
ACRL President's letter

1987—Values, planning, and creativity.

Dear ACRL Colleagues:

The beginning of the new year traditionally is a time of taking stock and of assessing our recent past and immediate future, both personally and professionally. At each Annual Conference the President submits a comprehensive report to the membership, which is subsequently published in *C&RL News*, and the Executive Director presents a similar report at the closing of the fiscal year. This New Year's review, then, is an opportunity to take stock in another way.

As I review the year, three themes stand out.

Personally, I have been concerned with creativity and innovation, my chosen theme for my presidential year, and how we can use our creative powers in our professional lives, our jobs and our Association. Much of ACRL's attention and energy has gone into what can be best characterized as *values* issues; more about those shortly. Finally, planning continues to be of vital importance to us, so that we are able to realize the goals we set for ACRL.

1987 has been a year in which value questions have dominated much of ACRL's agenda. For many of us, the long-running discussion and debate over the relationships between ALA and its divisions, embodied in the 1982 Operating Agreement and now under revision, have raised value questions. What does it mean to be part of a unified professional organization? What sorts of financial arrangements between the "parent" (ALA) and the "children" (the divisions) are appropriate—if in fact this is the proper metaphor? What degree of autonomy should divisions have? What responsi-



Joanne R. Euster

bilities do the organizations have to each other and to their members for services and programming? The list of questions could be much longer. *C&RL News*, *American Libraries* and *Library Journal* have carried extensive reports on ALA and the divisions. The discussions will extend at least until the Annual Conference in New Orleans, and possibly beyond. The decisions should reflect not just the opinions of the elected and appointed leaders, but of members at large.

Several of the new task forces appointed in 1987 also deal with value issues. The Task Force on Awards has been charged to consider an awards philosophy for ACRL, in terms of how we encourage, recognize and reward accomplishment. The Task Force on ACRL and Social Responsibility will assess how our Strategic Plan addresses issues of social responsibility. The Task Force on professional ethics will examine areas of professional ethics unique to academic and research librarians.

ACRL has begun a planning project addressing the needs of historically black colleges and universities. With support from the Mellon Foundation the first stage, an assessment and planning meeting was held in Atlanta in October, with librarians from 28 institutions participating. Next steps include efforts to acquire funding to support accreditation workshops and an NEH project targeted specifically at historically black colleges and universities.

ACRL is one of the strongest of the ALA divisions. With more than 10,000 members, an annual budget (including *Choice* operations) of a little over \$2 million, and a healthy reserve fund, we have many options for expending resources. Our budget planning process is thorough, thanks to our dedicated Budget and Finance Committee, and budgets are closely monitored, thanks to exemplary staff management. Since we close some years with an unexpended balance, a policy on the allocation of surplus funds has been adopted and the

Surplus Fund Award Committee established. The Committee is responsible for writing objectives for allocating surplus funds, developing guidelines, receiving proposals from ACRL units, and making recommendations for allocations.

Both the regular budget process and the surplus funds allocation policy are guided by the goals, objectives and strategies in the ACRL Strategic Plan. The plan was adopted in 1986 and was developed with widespread participation by ACRL members. Now our challenge is to keep the plan up to date, so that it continues to reflect our values and priorities as we make budgetary and operating decisions. All ACRL units are being asked to contribute to the regular and ongoing revision of the plan.

It is too easy, as we have learned from experiences in our libraries, to complete a plan, congratulate ourselves on a job well done, and then file it away. Yet of all organizations, it is vital that a large membership organization such as ACRL has a plan which is a living document to rely on. The complexities of such a wide geographic spread, of meeting only two times a year, and of having management and leadership shared between elected leaders and professional staff all call for a clear and current touchstone for guidance. The Planning Committee will soon be asking for additional advice on unit goals and objectives and how they fit into the plan. The informed advice of members will be critical to our success.

My theme for the year is "Fostering Creativity and Innovation." As President I have had the privilege and pleasure of attending numerous meetings

of chapters and affiliated organizations already this year. My talks to chapters have been primarily concerned with creativity and leadership, and the need for both as academic and research librarians cope with the challenges of the information society. The new "Innovations" column in *C&RL News* is one forum for sharing creative ideas. My President's program on July 11 in New Orleans will also be on the topic of creativity. An exciting and involving experience is promised!

The most exciting innovations, to me, are not the technological wonders which have become almost commonplace in libraries, but the *social* innovations we are creating. Often we are unaware of social innovations because many people may be involved in their creation and because they are evolutionary, based on a cycle of trial, adjustment and adaptation. Nevertheless, they *are* innovations, and they call upon some of our greatest creative powers. Social innovations are such things as new organizational structures, new service designs, the development of new ways of looking at our world. They are also found in our goals, plans and budgets for our professional association—those elements which articulate our professional values!

ACRL is a lively, dynamic organization. It strives to be responsible, responsive and innovative. I think we have much to be proud of, as we look back at the past year, and forward to 1988.

Joanne R. Euster
ACRL President



ACRL executive summary

Executive Committee

The most significant event of the month was the meeting of the ACRL Executive Committee at Headquarters on November 2. At their meeting, the group took several key actions:

The Committee approved the request of CJCLS to sponsor (jointly with AECT/CCAIT) a Teleconference on CD-ROM Technology to be held in April 1988. Details may be found on p.10 of this issue.

The Committee approved a proposal for allocating "surplus funds." It is ACRL policy that each year's budget revenues equal or exceed expenses. For several years, ACRL financial performance has been better than expected, and the Association has been building a fund balance as a reserve for special projects and emergencies. Recently the Board set as a goal the maintenance of a fund balance equal to 50% of the average annual expenditures for the previous three years. At the end of the 1986-87 fiscal year, the fund balance was greater than that goal, and the Budget and Finance Com-

mittee suggested that a mechanism be established to allocate these "surplus funds." Whenever there is a surplus, proposals will be solicited from ACRL units and a committee will award the funds. Further information will be sent to all unit heads soon.

The Committee approved the establishment of two new task forces: one on Professional Ethics and one on ACRL and Social Responsibility.

The Committee took three actions in connection with planning a project to serve libraries in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's):

- an effort will be made to seek funding for three annual accreditation workshops;
- funding will be sought for an NEH project targeted specifically at HBCU's and their communities;
- staff will draft a proposal for a project to collect information about HBCU libraries for use principally in accreditation work.

Planning workshop

On the day following the Executive Committee meeting, the first planning workshop involving