

## Editor's Letter

*Megan Lowe, ACRL-LA Newsletter Editor, Reference Librarian, University of Louisiana at Monroe*

Well – it's been a while since ACRL-LA put out a newsletter. The last one came out last year – the Summer/Fall 2007 issue. Several wonderful things have happened since then; this newsletter will talk about some of them. I'd like to take this opportunity, though, to highlight a few things:

**Workshops & Panels:** Since the fall of 2007, ACRL-LA has hosted two major pre-LUC workshops. "Assessment of Academic Library Effectiveness" took place in October 2007. For 2008 we hosted "Publish and Flourish: Writing for Academic Librarians," with the esteemed Dr. John Budd of the University of Missouri as our keynote speaker, with Dr. Anthony Fonseca, Dr. Melissa Goldsmith, and Sigrid Kelsey. Both were very well attended and received great feedback. We're already in the midst of planning for next year's pre-LUC workshop! If you have an idea for a workshop, for either pre-LUC or during the year, please make sure to get in touch with us and share!

In the spring of 2008 ACRL-LA hosted "The Future of the University Library: Strategic Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," a panel discussion held at the Lafayette Economic Development Authority which featured Dr Julie Todaro, Dr. Thomas Armstrong, and John T. Landry.

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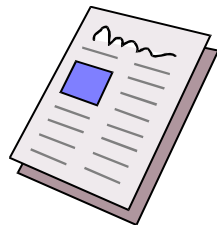
**Website:** ACRL-LA now has its own domain! The website has been moved from McNeese's servers and has its own webspace! Thanks to our webmaster, Karen Niemla, and all her hard work! Not only do we have a website, but we also have forums where members can discuss and debate and network! Check it out: <http://www.acrlla.org>.

**By-Laws:** In order to update ourselves and our practices, so that we stay in touch with the needs and concerns of academic librarians in the state of Louisiana, the Constitution and By-Laws committee has made some revisions to the By-laws. It's important that you, the constituency, review these changes and vote on them. You can see the changes and get directions about voting on the website. Just head to the site and click on "By-Laws" to see the changes and get directions about voting.

**Mentorship:** A new committee was created this year in order to examine and address the question of mentorship for academic librarians in the state. A survey, created and administered by Josh Finnell and Karen Niemla, went out on the LALINC listserv in July. The results of that survey were shared at LUC in a presentation given by ACRL-LA President Michael Matthews, LLA Liaison Rob Bremer, and myself, Megan Lowe, Chair of the ACRL-LA Mentorship committee.

**Executive Board:** The Executive Board has met several times this year and made some great plans and done some great brainstorming. The minutes for these meetings and others can be found on <http://www.acrlla.org>.

That's it for the highlights. ACRL-LA has a lot of great irons in the fire – keep an eye out for newsletters, so you know what's going on! Remember, too – if you have an idea or a news item for the ACRL-LA newsletter, be sure to drop me a line at [lowe@ulm.edu](mailto:lowe@ulm.edu) – I look forward to hearing from you guys!



## Message from the President

*Michael Matthews, Watson Memorial Library, Northwestern State University of Louisiana*

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish." Proverbs 29:18*

Academic librarians are, as a profession, beset by a series of perdurable challenges. Being lovers of order and erudition, we develop systems that resolve chaos and combat ignorance on a worldwide scale. Despite our lofty aims and purposes, we feel we are frequently overlooked by our university administrations, which may have—to put it kindly—other priorities than bestowing knowledge on the young. We have the lingering and panicky feeling that administrators believe, despite their blandishments, that libraries and librarians are quaint relics of a pre-Internet era. We are haunted by the specters of our own obsolescence. After all, information is ubiquitous, and as we are led to believe, free as birdsong.

Nothing of course, could be further from the truth. But, a cursory survey of our professional literature will tell you that since the advent of remotely accessible online information systems, the value of the university library as a place has changed utterly. The authority of libraries, and by extension, librarians themselves has undergone a sea change. Thirty years ago, a university library was the portal to an information universe for students and faculty. If you wanted to know who cited whom in what publication, you walked to the library and consulted the reference librarian on a permterm search in the Social Sciences Index. Now, a researcher will find—quite by random—the citation she

is looking for on Google Books. The citation she finds may be incomplete, falsely attributed, or otherwise inadequate, but online searching is convenient and in most cases, immediate.

