

William Crowe and Loriene Roy

Meet the candidates for ALA president

Vote in the election this spring

The ACRL Board of Directors posed the following questions to the candidates for ALA President, and *C&RL News* is pleased to publish their responses. Each candidate was given 1,200 words in which he or she could choose to offer a brief opening statement and to respond to the questions; the responses are identified under each of the six questions.

Opening statement

Crowe: My perspective as a candidate for ALA President-Elect is informed by almost 40 years of library experience and work in library membership organizations. To learn more about me and my career, please see information at my blog: billcrowe.blogspot.com/.

We need leaders who understand the strengths and problems of America's libraries and who can weave together the threads of our diversity to yield a stronger ALA. Equally important to the future vitality of ALA will be leaders who can speak with passion, joy, and some wit to leaders in the other professions with which we must make common cause.

In this age of rapid change, the President of ALA must be able to articulate in fresh and accessible ways the core value and values of libraries. Any president of ALA must be a capable teller of the library story, to hold the attention of and, therefore, help to win support in the communities we serve.

Questions for ALA candidates

1. What are your top three to five most important issues facing librarianship



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Loriene Roy

today? Why? What do you see that ALA can do to address them??

Crowe: ALA can help us explain to the people we serve, especially younger people, but also to some seasoned academics, what it is libraries and library people do and how we continue to meet society's needs.

Derived from the first is the imperative that ALA help us make an effective case to decision makers for the resources we need to meet the responsibilities of libraries and gain the attention of able people from all sectors of society to consider librarianship as a career.

Roy: One of the most important issues in our field is the need to advocate for libraries and library workers. This advocacy needs to take place through informing citizens about

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the work of libraries and through influencing information policy, particularly regarding privacy issues. ALA can respond by continuing to support the ALA Washington Office, by responding quickly and decisively to legislative issues, and by maintaining the advocacy institutes held at ALA Midwinter Meetings and in train-the-trainer events around the country. Other critical issues include recruitment of new professionals into the field and into service in ALA, improving salaries and benefits, and updating professional skills to meet the present and future needs of library patrons. ALA can continue to address these issues by entering into collaborations with LIS programs, by supporting and working with ALA-APA, and by investigating new ways to deliver content to ALA members.

2. Share with us your vision of what librarians and libraries will be like in the next 10 to 20 years.

Crowe: This is a tall order. My study of library history suggests that once we are able to look past the inevitable changes in technology, physical space, and methods of operation and delivery of service that will take place in the United States and in many other parts of the world, we will see evidence of: 1) a much more diverse workforce that has developed new ways to identify with the needs and aspirations of the constituencies libraries serve, 2) more everyday connections that libraries have with other information professions (e.g., with archivists), and 3) a greater sensitivity among libraries to look beyond the local setting, often to a global context.

Roy: Libraries and librarians face myriad possibilities as we move into the future. Some libraries will forgo technological innovation but may serve as well-loved and well-supported centers for print information. Other libraries will thrive as information commons and provide social space for human interaction. Still other libraries will serve as laboratories of discovery, providing the settings and resources for the development and testing of new ideas. Librarians' roles may expand to include services as information archivists

or family information specialists, and some librarians already fulfill that role. Libraries will continue to evolve to incorporate the traditional features of museums, materials collections, cultural heritage enterprises, and public performance venues. The gap between wired and the unconnected will continue to widen. But it is our job as Librarians to strive, to fight against this drift.

3. If your presidency could be remembered for just one impact it had on ALA, what would you hope that to be?

Crowe: I want ALA to be seen by our own members and by those in other information professions as: 1) a first choice partner/source for association programming; 2) a logical link in the recruitment, education and development of new information professionals who represent all sectors of society; and 3) a natural partner in the research and development needed to help improve services to the communities we serve.

Roy: As ALA President, I would want to challenge and encourage members to become more active in ALA. This involvement can take a range of forms—more first-time appointees to committees, more participation by LIS students and new graduates, and a return to association work on the part of experienced library workers. If each ALA member would send a single message in a national letter and e-mail campaign, it would translate to 66,000 communications on behalf of libraries. I hope that each ALA member will be able to explain how ALA has helped them and their constituencies.

4. As ALA leaders present members with a dues increase ballot, it will be important for ALA leaders to articulate the value their ALA membership brings to them. Tell us how you would craft that message to academic and research librarians?

