

Ann Campion Riley and Rickey D. Best

Campion Riley and Best share plans for ACRL

Cast an informed vote in the election this spring



Ann Campion Riley



Rickey D. Best

Ed. note: *C&RL News* offered candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Ann Campion Riley and Rickey D. Best, 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.

ANN CAMPION RILEY

In 2015, ACRL will celebrate its 75th birthday, the anniversary of its founding. Occasions like that call for celebration, and also promote reflection. As I think about the upcoming ACRL elections, reflection on that anniversary and what ACRL has meant to its members over the years led me to think about how ACRL has affected me, and what it has done and can continue to do for its members and for the whole library profession.

Through the course of a career, in any field, people's needs change. For the early career librarian, job placement is often at the top of the list. The online job site that ALA and ACRL maintains (joblist.ala.org) now is a primary source of job information, and is the successor to the ads that used to run in *American Libraries* and still run in *C&RL News*. Many programs at ACRL conferences have focused on successful job searches, both for candidates and employers over the years. Every time I have looked for a position in my career as a librarian, those job ads have been essential to me. Promotion and sometimes tenure questions usually quickly follow, and ACRL programs along with publishing opportunities in ACRL publications are key ways that members learn and share knowledge to address those issues. Certainly the presentation and publication opportunities the association offers have been important to many of us, with *College and Research Libraries* maintaining its role as one of the most prestigious journals in our profession. Continuing education is another key component, and that has historically been one of ACRL's strongest areas of service, in forms and venues too many to describe fully.

For many, management training follows closely on promotion concerns, and again, ACRL has been right there with programming. One very successful program, the Harvard ACRL Leadership Institute, has been in operation now for almost 20 years, giving

librarians the benefits of high-quality leadership training that is recognizable to campus leadership, many of whom have attended other Harvard graduate educational leadership programs. Boosting the credentials of library leaders through this connection is a great service for interested members, one that has helped many over the life of the program. Close behind job placement, continuing education, and leadership training has to be standards' work.

Writing and promulgating standards for libraries, librarians, collections, information literacy, distance library services, and other aspects of librarianship are crucial roles for our professional association. Many times librarians have reached out to ACRL standards for libraries as essential lines of defense when controversy or budget slashing hit their campuses and institutions. Whether the library or librarian were members or not, those standards were there for them to help guide the planning and formation of services or help save them when the budget wolf was at the door. In my work some years ago at a community college, those standards were a tremendous help. Perhaps most importantly for many of us, where would our profession be today without the information literacy standards that ACRL took the lead in writing? It is hard to imagine how much different libraries and our outreach to learning and teaching would be without that landmark work now almost 20 years old, and currently beginning the first comprehensive revision. Those standards were the bedrock for many as we began our careers and took our first library leadership positions.

This reminiscing could go on and on, but just a few paragraphs serve to show how very central ACRL is to our work as academic librarians. Leadership work in collections, diversity programs, and many other tremendously important areas continues to come from ACRL today. Because we are a volunteer organization with a small, very dedicated staff, most of the work has been done by you, the members of ACRL, past and present. Every other year at our conferences,

new members join us after attending, many proclaiming it the "best conference ever." Evaluations of the conference continue to glow year after year, as does the quality of the conference programs. Cost is always a concern (at one point some years ago, I felt I could only afford to join in conference years), and keeping a balance between cost and quality is a difficult challenge that ACRL must continue to address.

Recently (from 2009 to 2013) I had the privilege of serving on the ACRL Board of Directors. (Thanks for electing me.) Over those years, the Board worked to keep up the services that ACRL is known for, and to extend and improve them through the strategic Plan for Excellence. The association has grown the roadshow on scholarly communication and the immersion program for information literacy, and has approved some new standards during that time. Currently the Board is working on the issue of data curation and what many of our members need to learn about it, and what new services may be asked of some libraries. The hugely successful Value of Academic Libraries initiative, funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Libraries Services, will be the next ACRL project that provides key tools and information to librarians, as it has already begun to do. If any members out there has not read the first report or heard any presentations about the work, stop reading and go to www.acrl.ala.org/value/ right now. (Look under its authors, Megan Oakleaf or Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe). It is amazing, important work for the future of libraries and the survival of our profession.

During some strategic planning sessions a few years ago, the ACRL leaders also worked on branding. A phrase that came out of some exercises was, "ACRL, the higher education association for librarians." An alternate version was "the association for librarians in higher education." Those of you who have participated in planning sessions know how these things go—lots of talking, small groups, voting with dots, etc. They are not a favorite activity for most of us. However, they are

often useful, and the fact that ACRL is the primary professional group for librarians in higher education is a useful idea to articulate. Most members probably know that at some level, but we seldom think of it. As I look back over the achievements and activities of my time in ACRL, the centrality of ACRL to academic librarianship is very clear. The association needs to continue to flourish and do its work through its members. The association needs to keep working to learn and address the professional needs of its members. The association works for members at every stage of their careers. I would like very much to be one of the presidents who have helped form the history and the future of ACRL.

