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What ACL Means to Me

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I joined the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) in 1997, at a time when I was seeking God’s will for my future in library work. The previous year, I had been unexpectedly let go after eight years in a Bible college library position due to downsizing, and my heart was still in academic library work.

I found ACL to be far more than a facilitator for library job searching. This association is foremost a Christian one, and provided something far better than networking just to advance oneself. Attending my first ACL conference in 1997, I was greatly encouraged by a group of library colleagues with whom I could share my heart and search for God’s will, with the assurance that they understood and would pray for me. Here I could be developed and challenged both professionally and spiritually – what more could I ask for? I determined to attend the ACL conference every year.

At this time, I was Reference Librarian at my local public library, and ACL’s sui generis group encouraged me to value this position’s opportunities for both professional development and for being a witness for the Lord. So when I received a call from Word of Life Bible Institute to consider the library position there, I was better able to see how my public library work had prepared me for this next step.

At Word of Life, I had the joy of reconnecting with a library colleague that I had worked with at Moody. And ACL has provided a way for us to stay connected, and an opportunity to encourage him to reconnect with ACL. We attended conference together last year, and plan to do the same this year.

Due to Word of Life policy on conference cost coverage, I regrettably have missed attending a few ACL conferences during my years here. The professionalism at ACL, however, has steadily increased, and has solidified my determination not to miss another conference. The opportunity to grow professionally at conference is just too vital, not to mention the importance of keeping connected with colleagues. Yet, even after missing conferences, I found that the solid rapport I had built by consecutive conference attendance, 1997-2000, enabled me to pick up where I left off with a number of ACL colleagues.

Beyond the many practical conference workshops that I applied immediately to my work, ACL has placed many professional tools in my hands. These include the fine articles in The Christian Librarian, the ACL listserv (where I “lurk” too much and need to contribute more), and the Christian Periodical Index which not only helps me serve the Bible college students at Word of Life, but has also allowed me to keep up on indexing skills. And the ground-breaking anthology edited by Greg Smith, Christian Librarianship, has proven invaluable for my thinking about why I am in library work and about how I serve in this work.

In sum, I thank the Lord for ACL. However uncertain the future may be for library work and my part in it, I can be confident that ACL will provide the best in professional continuing education, along with the best in Christian fellowship.

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