the profession?

Johns: There is a need to involve new members in ALA as soon as they join. As ALA President I would very much like to streamline the appointment process for all members who want to be on a committee and take advantage of e-participation to encourage members to develop communities of interest. ALA can

expand the use of social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, to enable connection and conversation as part of younger members' professional lives, including mentorship opportunities virtually and personally through NMRT, divisions, and caucuses. Increasing the number of virtual committee members needs to be considered by Council.

Raphael: We need to understand what new members expect from their ALA membership and ensure that they have opportunities to engage in the association's work. We can look to existing programs, such as Emerging Leaders, Spectrum Scholars, mentorship programs, and other leadership development activities, to ensure that these opportunities meet the needs of newer members. We should focus on retaining these members by developing clear pathways for further engagement in ALA through divisions, roundtables, and virtual participation opportunities (collaborative software and social networking, e-Learning programs, expanded virtual conferences, and connecting through chat, such as ACRL's OnPoint). ALA divisions are particularly active in pursuing engagement of newer members. We should ensure that ALA supports these efforts and fosters experimentation with new participation models.

5. Academic librarians have many options for professional affiliation outside of ALA, for example EDUCAUSE, SLA, ASEE, NASIG, ARLIS, and others. As President of ALA how would you express the value of ALA to attract these librarians to the association?

Johns: The experience of visiting boards, committees, round tables, and caucuses as a candidate during the Midwinter Meeting gave me an even wider perspective on the passionate people working diligently in the complex organization that is ALA. The organizations listed above address distinct parts of the profession; joint task forces with them for particular issues can be initiated. However, ALA is the only organization that is the national voice for all types of libraries and library workers. That is strength, strength that we all need.

ALA has resources for our interests, such as the Washington Office and the Office for Intellectual Freedom, who, when they speak for libraries, speak with a voice that is 63,000 members loud. ALA addresses issues across the profession in places where numbers matter and voices need to be loud. I value my membership in other library-related organizations, but my membership in ALA is “priceless.”

Raphael: ALA is the only association that speaks for all types of libraries. ALA is a highly respected organization in the United States and globally. In order for our profession to have clout in public policy areas, such as information technology policy, scholarly communication, and other critical issues, we must be able to speak forcefully for all types of libraries. The stakes are local—but the battle is national. Only ALA—with a united voice—can advocate and lead all types of libraries on the national level.

6. Electronic participation is quickly taking off in ALA divisions. What is your view on how ALA could foster and support expansion of this movement to virtual participation?

Johns: ALA Connect is a strong start for increased communication, involvement, and transparency for our organization. ALA staff should be commended for their diligence and patience as we transition into use of ALA Connect for the business of the organization. I will look to ALA staff, OITP, LITA, and other members to recommend future technologies that move the organization towards more virtual participation, including informal opportunities for members to communicate, develop grassroots action, and learn from each other. The “Uncommons” at both the ALA Midwinter Meeting and the AASL conferences were a relatively low-cost way for members to participate in and extend the conference experience. ALA members can also mentor other members virtually, who need assistance with learning protocols and procedures for the new technologies.

Raphael: ALA needs to be flexible in finding ways to engage its membership. Divisions

such as ACRL have taken important steps to engage members through electronic participation. Some of ALA’s work can and should be done entirely virtually. We need to build our capacity within ALA to deliver our products and services directly to members—in their workplace, at their state or regional conferences, on their desktops, and on their handhelds. We should encourage divisions to try new approaches and then share those results widely across the association. ALA needs to support these efforts through the acquisition and implementation of technology products and services that support these new models of participation.

7. In your opinion, what technology applications should ALA focus on in order to best advance the association’s mission?

Johns: As ALA President, I will work to meet ALA’s vision for a more participatory organization and will nudge ALA to explore options that meet the needs of communicating with the membership. Technology is a great communications tool for committees, task force groups, and members. Technology can’t replace personal interaction, but it can enrich communication, maintain conversations, and organize/document information. The technology that will advance the association’s mission is that which the membership can most easily access and which ALA can afford to support as ALA implements its 2015 strategic plan. I look forward to the advances.

Raphael: ALA must continue investing in collaborative software, such as ALA Connect. As members use these applications, ALA can facilitate their use through tutorials and training. ALA should also build on the experience of its units in delivering continuing education and professional development through e-Learning applications. Supporting technology applications is expensive, but ALA must be a leader in this area. ALA should turn to our members in LITA, ACRL, and other divisions who are knowledgeable in recognizing the advantages of future IT applications. //