RICKEY D. BEST

I am deeply humbled by this opportunity to stand for election with Ann Campion Riley for the position of ACRL vice-president/president-elect, and I hereby express my thanks and appreciation to the members of the nominating committee for this singular honor. To my many colleagues who have offered their advice and support throughout my career, my deepest thanks. And to my institution, whose support for my candidacy is essential, I extend my gratitude and appreciation.

ACRL and the future

As the role of higher education continues to change, the pressures on libraries continue to increase the need to demonstrate the value of the library to student learning. Fortunately, the association's Plan for Excellence serves us well as a roadmap for developing best practices and conducting the research necessary to prove our worth to our administrations. As inflationary pressures impact what libraries can provide our users, and as we face a constantly changing technological future, it is important to recognize the continuing value and role that ACRL plays in our lives. The association works diligently to ensure that its Plan for Excellence serves as a roadmap for our

professional development—it sets the goals that we all strive to achieve.

Among the organizational values promoted by the Plan for Excellence, ACRL's commitment to visionary leadership, transformation, new ideas, and global perspectives are reflected in the educational offerings and publications provided by the association. The operations of the association through its committees, through council, and through the Board all reflect the values of diversity, integrity, continuous learning, and responsible stewardship that we have come to expect from ACRL.

ACRL supports librarians through excellent training and development opportunities, all the more necessary as we strive to adapt to and influence the changes that are taking place in higher education generally, and in the publishing and dissemination of information. The association aids us in thinking about the impact of technology in new ways, and allows us to partner with organizations such as Educause in understanding the impact of libraries and technology on student learning.

What will we continue to face? We will face the ongoing pressures on higher education to graduate students faster and cheaper—MOOC's will have a significant impact on libraries and our ability to integrate learning resources and instruction into these large classes. Even more will we be required to demonstrate and document the value of the library for student learning—lest we lose space and funding. The alignment of the value of libraries is at the heart of the Plan for Excellence and of necessity must be at the heart of our research and development. We must establish the benchmarks and best practices necessary so that librarians can make a convincing argument about the values provided to students in the educational process. Failure to establish those benchmarks and to document and argue our value places libraries at risk, given all of the financial pressures on higher education and the increasing demand to control costs.

Beyond this, academic libraries are well positioned to influence the continued growth

of open access journals—to promote and assist our faculties in making their research widely and freely accessible. I believe that our knowledge of and skills with technology, combined with our understanding of copyright issues, will allow us to play a significant role in supporting open access to faculty research via our institutional repositories.

Acts of leadership

I am a believer that to lead is to serve. The responsibilities associated with leadership require a dedication to and support of the membership. I have practiced this philosophy as president of the Alabama Association of College & Research Libraries, as president of the Society of Alabama Archivists, as chair of ACRL's Chapters Council. In each circumstance, I worked to understand the concerns of the organization and its members, and strove to find solutions to the pressing issues each group faced. Within the Alabama ACRL chapter, we worked to increase support for Camila Alire's presidential goal of advocacy. To do this, we established a government relations committee and voted to increase membership dues to support academic librarians' participation in National Legislative Day.

Within Chapters Council, I worked with my colleagues to develop proposals for increased funding and support for the local chapters. As a result, there is now in place opportunities for local chapters to receive free access to digital learning opportunities. I have served as an active participant in ACRL's Government Relations Committee, the Standards & Accreditation Committee, the Recruitment & Nominating Committee, and the Excellence in Academic Libraries Awards Committee. I have also served as a member of ALA's Chapter Relations Committee. In all of these opportunities, I have had the opportunity to develop a strong understanding of the value of ACRL, and to learn from my colleagues. I believe that my activities have allowed me to understand at a fundamental level the issues and concerns affecting academic libraries.

I have enjoyed the opportunities to participate in understanding the value and importance of accreditation and standards of importance to higher education through serving as on-site review for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. I have cochaired the reaccreditation process successfully on my campus. Through my participation in preparing for accreditation and evaluating institutions, I have been able to ensure our library's contributions to demonstrating institutional effectiveness and student learning.

Recognizing that the only constancy in life is change, I have focused my career upon preparing for, and adapting to, changes in technology that allow the library to become more efficient and effective. I have also focused specifically upon answering the question of how we know if we are successful in accomplishing those things we set out to achieve. I have worked to understand the expectations of our users and to find ways to meet those expectations, and to demonstrate our success in meeting the expectations.

I believe that my nearly 30 years of involvement in academic libraries and in library and archival associations have given me a breadth of experience and knowledge from which I can contribute to ACRL's reaching the goals and objectives' of the strategic plan.

I hope as ACRL vice-president to contribute to the continued goals of the ACRL strategic plan of demonstrating the value of academic libraries to the higher education community, to articulate the need to that community for academic libraries to be heavily involved in issues such as scholarly publishing, the promotion of open access; teaching information literacy and critical thinking, promoting intellectual freedom and articulating the need for a revision of the fair use provisions of copyright law.

Thank you for voting in the ALA/ACRL elections. I hope that the future will find you participating in our professional opportunities for service and advancing the knowledge base and skill sets of librarians into the future. ♪