

ULS asks scholars: Do you need us?

By Anne Garrison, Paula Walker, and Linda TerHaar

Annual Conference highlights from the University Libraries Section

More than 300 people attended the ULS program at San Francisco, seeking the answer to this question put to scholars Roger Caldwell, professor of soil and water science, and special assistant to the dean, College of Agriculture, University of Arizona; Michael Goodchild, professor of geography at the University of California, Santa Barbara, as well as director of the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis, and associate director for Project Alexandria; and Paul Jones, a humanities scholar and faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the School of Information and Library Science, and the director of the UNC MetaLab project. Shelley Phipps, assistant dean for team facilitation, University of Arizona, moderator, began by stating that the traditional purpose of academic libraries is to support the research and teaching on our campuses. However, scholars are changing their methods, and we need to change as well.

Caldwell said that the answer to the question is "It depends." The world, scholars, and libraries are all changing, and all three are interacting in different ways. Huge changes are about to happen in the world, but it is difficult to predict the future by looking at the past as a guide. Accurate predictions of the future may seem so wild to us right now that no one would believe them. Yet, we need to look 20 years out, not 5 years. If we only look 5 years ahead, then we only deal with the immediate. We should in-

stead start by imagining 20 years ahead and work back to the present in order to provide a setting for what might happen in the future.

Caldwell reviewed the evolution of work from the agrarian age through the industrial to the service age and then the information age, where we are now. The digital world is coming, and it will change the way scholars work. In the library of the future, it is how the scholar gets to the information that will count, not where the information is housed. The Internet offers contact between people and information independent of where either is located. Hypertext concepts have changed how scholars search for information. Caldwell sees librarians moving from being keepers of collections to being finders and organizers of information. Scholars as consumers know what they want, and the service should come from their perspective.

Approaches to scholarship and learning roles are changing—how do we even recognize who is a scholar? We cannot use a 1950s mindset at the end of the 20th century to look at the definition of a scholar or of a scholarly publication.

The lines between what librarians do and what scholars do are blurring. Librarians are taking on more of a teaching role, and faculty are doing more of their own information searching. That is not to say that each becomes the other, but that each takes on some of the role of the other. Both must ask what they provide as value added. This is a time of great uncertainty but at the same time great opportunity. Caldwell ended by saying that he sees the role for librarians as being information management.

Goodchild said that geography stands at the intersection of physical and social science. It has always been an information-rich discipline, but geography is changing. One new trend is

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the study of neighborhoods and the very local area. Various Web sites have provided very detailed information on the Northridge earthquake, for example. Geographical data now available digitally include large numbers of images, visual simulations, ever larger data sets, and the many resources related to geographic information systems. While the data are coming from sources such as the government and not from libraries, Goodchild said that the role of librarians is to index, abstract, and evaluate the information for the geographer. The principles of collection management that librarians have followed in the past must be applied to digital images and maps and other geographical data. Libraries must also provide a space for scholars to work collaboratively with these data. In the broader social sciences, Goodchild perceives the same needs, where many personal and cultural databases are being created rapidly, and the librarian's role should be to organize the material and provide collaborative user space.

Jones gave his perspective of the world of mass communication and the decline in the number of independent publishers, with a resulting decline in book titles. Media oligarchies, he said, are limiting our choices. However, new partnerships between faculty and university presses may provide some hope for a shift in this trend.

After the presentations, the attendees were asked to discuss points of interest for the next ten minutes at their individual tables and to raise questions for the speakers that could be shared with the whole group.

Among the questions asked was one concerning publishing on the Web: As publishing of journals moves to the Web, why must libraries still spend so many of their limited dollars on print journals? The point had been made by the speakers that some scholars never send their students to use the printed journals in academic libraries and never use these materials themselves. If this is the case, then, is the only pur-

pose for print journals to provide a refereed source for faculty publishing to gain tenure? Libraries have very limited resources, so why should they continue to purchase these journals? The response included a discussion of why the tenure process needed to change and how it is changing already at some institutions.

During the questions and discussion, all three speakers said that librarians should feel empowered to work with scholars to preserve knowledge and to preserve access. Information literacy for future generations is a joint responsibility of scholars and librarians.

An audiotape of this complete conference program is available through ALA (for complete details see page 000). The University Libraries Section homepage includes more information on the speakers as well as a bibliography for further reading on this topic: <http://www.sc.edu/library/ala/index.html>—*Paula Walker, University of Washington*

Librarians take on diverse notes

The ULS Librarians in Higher Education and Campus Administration Discussion Group met to consider the diversity of new roles librarians are playing in the university setting. This, the first of a two-part discussion, will be followed at Midwinter in New Orleans with a discussion about librarians no longer affiliated with the library but who continue to work at the university in other capacities.

Nancy Baker, director of libraries at Washington State University, moderated the session, noting that in the past multiple roles may have meant cataloging and doing reference. Today, however, librarians must often balance manifold responsibilities as library directors, campus administrators, computer center supervisors, and distance education facilitators.

