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## ACL: An Amazing Story

Nancy J. Olson

*Association of Christian Librarians*

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# ACL: An Amazing Story

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## 1982 – 2006

When one stops to contemplate and consider the phenomena of the Association of Christian Librarians as it celebrates the 50th year of its existence, it is nothing short of amazing! In the beginning there was a tiny band of five volunteers with a vision and passion for sharing Christian fellowship, providing access to evangelical journal literature, publishing a professional journal, and facilitating professional development amongst evangelical librarians from institutions of higher education. They had no idea what God would do with their vision, passion and hard work. No one can doubt that God has done far more than they could ever imagine or guess or request in their wildest dreams! (Eph. 3:20, The Message).

As with any organization, the path of development and growth requires hard work that is always challenging, often exciting, sometimes disappointing, and constantly changing. Countless hours of labor and love given by its faithful members have and will take ACL along its path of development and growth. Each passing year brings along its own challenges, exciting opportunities, disappointments, and changes. There are times when it seems that any one or combination of these is far greater than the Association can withstand and the breaking point seems inevitable. Yet, one does not have to look hard or long to find evidence of God's leading and faithfulness within the Association as a whole and in the individual lives of its members.

During five decades of journeying together along the path, countless librarians have been and continue to be profoundly impacted, blessed, and developed professionally as a result of the vision and passion of ACL and its members. This is evidence that the Association's leadership has remained loyal to ACL's mission and vision. As well, it demonstrates the effects of the collective and individual responses the leadership gave to all of the Association's challenges and opportunities to this point in its history.

Outsiders marvel in astonishment when they

learn ACL is essentially a volunteer organization taking into account the Association's membership size, magnitude of service and services, and the professional caliber of its conferences and publications. Conversely, the Association's members and leadership alike marvel in astonishment, too, as they jointly and personally experience ACL as a caring Christian community that integrates faith and academic librarianship, emphasizing ministry and service. Yes, ACL is nothing short of amazing!

The continuing story of ACL is probably best told within the context of its mission to empower evangelical librarians through professional development, scholarship, and spiritual encouragement for service in higher education. So, exactly how has ACL's mission been achieved over its last twenty-five years?

One way is through an ongoing commitment and passion to publishing quality materials for the benefit of libraries and of Christian academic librarians.

- The *Christian Periodical Index*, first published in 1957, continues to be the "preeminent source" for comprehensive indexing to journal articles and book reviews from an evangelical Christian perspective. In the April 1999 issue of TCL then President Sheila Carlblom reported: "It gives me great pleasure to announce that the Association of Christian Librarians has signed a contract with Bibliographic Center for Research in Aurora, Colorado for the production of CD-ROM and Web accessible formats of CPI. Currently special thanks goes to Clem Guthro, CPI Electronic Access Coordinator, the CPI Team with Jule Kind as Coordinator, and the ACL Board, without whose commitment we could never have reached this point (p. 54)." There was a ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration at the 1999 conference at Lee University in Cleveland, TN. Today CPI's electronic database provides access to over 200,000 records including records for 119,000+ journal articles and 81,000+ book

Nancy J. Olson  
Executive Director  
Association of Christian  
Librarians  
Lincoln, Illinois

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reviews for 252 journal titles, 133 of which are currently indexed. ACL can still proudly claim that all of the indexing is done by volunteers!

- *The Christian Librarian*, first published as a newsletter, is still faithfully promoting and reporting on ACL activities as well as disseminating Christian research fifty years later. In 1991 *Library Literature* started indexing TCL. Ron Jordahl, longtime devoted editor of TCL, mentored Anne-Elizabeth Powell as his replacement; in June of 1999 she became the Editor-in-Chief. As of January 2006 TCL has published over 1,400 research articles and reviews by approximately 350 different authors. Through *The Christian Librarian* members publish scholarly materials for their ACL colleagues and the larger academic library community.
- In the early 1990s a lot of work went into writing the *Librarian's Manual* a replacement of ACL's earlier, but similar publication the *Library Manual for Missionaries*. Ferne Weimer and Ken Gill of the Billy Graham Center presented the newly published *Librarian's Manual* to then President Nancy Olson during the 1994 Conference at Greenville College, in Greenville, IL. Hundreds of copies of this manual have now been distributed around the globe, providing training and encouragement for improvement of academic library service worldwide.
- The Bible College Library section of the Association wrote the first edition of *Guidelines for Bible College Libraries* in 1986. It was written at Bryan College in Dayton, TN, prior to the annual conference and that is a remarkable story. A second edition followed in 1991. Selected ACL Bible College librarians, also serving at ABHE institutions, wrote the new *Library Guidelines for ABHE Colleges and Universities*. The questions and performance criteria are based upon the 2004 Association for Biblical Higher Education Standards (Institutional and Programmatic) and, therefore, supersede both editions of *Guidelines for Bible College Libraries*.

