

Brad Warren and Devin Savage Share Plans for ACRL

Cast an Informed Vote in the Election this Spring

Ed. Note: C&RL News offered the candidates for ACRL vice-president/president-elect, Brad Warren and Devin Savage, this opportunity to share their views with the membership. Although many of the issues facing ACRL are discussed informally at meetings, we want to use this venue to provide a forum to all members. We hope this will assist you in making an informed choice when you vote in the election this spring.

Brad Warren

I have been a librarian for 24 years and a member of ACRL for the past 15 years. I am a first-generation college student who took an interesting and meandering path to librarianship. My journey, starting as an engineer at Purdue University and eventually finding my passion for libraries at Indiana University in the stacks as a student worker, enabled me to discover work that fostered my interests in learning, creativity, experimentation, and trying new things. After graduation, I secured a job as a staff member, decided to pursue my MLS, and made a career of being an academic librarian. Upon graduation, I was fortunate to be hired as a Library Fellow at North Carolina State University—part of the first group hired into that program. Since my first shelving job and through my series of positions up to my current as dean of libraries at Augusta University, I have always either worked in access services or had it in my area of responsibility.



My initial engagement with ACRL stemmed from my view of a gap in the existence of a clear national library organization that supported the full scope of access services work in academic libraries, which was undergoing significant change. My decision to join ACRL and get involved was because I felt that it was the right organization to support my areas of interest and shared my commitment to elevating the significance of all types of library work contributing to the success of the academic mission. After joining, I was encouraged to bring a proposal to the Board to create the Access Services Interest Group. While that initiative was transformational to me, my hope was for it to be valuable to other Access Services workers across the ACRL membership. The ability to conceive, lead, and create initiatives such as the interest group and subsequent Framework for Access Services Librarianship stands as a testament to the impactful work that ACRL can provide its membership.

Finding an organization that saw value in me, my work, and my passions is why I joined ACRL. Over the past 15 years, my involvement has been diverse, including serving on the editorial board of *College & Research Libraries*, contributing to program planning with ACRL conferences, working with the University Libraries Section, and serving on the Standards Committee. My focus has always been on connecting the work of ACRL directly to the personal benefit of its members, which is a tenet of what I would pursue as vice-president/president-elect of ACRL.

ACRL has excelled in demonstrating the value of academic libraries at the institutional level. It has tackled the work of providing a focused and intentional approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion and has not diminished those efforts in an increasingly challenging environment for this work. It continues to provide benefit through the work of its various sections, interest groups, and discussion groups to enable academic library employees a place to connect, share, and develop in their various areas of interest and specialization. The inherent challenges and growth of our work, however, have been heightened over the past few years because of increasing threats to the tenets of academic freedom, budgetary challenges, and low morale.

If elected, I will concentrate on two key areas to provide personal and professional benefits to individual academic library employees:

Support for Academic Freedom

Challenges to academic freedom are escalating at a pace in which library workers are ill-equipped to address. I propose developing a focused, intentional, and activist approach to provide toolkits, resources, and a sharing of best practices to academic library workers facing these challenges while also fostering partnerships with other faculty and national organizations. Academic freedom supports the ability for libraries and library workers to create services and collections that support intellectual freedom. This work contains materials and approaches that may challenge prevailing norms, protects the privacy of its users, and champions the cause of freedom of thought and expression through programming on campuses. It is also equally important for individual academic library workers to pursue their areas of research and academic interest. So much work has already been done by ALA to support censorship and book challenges with public and school libraries, but there is a gap in similar support for academic librarians facing challenges to academic freedom from external and internal pressures related to workers' personal academic freedom and professional responsibilities. This initiative would be a first and important step to transition from statements of support to the collecting, disseminating, and sharing of resources that benefit library workers facing these challenges.