Colleagues who are engaged in information literacy issues will be quick to point out that the roles of librarians have changed in response. Library instruction was once ancillary to reference service, now it is the primary mission of any good public services department. Such a transformation of our profession was a necessary response to the sudden explosion of online information. But is it sufficient? What of the cataloging, acquisitions, and systems departments? How are economic trends and technological innovations determining the future of our universities? Will libraries and librarians be agents of change, or will our futures be determined by administrative caprice?

These pressing issues are further compounded by the fact that the profession is growing older, and fewer young librarians are being recruited. Many of us are starting careers in academic librarianship after working in a variety of fields. However, this workforce is older and will serve only a limited amount of time before applying for retirement. The professional needs of these second career librarians are markedly different from those of the "Generation Y". Younger librarians may be more technologically inclined, but many do not understand workplace cultures or their intrinsic ethical and social ambiguities.

In response to these cultural, social, and technical challenges, our chapter is

working to develop a pilot program for mentoring academic librarians. Our mentorship program is based on a widely shared intellectual platform: By investigating the elusive nature of academic librarianship, we can better communicate our professional values to those beginning their careers, as well as provide a forum where those values can be freely expressed. In order to survive—indeed, endure—as a profession, we must articulate a cohesive vision of who we are and the importance of our work.

To this end, I have decided to use some of our chapter funds and the collective time and effort of the executive board to provide a series of focus groups around the state. The purpose of these focus groups will be to interview librarians on what they believe to be the core values of our profession, and how those values have changed over the years. Our interviews will explore the transformations of the librarian profession, as well as the causes and effects of these transformations. Have academic libraries changed because of the voluntary actions of librarians? Or is the post-modern library the product of social and technological forces beyond our control? To what extent are librarians shaping the institutions where they work? Is the library the true heart of the university?

I hope you will join us as we make our way around the state. These events are open to all professional librarians, and our discussions will take approximately 90 minutes, and we plan to visit at least five universities throughout Louisiana. The executive board will meet in early January and finalize a schedule. If you have ideas, suggestions, or strong

opinions on how we could conduct these focus groups, please send me your correspondence at [matthewsm@nsula.edu](mailto:matthewsm@nsula.edu).

Thank you very much for your continuing support of your chapter. I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Matthews  
President of ACRL-LA  
June 2008-June 2009

## **The Future of the University Library: Strategic Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Karen Niemla, Reference Librarian,  
University of Louisiana at Monroe*

On January 24th 2008, ACRL-LA held a cost-free panel discussion on the promotion of academic libraries at the Lafayette Economic Development Authority. The three panelist speakers were Dr. Julie Todaro, ACRL National President and Dean for Library Services at the Austin Community College, Dr. Thomas Armstrong, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at LSU-Alexandria, and John T. Landry, a Certified Fund Raising Executive and Director of Development for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The day began with breakfast pastries, coffee, and the Spring 2008 Business Meeting, at which many issues were discussed, including the possibility of migrating the ACRL-LA web site (since completed), and serious discussion about

creating a member directory (since abandoned). Following the meeting was a Gale Centage-funded lunch from Roly-Poly, and afterwards, Michael E. Matthews made introductory statements and each panelist gave a presentation.

John T. Landry spoke about how and why donation occurs and how it can be attracted. Libraries are often in need of grants and donations, and one way of acquiring them is to pursue them aggressively. Of the most common reasons why people give money, "tax considerations" is not the first, but in fact, the twentieth. This means that a significant part of the process is about forging emotional bonds, yet there are also pragmatic concerns such as forms and letters. He included for each attendee a personalized folder with his/her name on scholarship pamphlets, illustrating how this can cause a donor to feel emotionally involved. He also showed everyone a letter that resulted in \$400,000 in endowments and a place in the donor's will. Other ways to attract library donations are through other university entities, such as alumni foundations, making the library more attractive physically, marketing, and fundraising events.

