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## What ACL Means to Me

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Imagine not knowing that Christian higher education or The Association of Christian Librarians existed. Being surrounded by a secular world in your profession and having no one that you knew to discuss the issues in librarianship who shared a Christian perspective. It's an isolated position to be in, but it was just how it was. At the time I had no idea that there was an alternative.

Most of the years of my career were spent in a large research university in a part of the country that was quite hostile to Christianity. Although I had a budget to buy books in that library, it was quite clear from the attitude of the administration and fellow colleagues that books with a Christian worldview were considered inappropriate. Participation in organizations that were religiously inclined or publishing in journals so inclined was considered unacceptable and not regarded as scholarship. Speaking the "G" word or the "J" word reverently were grounds for being called on the carpet and disciplined. I used to feel like there were two separate parts of my personality that existed in their appropriate environments. One was the Christian who was my personal life, and the other was the librarian who was my professional life. I used to wonder if there was any place where the two could integrate but I knew it was not in the place where I was.

So in time I moved on to a different part of the country where Christianity was commonplace and most folks had been churched at some time in their lives. Although I worked in a public university, the library did own Christian materials and there was no particular hostility toward Christianity. Still I was surrounded by unbelievers in the workplace and my professional persona as a librarian remained separated from my personal persona as a Christian. I was surrounded with Christian fellowship in my personal life, but still there was no one with whom to discuss issues in my chosen profession from a Christian point of view.

It was then that I discovered Christian colleges and the Association of Christian Librarians. It happened one day as I was browsing on the Internet. I still remember reading the ACL Statement of Faith for the first time on my computer screen and thinking it was remarkable that librarians who believed as I did had congregated in higher education. As the Lord drew my attention to Christian higher education, he called me to use the skills I had in His service. The time had come to consider ministry as a librarian and to move into Christian higher education.

And so today I am happily working at a Christian liberal arts college. That in itself carries the privilege of being in Christian community on a daily basis. My personal and professional personas are now integrated. For several years I have luxuriated in the opportunities to integrate faith and learning as well as faith and teaching. But it is not only the community of Christian scholars with whom I work who have nourished and nurtured me in this exciting endeavor.

I joined ACL as soon as I began working in a Christian college while I continued my commitments to the secular national, regional and state library organizations I belong to. While those organizations do offer collegiality in the profession at large, professional development from the mainstream secular library organizations no longer meets my needs as a person whose Christian worldview is integrated into my profession. That is the gap that ACL has filled, and done so admirably.

Going to ACL conferences has been professionally refreshing. The caliber of scholarship has been high and the personal acquaintances rewarding. My favorite part of ACL conferences is the daily devotions that constantly keep the fact that ACL is a caring Christian community in the forefront of my awareness. I have enjoyed visiting different Christian college campuses and learning more about the denominations with whom they are affiliated, seeing your libraries and chapels and feeling your ambience.

I have enjoyed ACL meeting me where I live for the past several years. Although I cannot always attend conferences, I can always be a part of the listserv, and my colleagues are with me. Those of you who actively participate on the listserv have been so collegial and helpful. Just the very presence of that support, that I can reach out to anytime, has been empowering and edifying. The opportunities to share my own scholarship and the privilege of many ACL members sharing theirs at conferences and through *The Christian Librarian* enriches and stimulates my thinking. It has enabled me to integrate faith and learning with ministry and service. There is no greater professional satisfaction than this.

Most of all, we are a community who prays together, for one another and we are one in Christ Jesus. Although I may not know everyone personally, and those who I do know may be geographically distant, I know that some day in Glory we will have eternity to be together. So I enjoy that wonderful hope we share. And I am grateful that ACL has made it possible to for us to know one another and be community together.

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