Connecting Institutional Success to Individual Success

ACRL's longstanding commitment and work to support academic libraries at the organizational level should be clearly articulated and extended to the direct benefit of individual library workers. I propose providing support, resources, and the creation of metrics that connect and measure quality-of-life indicators such as salary, morale, and personal well-being to success indicators at the organizational level. From my own work to address salary inequities and changing job descriptions to be more resilient and oriented towards the future, there is inadequate information to demonstrate accurate and competitive compensation

across states, regions, and the country as well as mental health and self-care support for the unique pressures that academic library workers face. Support from ACRL to develop resources and metrics for the health of both the library organization and its workers is impactful in increasingly challenging budgetary and academic environments. The pandemic was a watershed event for library workers at retirement age and many who questioned the personal value proposition of the work versus the quality of life. As vice-president/president-elect, I will make it a priority to work with ACRL leadership and its members to support library workers at all levels to help connect their organizational success directly to personal success and well-being. We cannot succeed in our work if we do not prioritize our own well-being equally to that of our organizational and professional success.

I am humbled to be nominated for the role of vice-president/president-elect of ACRL. If elected, I will make it a priority to provide tools, resources, and support for individual library workers at all levels to support their academic freedom and personal well-being. While I know that this is a large task, I have personal experience with tackling these kinds of initiatives in my work and organizational experience and look forward to the opportunity to work with ACRL staff, membership, and leadership to enhance and support academic library workers success and well-being.

Devin Savage

I am honored and humbled to stand for the Association for College and Research Libraries vice-president/president-elect. Libraries have been a refuge for me for my entire life, a place where I was able to get access to information, education, and even socialization in ways that were otherwise inaccessible to me. When I became a librarian, ACRL was there for me, offering me resources, professional development, relevant research, and opportunities for connection and leadership development. I was able to dramatically increase my understanding of the scholarly publishing landscape through engagement with, and service on, the Research and Scholarly Environment Committee. It was the first place I encountered our profession's legislative advocacy, as I worked with the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition to create and moderate the SPARC Forum at the ALA Annual Conference. I am proud of the work that ACRL has done, and it is important to me, regardless of the result of this election, to add my energy and time to advance their efforts.

I believe in two core ideas: that the provision of information resources is a public good, and that education improves lives. I always check in on the ACRL Member of the Week, as I find it fascinating to see what my colleagues value, and how they describe themselves and describe ACRL. To generalize a bit from these answers, it would seem that ACRL is comprised of proactive, adaptable, and curious members who feel that they belong to an association that offers them connection, resources, and professional development opportunities. I am inspired by these people, and I am grateful for the opportunities that ACRL offers. And I think what ACRL offers is extraordinary. In addition to networking, professional development support, and legislative advocacy, the association provides a depth and breadth of freely open resources, open access publications, and freely open programming



that should not be taken for granted. In my own work, I have relied on such resources as the Framework for Information Literacy Sandbox, the Scholarly Communication Toolkit, and the Standards for Libraries in Higher Education. Even in just the last year ACRL has launched a new Academic Library Advocacy Toolkit, and they also acquired, redesigned, and relaunched the Threshold Achievement Test for Information Literacy (TATIL). The ACRL Board of Directors added Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as a fifth goal area in the Plan for Excellence and charged task forces to apply an EDI lens to nominations processes and policies, volunteer recognition practices, and awards. The Diversity Alliance has been moved from a task force to a standing committee. The New Roles and Changing Landscape Committee's Diversity Pipeline Subcommittee launched a Library Worker Retention Toolkit. To me, this is all evidence of ACRL's timely and pragmatic responsiveness to member needs.

I have been fortunate enough to have been involved with ACRL in a number of projects. In my work with the Research and Scholarly Environment Committee, I was able to serve as the Scholarly Communications Discussion Group convener. It was in this role that I was able to address the issue of ACRL's Scholarly Communication email list, and institute moderation, a code of conduct, and guidelines for posting for that list. This made a visible and notable difference in assuring collegial discourse throughout the remainder of the existence of that email list. I was able to be a part of ACRL's Library Transforms Taskforce and led a presentation on the rollout of the toolkit at the ACRL 2019 Conference. I have been a member of the Academic Library Trends and Statistics Editorial Board since 2018 and was chair during the important transition of the platform to ACRL's new Benchmark tool. I put in a lot of work with former ACRL Associate Director Mary Jane Petrowski to ensure that this platform was functional and that we provided awareness and support to our member institutions regarding its use. Working on this editorial board has also involved serving on and collaborating with other groups, such as the ACRL Publications Coordinating Committee, the ACRL/ALA/ARL/IPEDS Advisory Task force, the NISO Z39.7 Standing Committee, and the editorial board for ACRL's Project Outcome.