Dr. Thomas Armstrong made the rather bold statement that librarians are directly involved in student retention: they help students get over obstacles that prevent them from getting the information they need to learn [in other words, information literacy]. The physical space of the library is important to making them feel welcome. Librarians need to be partners with faculty and participate as faculty. SACS investigates not only for the availability of assistance, but its effectiveness. Librarians should explain

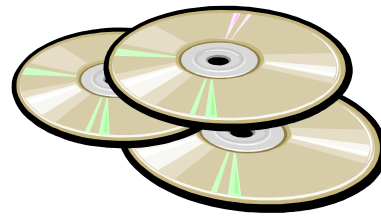
to students not only the "how" of research but also the "why." They need to have a University-wide view, and see themselves and their value within its context. Cutting funding to academic libraries makes sense to administrators who are unwise. Library directors should champion their libraries because it is an important part of teaching students well.

As the subject is gravely pertinent to librarians in Louisiana and other states, much of Dr. Julie Todaro's speech was about how to argue the value of libraries for any purpose (and in regards to SACS accreditation). When attempting to convince others for more library funding or support, one should be persuasive and form an argument for the value of the library in a very concrete and "corporate" way. One should look at the rules by which those one is trying to persuade play, their goals and their language, and explain the library's value in that context so that they will understand. For instance, this could mean making a connection between the library and student retention or information literacy goals. In promoting the library and its services, librarians should be proactive and not reactive.

The individual presentations were followed by a "Q & A" session moderated by Michael Matthews, which included questions about, among other subjects, the propriety of business models in regards to higher education, outreach, and cooperation with public libraries.

More information about the panel discussion, documents, presentations, and the minutes of the ACRL-LA Spring

2008 Business Meeting are all available at [acrlla.org](http://acrlla.org).



### **Starting a Mentorship Program for Academic Librarians**

This year at LLA, in Shreveport, Mike Matthews, ACRL-LA President, presented "A Pilot Program for Mentoring Louisiana's Academic Librarians." In the same time slot, ALA President Loriene Roy was also presenting on recruiting and mentoring students and librarians of color. The two sessions were subsequently combined, resulting in an excellent panel discussion on mentorship in Louisiana.

The discussion led to ACRL-LA seriously considering the creation of a mentoring program. The Executive Board did a little research and uncovered a mentoring program for medical librarians in the state, pioneered by Gail Kwasik. Ms. Kwasik graciously agreed to talk with the Executive Board about her experiences developing the mentoring program, communicating with the Board via phone during an Executive Board meeting. She shared some very useful insights and tips that the Board considered while working through preliminary ideas for the program.

In order to better coordinate the mentoring program, a committee was created to oversee the various projects that would provide the various pieces of the mentoring puzzle. Megan Lowe was asked to chair the committee, and several members of the Executive Board volunteered to serve on the committee. Karen Niemla and Josh Finnell were tasked with the creation of a survey that would gather demographic and environmental data; the data from the survey would provide the committee and ACRL-LA with a clearer blueprint for the program.

The survey, conducted in July, produced some pretty surprising results. The Board had developed several working hypotheses that were expected to be born out by the survey, including the fact that new librarians need and would want mentoring; that older librarians would want to mentor; and that all librarians, regardless of age or professional level, would want to improve their skills. The survey results did not entirely support the hypotheses. For example, 72% (30 of 86) of respondents indicated that they were not interested in serving as mentors. Moreover, only 15% (6 respondents) indicated that they wanted a mentor. Interestingly, 66% of respondents had 5 or more years of experience, but 37% did not feel that they had enough experience to be a mentor.

Following the survey, the committee revisited its hypotheses. It decided that the vision it had developed would not meet the needs of academic librarians in the state. It was determined that more information was needed to adjust the vision to meet those needs. More surveys are planned, as well as focus

groups throughout the state, in order to provide a more casual forum for communication.

