

# Exciting things happen @ your library™

## ACRL advertisements in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*

by Larry Hardesty and Theresa Byrd

The local academic library is no longer the only game in town. Several commercial information providers, such as Questia, XanEdu, ebrary, and Jones e-global library, are aggressively marketing their products directly to the traditional academic library's constituents. Some, such as Questia, market their service directly to students using national television ads (with limited success). Others, such as Jones e-global, market to institutions with advertisements in such publications as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.<sup>1</sup>

Theresa Byrd, director of libraries at Ohio Wesleyan University and ACRL Board member, decided that academic librarians should not stand by while these for-profit organizations vigorously promote their message to the academic community.

At ALA's 2001 Midwinter Meeting, Byrd proposed a course of action to promote academic libraries, and the ACRL Board of Directors formed a subcommittee to implement her plan.<sup>2</sup> The Board agreed to sponsor a series of full-page ads in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* with the purpose of reminding readers (academic administrators, faculty members, and others) of the contribution that academic libraries and academic librarians make.

Under the heading "Exciting things happen @ your library," ACRL sponsored four ads dur-

ing the past year.<sup>3</sup> In the first ad, ACRL along with Blackwell's Book Services, the award sponsor, congratulated the first winners of ACRL's Excellence in Academic Libraries award. The three remaining ads focused on academic administrators, classroom faculty members, and students, respectively. These color ads included quotes from each group stating the importance of academic librarians and the library at their institutions.<sup>1</sup>

Subcommittee members sought the help of university, college, and community college librarians to solicit quotes from the groups that would be highlighted in the ads. Colleagues often responded with numerous quotes, and the committee worked with ACRL staff to select the quotes to be used.

### Making use of the ads

Although the full impact of the advertising campaign is difficult to measure, many librarians have reported making use of the ads to successfully gain attention for the libraries on their campuses. Marianne Gaunt, university librarian at Rutgers University Libraries, should win an award for using the advertisements in the widest variety of ways. The university circulated copies of the ad featuring its president in its weekly "media clips," the University Libraries included copies of it in its Friends of

### About the authors

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the Libraries Advisory Council packet, the libraries' development officer includes it in information she sends to donors and supporters, and the University Libraries noted it on its staff electronic list and staff paper. Gaunt said, "The ad had benefit in the library as a morale booster."

At Emerson College, Mickey Zemon, executive director of the library, reported, "The administration and faculty were thrilled that one of Emerson's faculty was selected for the *Chronicle* ad. The selection was announced at the Faculty Assembly, in the campus newspaper, and as a 'bragging point' during Alumni Weekend."

As a final touch, they enlarged the ad to poster size and put it on an easel near the entrance of the library for everyone to see.

Steven Bell, director of the Gutman Library at Philadelphia University, and Sherry Duren, information services/serials librarian at Gwinnett University Center Library, also enlarged the ads and posted them near the front of their libraries. Bell made a copy of the second ad (with the quotes from faculty members) and sent them to more than 400 of his faculty members with a note to remind them that the librarians are there to help.

Patricia Kreitz, director of technical information services at the Stanford University Linear Accelerator Center and ACRL Board member, made color copies and sent them to many senior administrators on campus and in the laboratory. She also has a copy signed by Burton Richter, the Nobel Prize winner in Physics who is quoted in one of the ads, hanging in a place of honor in the library.

Even librarians who did not have the quotes they submitted selected for the ads found ways to use the quotes on campus.

Chris Nugent, library director at Maryville College, said,

"While the quotes I submitted from student leaders were not used for a *Chronicle* ad, I

used them internally. We used them as part of a logo on our five-year review Web site and made bookmarks with [the quotes] on the front and the URL to our Web portal on the back for distribution to the entire faculty. The quotes made such an impression on some faculty that they were again used in a speech at a college award ceremony."

Nugent added, "The project gave me excellent opportunities for marketing our own library here on campus. I do appreciate that!"

Henry Adams once stated, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." Similarly, while it is difficult to measure the impact of the *Chronicle* ads, they have the potential to influence our colleagues in higher education well into the future.

## Notes

1. The various commercial information providers are discussed in more detail elsewhere. Most

notably: Steven J. Bell, "New Information Marketplace Competitors: Issues and Strategies for Academic Libraries," *portals: Libraries and the Academy* 2, no. 2 (2002): 277-303; and Mignon Adams, "Questia, XanEdu and Friends: What Campuses and Libraries Can Learn from Them," *Library Issues* 21 (May 2001): 1-4.

2. The subcommittee consists of Theresa Byrd, Debra

Dancik, Larry Hardesty, and Mary Reichel. The ACRL Board approved the implementation of the advertisement series at the Midwinter 2001 meeting.

3. "@ your library" is an ALA trademarked public relations theme.

4. Four ads have been published in the following issues of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*: congratulations to winners of 2001 Excellence in Academic Libraries Award, 47 (April 20, 2001): A41; administrator quotes, 48 (November 16, 2001): A15; faculty member quotes, 48 (April 12, 2002): A27; and student quotes, 48 (May 31, 2002): A13. ■



The Abell Library at Austin College's bulletin board by Pat Means, library media specialist.