

ACRL advocates for libraries

By Susan Kaye Phillips

The second in a series focusing on ACRL's strategic plan

As the communication possibilities of the Internet have exploded, so has the ability of academic librarians, through ACRL, to make a direct impact on the political process. Besides the monetary contribution that ACRL makes to support the ALA Goal 2000 technology initiative and legislative agenda, your organization voices support for academic libraries whenever individual situations arise.

Recently, as a result of an Internet alert, ACRL leaders mobilized quickly to ensure that academic libraries were included in a U.S. Department of Education document, "Building on What We've Learned: Developing Priorities for Educational Research." A call went out from the ACRL leadership asking members for letters supporting this idea, along with a sample letter which was sent to the agency.

This is just one example of the ACRL Strategic Plan in action. With the adoption of this plan, the ACRL Board has placed a priority on "maintaining at the national level a prominent role in planning and decision making for influencing information policy." To implement this initiative, a task force, chaired by Tom Kirk, generated ideas which led to changes in the charges of Chapters Council and the ACRL Government Relations Committee. As a result, the two groups are working together, along with the ACRL Board, executive director, and the ALA Washington Office to make a more effective impact on the political arena, especially by encouraging advocacy efforts on the local level.

As an initial step, the ACRL Board identified four areas of concern to academic libraries: funding for higher education, the GPO transition, intellectual property issues, and accredi-

tation and accountability. Advocacy efforts are not limited to these four issues, but by identifying them, the organization has created focal points from which to work.

Building a strong network

When the task force examined the charges of the two groups (Chapters Council and the ACRL Government Relations Committee), it was evident that if ACRL is to be effective, a strong advocacy network must be built. The ACRL chapters represent the "grassroots" of the organization, and several chapters already have statewide networks in place to address political concerns. The task becomes one of connecting what's in place and creating new structures where there are none.

As a result, Chapters Council is now responsible for a network of chapter representatives, with the Government Relations Committee helping to formulate policy and assisting the network. Because the current legislature responds especially well to individuals and local efforts, mobilizing individuals within the ACRL chapters makes good political sense for the organization and for academic libraries.

Each chapter is responsible for choosing an ACRL Chapter Government Relations Representative who will maintain a phone/fax/e-mail communication tree for transmitting information to academic librarians in their respective communities. This person will also keep up-to-date on state and ALA legislative initiatives and information policy issues. It is expected that the network representatives will subscribe to the ALA Washington office listserv, ALAWON, and their state communications network, and actively encourage others to communicate concerns with members of Congress.

As the coordinator for this network, Lee Wisel, a past chair of Chapters Council, will forward legislative alerts from the ALA Wash-

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ington Office to the chapter representatives for distribution and monitor their responses. Bills move through Congress so quickly that it is no longer possible to get the information out through print resources in time to write the letters of support that are needed. This network will allow ACRL to respond in a timely fashion to the concerns of academic libraries.

Another important task of the network will be providing stories about how proposed legislation would impact individual libraries and patron service. Providing "real life examples" to the ALA Washington office as it works to influence legislation adds vitality and credibility to its arguments.

You can become involved as your chapter's representative to the network or as an active member of your chapter's network. Contact Lee Wisel (lwisel@cuc.edu) to volunteer. By volunteering, you are supporting your profession and your professional organization, adding your voice to others so that we can make that important difference.

Ways to communicate

What are some effective ways to "advocate" or communicate with legislators? The following was condensed from a brochure created by Connie Stoner, Ohio Chapter, from information from the ALA Washington office, the California Library Association, and "Lobbying 101," an ALA program in New York:

1. Letters—the most powerful way to communicate by writing. Write three short paragraphs, up to one page, in your own words, presenting a definite position. Base your letters on your own pertinent experiences and observations, with concrete examples. Do describe a specific bill by number or its popular name but if you don't have that information, write anyway. Don't send form letters and don't send letters that merely demand a vote for or against without reasons. Time letters to arrive while the issue is alive. Do sift for jargon. Don't use university stationery unless sanctioned by your institution. Don't send letters to members other than ones in your state or members of the committee specifically considering the bill. Keep a stack of envelopes, stamps, and paper handy. Use petitions sparingly.

2. Telephone calls. Telephone to ask for support before a hearing or floor vote; to ask for help with legislative colleagues; or to convey urgent local concerns. Don't ask to talk with the legislator. Communicate with the sec-

retary or aid. Have your message clearly well thought out before the call. Don't use university telephones unless sanctioned by your institution.

3. Personal visits. Face-to-face discussions are the most effective means of communication. Invite your legislator to visit your library. Legislators are usually eager to learn about new technologies and what perfect place to do this but in your library! First, brief the appropriate people (dean, government relations officer, public relations officer) at your university about your plans. Make arrangements for the visit through the legislator's district office and get to know the local staff. Be sure to arrange for publicity, prepare a packet of relevant handouts about your library, and send a letter of appreciation after the visit. Another important opportunity for personal contact is your local candidate election forum. Be sure to ask questions about library issues.

