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## President's Note

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# President's Note

For many the Annual Conference defines ACL. For some, conference is the only professional development event of the year; for others, it is the only opportunity for encouragement from other Christians in the profession. It is a high profile event that makes the organization visible. (As I pointed out in my last column, many of ACL's invisible activities are, nevertheless, essential for the functioning of the association. (Do you hear an echo of the Apostle Paul who stated that some parts of the human body are more visible than others, but all are needed?) But a conference does not just happen; it demands a lot of planning, a lot of hard work and a lot of money!

Conference accomplishes many things. From a professional viewpoint, it requires that we break away from the daily demands of our jobs and forget our routine worries. It offers us the opportunity to look at the big picture of librarianship and remind ourselves why we do what we do. It allows us to hear about what is new, and learn what works and what does not! It challenges us to learn new skills and embrace new ideas. Socially, it facilitates fellowship with friends we see only once a year, provides a platform to make new friends and puts faces with names from the discussion list. Spiritually, conference challenges us to examine our attitudes and motivations. It allows us to share our hearts with one another and to pray for one another. ACL Conferences are, in fact, many things including just plain fun!

Perhaps some consider conference to be a "sacred cow" that must not change; yet, in fact, conference is always changing. No two conferences are alike. Think about the meetings at Grand Rapids, Boston and Springfield (MO). Not only were the locations different, but the conferences themselves were very different! Each had unique presenters, keynoters, activities and meals! Each had a different tone, a special ambience and left a unique memory. Furthermore, the needs of the conference have changed through the years. We need larger rooms for the plenary session, more locations for presentations and more technology in more rooms. At the same time, we need locations

that are more compact so we don't need to walk as far. We need air conditioning, very clean facilities, more service and better food. We need a free ride to and from the airport and we need to be entertained. And we need a discounted price. At least, that is what we state on the conference surveys!

During the spring of 2009, a number of conference veterans and some of the organization's officers met with the Home Office staff to try to define what an ACL Conference should be. That Conference Task Force made a number of recommendations and the ACL Board continued the conversation at its October meeting. The Board studied the results of the Member Survey and the comments from the last conference. (Yes, your comments and suggestions are taken seriously.) Here are some points of agreement, although I am sure the conversation will continue and ACL will continue to adapt to changes in the membership, in the profession and in society at large.

The ACL Conference will continue to be a professional event. ACL Conferences feature national and international leaders in the world of libraries. Some confess faith in Christ; others profess no allegiance to any religion. They have, nevertheless, challenged us to understand the changes taking place around us and they have urged us to be better at what we do. Many ACL presentations meet or surpass the quality of any library conference. ACL wants to invest in a quality professional conference. To balance the budget, this emphasis might mean that there could be fewer entertainment events and fewer outings organized as part of conference. Likewise, liability concerns will limit transport to professional carriers instead of personal or university-owned vehicles and some tours will become pre- or post-conference activities. The content and the quality of the conference is more important than the geographic location or the outings.

The ACL Conference will continue to be affordable. The ACL conference continues to be the low cost leader among professional library conferences! The surveys suggest that a

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notable rise in the conference fees would make the cost prohibitive for a significant percentage of our members. We have investigated large hotels, conference centers and retreat locations as possible venues but, when all the costs are calculated, these locations are simply not economical options for us. At the same time, we will try to provide convenient motels for those who want more comfortable accommodations. To keep expenses down, we might need to reduce the number of days. In an electronic age, maybe we don't need conference bags or even conference notebooks. With a concern for the environment, we can just print out the handouts for the sessions we want. All of these steps help keep the conference affordable.

The ACL Conference will move appropriate functions to the Home Office. There was a time when the local library host was expected to make beds, stuff notebooks, collect money, make numerous trips to the airport, test

microphones and move projectors. Many of these activities are being handled by the conference services department of the host college. Many of the routine administrative tasks will be done by the ACL Conference Administrator. The negotiating, the signing of contracts and the registration of attendees has been assumed by the Home Office Staff who have the experience to facilitate the "business" side of conferences. This change frees the conference committees to apply their professional wisdom to conference content and program planning.

An ACL Conference is a major event for the organization because it is a major event in the life of individual members, and the ACL Board is committed to make whatever changes are required to keep quality professional development delivered efficiently at affordable rates. See you at conference in Minnesota! †

## News and Views

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### News from the Association of Christian Librarians

*Compiled by Alice Ruleman  
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#### **New York Move**

Ray Morrison, former library director at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, KS, recently accepted a position at SUNY-Oswego in Oswego, NY as the Coordinator of Access Services. His main responsibility is circulation, reserves, stacks management, Interlibrary Loan, periodicals and media with additional time spent at the reference desk and in collection development. SUNY-Oswego has approximately 9,000 students and is located on the shores of Lake Ontario 30 miles north of Syracuse, NY.

#### **Published Article**

The November 2009 issue of *Christian Higher Education* features an article by Grace Veach (Dean of Library Services, Southeastern University, Lakeland, FL) titled "St. Augustine and the Christian College Composition Classroom: Water Into Flame" (pp. 440-453).

#### **Changes at Northwest University**

The Hurst Library at Northwest University hired David Austin (MLS, University of Washington, 2009) as the User Services Librarian. He replaces Lynette Sorenson who has moved to another position at Northwest University.

#### **Retiring from Huntington University**

Robert E. Kaehr will retire at the end of May 2010 after 37 years as a librarian and the past 34 as the Director of Library Services at Huntington University (Huntington, IN). This will allow him to spend time with his wife, children, and grandchildren, as well as travel, fish, do crafts, write, and to do some volunteer work. "Probably the first year will be spent making life simpler, cleaning house and removing our adult children's stuff."