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What ACL Means to Me

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What can one say about an organization that has played such a vital role in promoting the professional development of Christian academic librarians? Ever since my first conference in 1984 at Houghton College in Houghton, New York, I have experienced a growing love and appreciation for this wonderful organization called the Association of Christian Librarians and for its many fine members.

Since 1984 I have participated in eighteen ACL conferences. Attending is a highlight of my employment year. I have found the Association of Christian Librarians to be a great source of professional stimulation and enrichment. I have a very warm spot in my heart for ACL and the great people associated with it that have made a positive contribution to my life.

ACL is blessed by having a host of dedicated leaders such as Nancy Olson, Jan Bosma, Linda Poston, Sheila Carlbloom, Sharon Bull, Woodie Moore, Anne-Elizabeth Powell, Barbara Nelson, Steve Preston, Jane Hopkins, Stan Terhune, and the list could go on and on. There is also that great number of volunteers who serve behind the scenes. All ACL members owe a debt of gratitude to these servant leaders as well as to the library directors, librarians, and library staff members of institutions that have hosted the ACL conferences across the years.

Many memories of ACL stand out to me. Allow me a little trip down memory lane. Want to travel with me?

How can we forget the weather in the mid-West in June such as the torrential rain storm at Cedarville in 1990, the hail and rain and falling trees at Mishawaka, Indiana in 1993, and the tornado warning at Taylor in 1998 that forced us all into the basement?

Then there have been the conference keynote speakers such as Patricia Breivik who spoke on information literacy at Greenville in 1994 and at Trevecca in 2002; Kate Nevins from SOLINET at Lee in 1999 and at Nashville in 2002; Michael Gorman speaking on library values at Point Loma in 2000; and Martin Dillon from the OCLC Institute speaking at Olivet in 2001.

Even travel to and from conferences can hold surprises and unexpected blessings. I will never forget the trip to the ACL Conference in Mishawaka in 1993. Our traveling party consisted of Cheri du Mee, Michael Sturgeon, Armand Ternak, and me.

Believe me, it is a long, long drive from south Florida to northern Indiana in a van. However, it was God's special presence that made it a truly memorable and exhilarating experience. The four of us spent hours sharing favorite Bible verses and what they had meant to us along with singing our favorite hymns, songs, and choruses. Mixed with that we each shared prayer concerns for ourselves, our families, and our friends and enjoyed a number of special times of prayer together.

Oh yes, we still had plenty of time to share "red neck" jokes and other forms of humor and had plenty of laughs. What I remember best was the bonding together in Christian fellowship.

The Bethel College staff under the capable leadership of Clyde Root did a super job of hosting that year. The keynote speaker, Evan Farber, from Earlham was exceptional. By the time we arrived back home we all felt that not only had we been professionally enriched but had also been spiritually refreshed and invigorated. Who knows, maybe we should slow down the pace and do more traveling by van to ACL conferences.

In addition to the professional development opportunities including outstanding workshops there is food, fellowship, and fun. How can we forget talent show performers such as Ron Jordahl or eating banana splits? There are one on one opportunities for networking, batting ideas around the lunch table, and even batting ping-pong balls around in the evening.

ACL is far more than a tremendous yearly conference. It is The Christian Librarian, the Christian Periodical Index, the Commission for International Library Assistance, and much more.

As I reminisce about ACL, I am reminded of what one of my former pastors said many years ago, "Our church has so many ways about it that you are bound to like some of them." I like virtually everything about ACL.

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