Crowe: The telling of the ALA story here is critical. I would say, "If we did not have ALA's [name the divisional, roundtable or ALA program; data set; forum for exchange

of ideas; or means to focus advocacy with stakeholders], we would need to find collective means to re-invent [name it]. Or, What would life for us be like without [name it]?

Roy: ALA has accomplished a great deal since the last dues increase was approved in 1995. Although many in our profession are not rewarded to the extent our work merits, we must approve the much-needed dues increase, not only to stay at our present strength but also to allow ALA to progress to meet the continuing needs of libraries and librarians. Our new strategic plan, ALAahead, calls on ALA to be even more committed to advocacy, education, policy development, and recruitment. A dues increase is not only a good financial decision, it is also a way to recognize the effort and support of ALA staff by awarding them much overdue pay raises and to fill positions that have long been open. We have a responsibility to join with ALA staff to ensure that ALA functions at its highest level and by agreeing to this dues increase, ALA members have a right to request improved and expanded services.

5. What aspects of ALA's current governance structure keep it from being as effective and efficient as it might be, and how would you hope to remove some of those limitations?

Crowe: The nature of ALA as both a unitary organization representing the core interests of libraries of all kinds and at the same time a home for groups of libraries and library people who have special interests and needs always has caused some tension. Any of us affiliated with other complex and large organizations—a university or large community college—can see the same phenomenon at work. Many of the limitations we see are inherent in this mix and so not amenable to significant change. In other dimensions—how we plan for and manage the work of committees, task forces, boards and other groups—we can do more, emulating the work of other large organizations. We can do more to train leaders in good practice

(the ALA parliamentarian has produced some excellent suggestions), provide templates and like structures for groups to learn from (example: what are the characteristics of a good report or resolution?), and offer each group access to an experienced mentor who can help new leaders and less experienced members navigate without intruding on the group's work.

Roy: I believe that the effectiveness of ALA increases as ALA members become more involved. Having served on ALA Council for seven years as a councilor-at-large (1997–2000; 2004–2006), I have observed and participated in the policy setting body of ALA. Over this time Council has done much to improve its efficiency. Agendas are distributed in advance; proposed time limits of discussion help at least place a framework of efficiency on open meetings. Members are reminded to share documents in advance of ALA's Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference (and most do). Councilors contribute to efficiency when they discuss agenda items on the ALA Council electronic list and on site at the Council Caucus meetings. Council will always have a mix of experienced and new councilors, and new members will continue to need mentorship through activities like the Council Orientation Session. Council is fortunate to receive guidance from Parliamentarian Eli Mina and members, such as Norman Horrocks, who serve as our institutional memory. The ALA Web site and the *ALA Handbook of Organization* also help improve governing efficiency. ALA's governance might improve through providing more opportunities for participation and through developing more coordinated information sharing. But communication will always be a challenge in an organization with 66,000 members, 11 divisions, 17 round tables, and hundreds of subunits.

6. At the Fall 2005 Joint Executive Committee meeting of all ALA Divisions, the need to upgrade ALA's information technology capabilities was mentioned

repeatedly as a restraining force for ALA to achieve its strategic goals. What steps will you take to rectify this?

Crowe: From all I can see, this problem is getting high-level attention, with a capable advisory body supporting ALA staff working specifically on ALA's presence on the Web. The problems we have seen more generally with IT are attributable, I suspect, to the inherent complexity of the organization and the diverse needs within it . . . and several years of a flat budget for ALA and all of the attendant consequences. This theme—the need to work on infrastructure of all kinds—is one that many large organizations (think many resource-strapped colleges and universities) have had to face and pay for. We have no choice but to do the same if we are to sustain ALA's core mission.

Roy: ALA can choose to lead rather than lag in applying technology to achieve its goals. A dues increase will provide us with resources to improve ALA's ability to respond to today's technological needs. ALA needs to examine how it delivers information and how it can use technology to continue to progress as a community of active members. Conducting a usability study of ala.org would be a good start. Such a study could hone in on the searchability of the site, archived content, the online conference scheduler, timely posting of content, readability, accessibility, and support and coordination of Web content from ALA units. Along with this review of its Web presence, ALA needs to continue to investigate using more interactive technologies to deliver education and training. The recent ALA Midwinter meeting proved that if we Webcast it, they will come. Hundreds of thousands of viewers attended the online announcement of the ALA youth book awards. Technologies exist to help support more direct involvement of members in the profession. Lack of resources to attend ALA Midwinter Meetings or Annual Conferences should not exclude members from contributing constructively to ALA.

