

# Tips for librarians planning for accreditation visits

**1. Make sure you have all relevant materials** available from your regional accrediting agency. These may include criteria or standards, guides for self-study, or other publications prepared for aspects of self-study. Read them and note those sections which pertain to the library.

**2. Press for adequate representation of the library** on the steering committee as well as other relevant committees.

**3. Take the self-study process seriously.** It should be an opportunity for the library staff to reflect, learn, and grow. The process can be an opportunity for an internal planning effort. It can also be a learning experience about the library for your institution's faculty.

**4. Make sure you understand your institution's mission and goals** and can demonstrate how the library helps to fulfill them.

**5. All accrediting agencies are stressing accountability and outcomes assessment.** The accrediting visit is a golden opportunity for your library to assess its outcomes. *Ed. note: ACRL's Measuring Academic Library Performance: A Practical Approach (Chicago: ALA, 1991) contains field-tested, easy-to-use output measures that can help you with this.*

**6. Your self-study should be cogent, clear, and explicit.** Avoid generalities and hyperbole. Brevity is a virtue.

**7. Highlight your library's strengths.** However, be assured that no institution or library is perfect and that the visiting team will not expect perfection. Be honest about your library's shortcomings, but also be prepared to discuss your strategies for overcoming them.

**8. Go beyond the traditional library plaint** of "need more money, more books, more staff." Everyone's already heard that.

**9. Educational equity and diversity in your collection and staff** should be noted as appropriate.

**10. Your self-study should not include just traditional items** such as number of volumes or hours open, but should reflect changes in libraries such as networking, resource sharing, expedited document delivery, etc.

**11. Make certain that the accreditation team** has access to documentation that supports the claims made in the self-study.

**12. A scrapbook of all library publications**—including BI handouts, bookplates, programs—is helpful for the team to examine.

**13. Press your institution to ask for a librarian** to be on the visiting team.

**14. Take the opportunity to use the visiting team** as consultants. Ask their ideas for solving problems; they likely won't offer unless asked.

**15. Finally, consider the possibility of serving** as an evaluator for your regional agency. You'll learn and your colleagues will profit.

*Based on contributions from accreditation veterans: Mignon Adams (Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science), Keith Cottam (University of Wyoming), Ron Leach (Indiana State University at Terre Haute), Alice Schell (Middle States Association), David Walch (California Polytechnic University), and Joan Worley (Maryville College). ■*

## Share your library's news

*C&ERL News* wants to hear about your library's activities. Information in the News from the Field, Grants & Acquisitions, and People in the News columns is gathered from press releases and notices we receive. If you don't share your ideas and activities with us we can't share them with *C&ERL News* readers. Be sure to put *C&ERL News* on your mailing list today. Send notices to the Editor, *C&ERL News*, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; or bitnet: U38398@uicvm.bitnet.