

Continuing Library Education—I

Editor's Note: With this issue C&RL News begins as a regular feature a column on continuing education. Dealing with some of the developments in continuing library education that will be of interest to academic librarians, the column is a product of ACRL's new Continuing Education Committee. In this installment, Richard Hume Werking, chairman of the committee and head of the Reference Department at the University of Mississippi Library, outlines the committee's plans.

A large number of library personnel perceive a need for opportunities that will aid their professional development. Because of this burgeoning interest in continuing education among academic librarians, ACRL last year created a standing Committee on Continuing Education. The charge given the committee was "to develop a continuing education program for ACRL, which will assist ACRL members in their professional growth, thereby benefiting them, their libraries, and the library profession." At ALA Midwinter in January, the committee met for the first time, and at both two-hour sessions, the number of interested observers far outnumbered the seven committee members in attendance.

The committee agreed that we should define "continuing education" broadly, to include a wide range of education opportunities: professional

reading, conference attendance, participation in workshops and institutes, degree programs, for-credit courses that are not degree related, etc. Our definition of continuing education would not exclude staff development or in-service training. We also agreed that we are not prepared presently to become involved with any formalized "recognition" or "evaluation" system. We intend to observe with interest how the Continuing Library Education Network and Exchange (CLENE) addresses this issue, but we believe strongly that adoption of any formal recognition system should await careful study and discussion. On this and other matters of mutual concern, the committee expects to work with CLENE.

A most important early task of the committee is to identify the continuing education needs of ACRL members not only at the beginning of programming activity but also on a continuing basis. Consequently, we are in the process of discovering what needs assessments have been made or are being made among portions of our constituency. As another important way of receiving information about continuing education needs, the committee will sponsor an open forum at the ALA meeting this summer. We want to provide ACRL members with the chance to tell us, in a setting conducive to discussion, about the kinds of educational opportunities they would like to have available to them. Details about the open forum will be forthcoming in *C&RL News*.

Once the priority needs of ACRL members are known, we expect to have identified existing programs or other opportunities that are likely to be responsive to those needs. The committee will then help make these opportunities more widely available to the division's membership. If no programs exist in some of these areas, the committee will assist in their development and sponsorship.

As an innovative educational service, the committee is in the process of establishing, on a trial basis, an "Advisory Service on Professional Development." A committee member with considerable experience in continuing library education will assist inquirers who wish to be directed to educational resources that are relevant to their needs. Interested individuals should contact Julie Blume, Reference Librarian, Health Sciences Library, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; (919) 966-2111.

Understandably, it is to their own professional associations that members turn for continuing education activities directed at their specific needs. During the months and years ahead, our committee will be working to help meet these needs of our constituency.—*Richard Hume Werking, Head, Reference Department, University of Mississippi Library.* ■■

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