Mike Matthews, Megan Lowe, and Rob Bremer (LLA Liaison to ACRL-LA) presented the results of the survey at LUC in Baton Rouge in their presentation “Starting a Mentorship Program for Academic Librarians.” That presentation can be found on the LOUIS website (LOUIS home > LUC 2008 Presentations > “Starting a Mentoring Program for Academic Librarians”). In addition to sharing the results of the survey, the presentation also included a discussion of the problems surrounding the establishment of the program and LLA’s role in the project.

Since LUC, several more ACRL-LA members have volunteered to serve on the committee. The committee is making plans to host several focus groups around the state in the spring in order to facilitate face-to-face discussion about mentorship and plans in particular to include SLIS. ACRL-LA is confident that the program will be up and running in 2009 and looks forward to input from academic librarians from around the state, as well as getting the mentoring program going!



## **Ruling Our Own Domain: ACRLLA.ORG**

*Karen Niemla, Reference Librarian,  
University of Louisiana at Monroe*

The new ACRL-LA web site has been up and running since late summer. This is how we arrived at this state of affairs.

Previously, ACRL-LA's web site was hosted at McNeese State University. My notes from the Spring 2008 Business Meeting say that the group was considering moving to the ALA's website, but that the ALA had a "content management system in place," and this would limit the control we would have over the. At the next board meeting in March 2008, there was further talk about moving the website to its own domain and hosting. Then-Webmaster Josh Finnell and I were given the task of researching hosting options. During this process, the position of Webmaster was passed to me by Josh Finnell (and voted upon as well), and I was/am very grateful for this honor.

Ultimately, Hostgator.com was chosen for hosting and Godaddy.com was chosen for handling the domain name "acrlla.org." 3 years of service was bought from each. Josh Finnell and I then transferred the files from the old site to the new one. I created new pages from the old site with "Seamonkey," a free html editor, using colors derived from the ACRL national site and their logo. To localize the site in a distinct way, I used a photo of Lake Martin. The site went "live" in early August, and the older ACRL-LA web site hosted at McNeese is now officially defunct.

Having our own web space with databases also means that we can install

free web applications such as blogs, Moodle (yes, anyone can have it if they want to install it), and message boards. PHP scripts are simple but useful. With the help of a template, I created forms for membership and Pre-LUC registration. Many options were considered for Pre-LUC registration, but all of those cost money, either per registrant or a percentage of profits. The PHP form did not cost anything (and boy does it look it!).

The latest significant development is the opening of our discussion forum at [acrlla.org/forum](http://acrlla.org/forum), which is free to anyone. Bulletin boards were online even before the WWW, and they are still popular because they work in a unique way. On message boards, content comes from its users as a community. As forum administrator, my role is primarily to keep discussion organized and civil, but I am not who originates ideas. Only you can do that by asking questions, answering them, or sharing something that made you laugh.

Similar to other online communities, you have a profile and can add a picture, biography, contact information, etc. You do not have to reveal your identity to other users. You can communicate through the board privately with other users and can program the forum to notify you of new posts. You can also choose a different look for the forum as you see it. All of this is explained at [acrlla.org/forum](http://acrlla.org/forum). This could be the online hangout for Louisianan Academic librarians. But only if you come by!



## 2008-2009 Executive Board

President .....	Michael Matthews
VP/President-Elect .....	Tony Fonseca
Secretary-Treasurer .....	Jessica Hutchings
Past President .....	Kevin Merriman
Archives .....	Kathie Bordelon
Awards.....	Boris Teske
Constitution and By-laws.....	Melissa Goldsmith
Legislative Liaison .....	Rebecca Blakeley
LLA Liaison.....	Robert Bremer
Membership.....	Jessica Hutchings
Mentorship.....	Megan Lowe
Webmaster.....	Karen Niemla
Publicity.....	Josh Finnell
Newsletter.....	Megan Lowe
SLIS Representative .....	Alma Dawson
SLIS Student Liaison.....	Clare Castleberry

## COMING SOON!

Coming spring 2009! The Mentorship Committee will be hosting several focus groups around the state in order to facilitate better communication regarding the future of the mentorship program. We will be sending out emails with details about the groups. Please plan to attend – without your input, we can't develop the best possible program!