7. What skills, capabilities, and background do you bring to the ALA Presidency that you want us to know about?

Crowe: Without repeating my c.v. (present on my blog), let me highlight three experiences I have had in the last ten years that are central to my preparation for the ALA Presidency: 1) three years service as the chief information officer for the University of Kansas—an eye-opener to the work of allied professions and to the expectations of students, faculty, staff, and the public (it was numbing some days to think that I was responsible not only for libraries and academic computing, but also for processing the university payroll, student registration, the campus telephone system, and campus mail); 2) five years work as a member of the Board of Directors of the Lawrence Sesquicentennial Commission (which took me deep into my own community—to work closely with people from all sectors—to listen and learn from people whose connections to libraries and librarianship often are tenuous); and 3) almost 15 years service, successively, as a member of the board of a regional library network (BCR), a delegate to and President of the OCLC Users (now Members) Council, and for the last ten years as a member (four years as chair) of the OCLC Board of Trustees (all of which required engagement with many issues, working with people from across the world who are passionately committed to the work we do).

Roy: Like many others, I discovered librarianship after having worked in another field, in my case as an X-ray tech in several community hospitals. I carried over skills and attitudes from that other career and from my small-town roots into public library services—a strong work ethic, a sincere caring for people, and a deep concern that everyone should have access to information that could improve their lives. I remain a good listener, have a pretty good sense of humor, and continue to welcome opportunities to learn. As an educator, I work to build collaborations that bring opportunities to my students to contribute to the greater good. In this role I have been able

to connect LIS students and new graduates to support equity of access initiatives among underserved communities, and especially with indigenous peoples. I am Anishinabe, enrolled on the White Earth Reservation, a

member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. Like other Native peoples, I respect the past, strive to improve life in the present, and believe in the visionary potential of the future. *~*

ACRL members running for ALA Council

The following ACRL members are either nominated or petition candidates for ALA councilor in the spring of 2006 election. ACRL members are encouraged to vote for these candidates to increase ACRL's voice in ALA affairs.

Rosie L. Albritton, director, University Library Services/professor, Educational Media and Technology, Prairie View A&M University

Michelle Baidon, history, philosophy, history of science, technology and medicine librarian, MIT

David Barton, dean, Library and Information Services, Metropolitan State University

Herbert Biblo, director, Long Island Library Resources Council

Tiffani Conner, university librarian, liaison to sociology, human rights, Rainbow Center, and Roper Center for Public Opinion, University of Connecticut

Katherine (Kate) Corby, reference librarian, Michigan State University Libraries

Trevor A. Dawes, circulation services director, Princeton University

Bob Diaz, associate librarian, University of Arizona

Aaron W. Dobbs, network services librarian, Austin Peay State University

David L. Easterbrook, curator, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University Library

Amy Gonzalez Ferguson, librarian III, Richland College

Charles Forrest, director, Office of Planning and Assessment, Emory University

Arthur L. Friedman, professor/coordinator, Distance Learning, Nassau Community College

Michael Gutierrez, senior assistant librarian, University of Delaware

Shelby Harkin, head, Acquisitions/Bibliographic Control, University of North Dakota

Elizabeth Hill, assistant professor/reference librarian, University of Idaho

Samantha Schmehl Hines, outreach coordinator/social science librarian, University of Montana

Carol Ritzen Kem, bibliographer/associate university librarian, University of Florida

Andrea M. Morrison, cataloger/government documents, Indiana University, Bloomington

Ria Newhouse, reference and instruction librarian, Metropolitan State University

Sandra Olson, acquisitions supervisor, University of Central Arkansas

Dale Poulter, systems librarian, Vanderbilt University

Ann Champion Riley, director, Technical and Access Services, Southern Illinois University

Larry Romans, government information services librarian, Vanderbilt University Central Library

Mark C. Rosenzweig, director, Reference Center for Marxist Studies

Felicia Smith, librarian-in-residence, University of Notre Dame

Tammy Sugarman, collection developer, Georgia State University

Margie Thomas, assistant professor, School of Library and Information Science, Louisiana State University

Patricia A. Wand, dean of libraries, Zayed University