In my career as a library professional and paraprofessional, I have been deeply committed to building inclusive and communicative working environments that center trust and belonging. This work often aligns neatly with strategic goals of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. I have been fortunate to have gained significant experience in organizational and governance affairs. As a paraprofessional, I revived a defunct staff association at the Northwestern University Library in 2006 in order to restore communication and participatory empowerment throughout that organization. I have been able to contribute across campus at Illinois Tech in a wide variety of institutional, staff, and faculty affairs, including on accreditation, strategic planning, and anti-racism committees. I was lucky enough to be supported so that I could attend leadership institutes offered by ALA and Harvard. I have served on the Board of Directors for Chicago Collections Consortium and the Center for Research Libraries, as well as serving as chair for ALA Library Research Round Table. When assessment, user experience, and design thinking started to make their way into job responsibilities for librarians, I co-founded a local group to offer free training and networking for librarians to gain experience. Even as this group was created (Library UX Chicago) and began its activities, we conferred with former ACRL Senior Strategist for Special Initiatives Kara Malenfant about how we might collaborate with ACRL. I love this work because I care about the people working in libraries, and I want to see their excellent work supported, recognized, and celebrated.

There are significant challenges facing academic libraries. Our work in information literacy will not go unaffected by recent developments in generative AI. Threats to defund libraries, criminalize the provision of certain books, and install political oversight over academic institutions are very real. In addition, many higher education institutions are grappling with an expected demographic cliff and student behavior shifts that have likely been accelerated by downstream effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. After a very brief respite, vendors are again increasing their annual price inflation and are seeking new ways to maximize revenues. In many parts of the country, we see revenue decreasing for both private and public colleges and universities while demands for a digital transformation increase. In my own work, I have had to work very hard to maintain consensus around library staffing and resources despite competing interests from administrators, faculty, students, vendors, and consultants. These crucial conversations are not always easy, but they are absolutely necessary.

Academic libraries are fortunate to exist in a space where collaborating with each other doesn't undercut the competitiveness of our parent institutions—in fact, it strengthens them. Our consortiums, state networks, and most importantly, our professional associations should be a foundational resource for our collective responses to these challenges. I do see various options for ACRL and its membership to work together in the coming years. We must leverage the advocacy tools that we have at our disposal. Articulating our value is one of our most important jobs in the current environment. ACRL's embrace of equity, diversity, and inclusion is commendable and aligns with the needs of today's students. Academic libraries are doing a lot of good work in providing welcoming, inclusive, and diverse spaces, and restoring equity in ways that really matter to students, like textbook affordability. Although sometimes ACRL's legislative advocacy can be hidden a bit behind all the day-to-day practical support that the association offers, it is incredibly important. I fully support ACRL's current priorities in this area, namely, upholding intellectual freedom, federal funding for libraries, net neutrality, open access and federally funded research, and the Affordable College Textbook Act (HR1811/S.978). And finally, we must strengthen our communication with, and support of, the executive leadership at ACRL. They must be empowered to move things forward on our behalf. There may be future changes needed in business methods, organizational structures, or priorities—but we can't compromise on our values or undercut what might be our best chance to innovate solutions that will work at scale.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to both ACRL and Illinois Tech for their support of me in this nomination and election process. Although the landscape sometimes seems forever changed, I have seen promising signs for the future. I loved last year's ACRL Conference in Pittsburgh, and I look forward to the planned return of ACRL Immersion in summer 2024. Pragmatically, what ACRL offers in support of its members is an excellent return on investment for membership. Collaboration leads to increased knowledge and development, and ACRL provides a place for real, iterative development for academic librarians. Even though we, and our professional association, are facing some challenges, I believe that ACRL will be able to help academic librarians and libraries, because when we work together, we can make a difference. ✍