4. Electronic messaging. Follow the same suggestions as with letter writing. Some offices will not respond to your e-mail unless you provide your mailing address in the e-mail message as they only reply by "snail mail." Not all Congressional offices have e-mail. Check on addresses at: <http://thomas.loc.gov> or <http://www.house.gov/>. Do not use university e-mail systems unless sanctioned to do so.

5. Subscribe to the ALA Washington Office newsletter, ALAWON, to keep informed. This is an excellent way to get timely information about what's happening with appropriations for libraries, hearings and legisla-

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Five basic rules for effective communication

- 1. Be brief.** A legislator's time is limited. So is yours.
- 2. Be appreciative.** Acknowledge past support, convey thanks for current action.
- 3. Be specific.** Refer to local library and district need.
- 4. Be informative.** Give reasons why a measure should be supported.
- 5. Be courteous.** Ask. Do not demand or threaten. Be positive. Most important, BE INVOLVED!

language poets are featured here—Ben Johnson, Alexander Pope, John Dryden, Percy Shelley, Elizabeth Barrett Browning—along with many 20th-century poets from North America, Ireland, and Great Britain. It is culturally instructive to compare the varying treatments of, say, the poems of Catullus by such writers as Thomas Campion, Leigh Hunt, Thomas Hardy, Richard Lovelace, Walter Savage Landor, Douglas Young, and Robert Clayton Casto. Original spellings have been retained to emphasize historical differences. \$29.95. Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016. ISBN 0-19-214209-7.

For those who wish to find out more about the Greek and Latin authors, try **Classical Studies: A Guide to the Reference Literature**, by Fred W. Jenkins (263 pages, February 1996), an annotated listing of bibliographical and information resources, including the Internet, research centers, and professional associations. \$43.00. Libraries Unlimited, P.O. Box 6633, Englewood, CO 80155. ISBN 1-56308-110-5.

The Painted Photograph, 1839-1914: Origins, Techniques, Aspirations, By Heinz K. Henisch and Bridget A. Henisch (242 pages, September 1996), is the first comprehensive history of overpainting black-and-white photographs from the earliest years to World War I. Photographers, eager to please a public that at first could not understand why color images were not obtainable, began to apply hues and tints using watercolors, oil, chalk, and crayons. By the mid-19th century, overpainting became commonplace as an alternative to traditional portrait painting. In describing the different techniques in America, England, and other countries, the authors survey colorization of daguerreotypes, tintypes, imprinted porcelain, milk glass, enamel, magic lantern slides, and textiles. The numerous illustrations enhance

understanding of these forgotten methods. \$75.00. Pennsylvania State University Press, 820 N. University Dr., Suite C, University Park, PA 16802-1003. ISBN 0-271-01507-1.

Propaganda for War, by Stewart Halsey Ross (341 pages, May 1996), examines how World War I was “packaged, promoted, and sold to a gullible nation as a holy crusade against evil.” The author, a retired public relations executive, describes British and German propaganda efforts to influence American opinion before 1917, as well as the censorship and news management activities of President Wilson’s Committee on Public Information (headed by propaganda czar George Creel), the first overt government propaganda agency in American history. Ross’s research is thorough, well-documented, and serves as a useful commentary on the issues and attitudes of the times. \$42.50. McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. ISBN 0-7864-0111-7.

Racism in Contemporary America, compiled by Meyer Weinberg (838 pages, January 1996), lists nearly 15,000 books, articles, dissertations, reports, and other materials under 87 subject headings, including those for specific states. The section on racism in higher education has 1,121 listings. Entries are assigned brief annotations when the titles are not self-explanatory. Most listings date from the 1980s or 1990s, although there are references from earlier eras. An author index and an ethnic-racial index offer additional access. Beware the fine print! Introduction, text, and indexes are all in 7-point type, so bring along a magnifying glass if you are an aging Boomer. \$125.00. Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881-5007. ISBN 0-313-29659-6. ■

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tion of interest to the library community, and availability of grants and fellowships. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to listproc@ala1.ala.org and leave the subject line blank. Use “subscribe” if your e-mail system requires a subject. Write “SUBSCRIBE ALA-WO FirstName LastName” in the body of the message. For example, President Clinton would subscribe by sending the following message: SUBSCRIBE ALA-WO William Clinton. ■

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seek larger campuswide roles. Experienced librarians can and should make major contributions by sharing information about techniques to enhance campus roles, modeling effective behavior, and creating or sharing opportunities with their junior colleagues. Newcomers must seek out these kinds of help and support to develop campus citizenship and extend the library’s influence. The changing climate in higher education calls for this level of assertiveness from librarians to claim the important roles we believe should be ours. ■