Leslie Wykoff, the first of two speakers, began the discussion by sharing her experiences as campus librarian and director of Information Services at Washington State University, Vancouver campus. Because the campus is new, Wykoff seized the opportunity to build bridges between departments that shared no common history (either of cooperation or antagonism). Working with the campus administration, Wykoff has successfully blurred the distinction between the computing center and the library. Her multiple roles include merging li-

brary and computer services, developing the campus Web site, integrating computer training and library instruction, facilitating the campus distance education program, and organizing classes on electronic communities and culture. Wykoff notes that such diverse responsibilities can make one's role on campus ambiguous. "People don't know if I'm administration or faculty."

The second speaker, Shirley Baker, dean of libraries and vice chancellor for information technologies at Washington University in St. Louis, also dissolves the distinction between administration and faculty as she adopts multiple campus roles. Baker became involved in universitywide activities because of her computing background and her reputation for managing change. Her opportunity to coordinate both library and computer services presented itself when the new chancellor asked her to become vice chancellor of information technologies. Baker believes that these kinds of opportunities are increasing for librarians due to our service orientation, technical expertise, broad vision for the university, and reputation for managing change. In order to prepare for these positions, Baker observed that we need first to understand what we do well and market those skills to the campus administration. Examples of such skills include: experience with systems migration, the development of an active vendor community, our historic ability to work collectively (as demonstrated by OCLC and RLN), and our skill at managing technologists.

In closing, the group concluded that the phenomenon of the librarian who functions as administrator, librarian, faculty, and computer guru will increase as the universities become aware of our skills as flexible and superior information managers.

New ideas for ILL and reference

Moderator Barbara Dewey led the ULS Public Services Heads of Large Research Libraries Discussion Group. Mary Jackson, ARL, reported to the group that the two-year ILL/DD Performance Measures Study is finally nearing completion. A final report due out at the end of the summer will offer comparisons of borrowing and lending processes as demonstrated by various libraries. Jackson also reviewed the progress being made on ISO ILL Protocol Compliance guidelines. ARL hopes to offer workshops and/or conferences to educate librarians about these guidelines. The group then debated methods

of assessment activities as related to information literacy skills. All agreed that closer partnerships with faculty are necessary to get a handle on assessment outcomes. Dewey queried the group about ideas for new and innovative models of on-site reference and information services. Many librarians are reevaluating the usefulness of physically imposing reference desks. In response, some are trying a "roving" approach to reference work while others have separate reference staff for phone, fax, and e-mail reference.—*Anne Garrison, Georgia Institute of Technology*

Getting student feedback

Getting student feedback was the topic for the ACRL Undergraduate Librarians Discussion Group, in a well-attended, lively session. The topic was introduced by presentations from Donna Senzig, undergraduate librarian, University of Wisconsin, and Judith Pask, undergraduate librarian, Purdue University. Senzig described the development and use of surveys at the University of Wisconsin designed to provide management information for evaluating services. Survey results and their analysis led to adjustments whose effectiveness was measured by a second survey two years later. Pask reported on some uses of focus groups at the Purdue libraries and how their results were used to shape services. Her presentation included a general overview of the characteristics of information gathered from focus groups and how they are best used. The ensuing discussion included methods of attracting student participation and of choosing appropriate evaluation tools for specific management goals.—*Linda TerHaar, University of Michigan* ■

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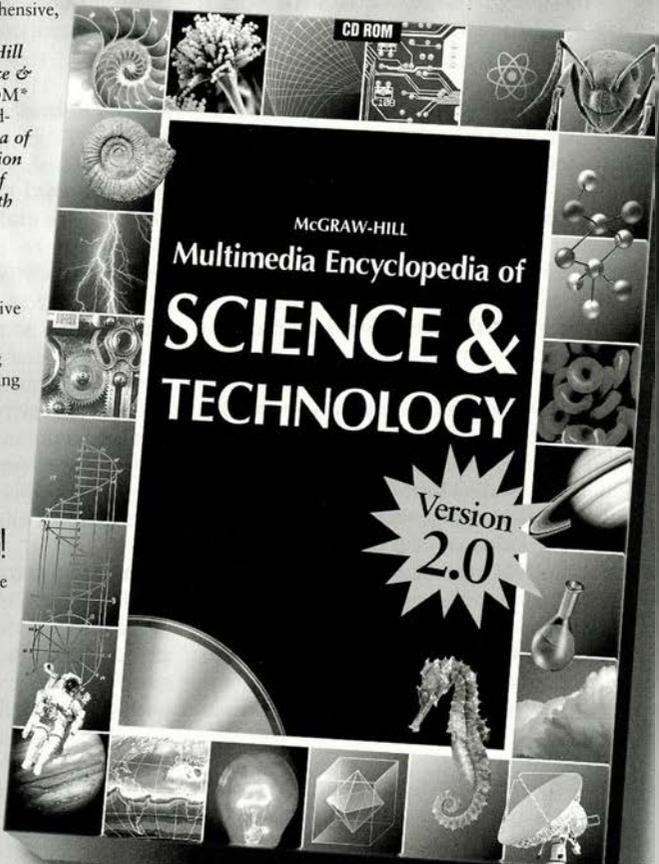
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