A second way is to provide opportunities for members to develop professionally through an annual conference.

- A major hallmark of the Association is its annual conference. Year after year members keep coming back for more professional development, more spiritual encouragement and enrichment, more fellowship with colleagues from across the United States and Canada and sometimes other parts of the world. Attendance is now averaging in the mid two hundreds range. In the last twenty-five years, ACL has been to twenty-one different campuses including two in Canada (Prairie Bible Institute, Alberta, in 1982 and Eastern Pentecostal Bible College, Ontario, in 1991), two on the West coast (Multnomah School of the Bible, Oregon, in 1989, and Point Loma Nazarene University, California, in 2000), and one in Florida (Southeastern College in 1995). Within those same twenty-five years three universities hosted ACL two times – Evangel University, Missouri, in 1985 and 2004 (Woodvall Moore, Host); Taylor University, Indiana, in 1987 and 1998 (Roger Phillips, Host); and Cedarville University, Ohio, in 1990 and 1996 (Lynn Brock, Host). In 1992 ACL held its first conference at a conference center (Stonecroft in Missouri). Hosting an ACL Conference requires a tremendous amount of planning and hard work. Yet year after year ACL members, modeling servant leadership, willingly give countless hours so that ACL can offer its members a first-class professional conference. The Association is thankful to the library staffs and administrations of these twenty-one institutions for their significant contributions to ACL.
- In 1992 Bea Flinner became the first Conference Coordinator, followed by Woodvall Moore, and then Jane Hopkins. It is the responsibility of the conference coordinator, now working with teams of eight or more individuals per conference to plan various stages of up to three annual conferences.
- Those who have attended conferences through the years will always have a conference story to tell and the story will likely start with, “Where were you when some weather phenomena happened (earthquake, tornado, thunderstorm)?”

- ACL members have been challenged by nationally recognized keynote speakers such as Patricia Sean Breivik on information literacy and Michael Gorman and Dr. Martin Dillon on the state of librarianship and Kate Nevins from SOLINET and Dr. Beth Woodard from the University of Illinois. Members have seen new library buildings including ones at Northwestern College in Minnesota, Asbury College in Kentucky, Trevecca Nazarene University in Tennessee and Indiana Wesleyan University in Indiana. Pre-conferences and a Monday evening through Thursday evening Banquet schedule are now regular features of the annual conferences

- During the Presidency of William Abernathy, 1988-1990, the Association instituted a Presidential Conference Scholarship program that offers up to three conference scholarships per conference to encourage attendance by qualified, first-time attendees. Further, to encourage library student participation in the annual conference, in 1993 the association started offering a 10% discount to students on the conference package fee.

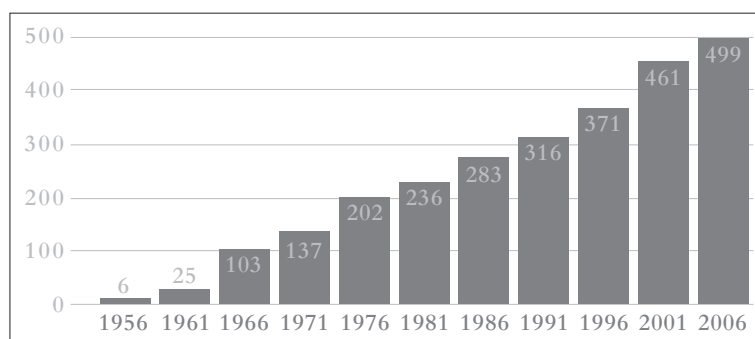
Facilitating resource sharing and communication among its members and their libraries is another way ACL accomplishes its mission.

- Since its beginning, one of the unique features of ACL is the fact it is a professional organization of librarians. However, in 1990 ACL expanded into institutional membership to facilitate resource sharing among the members' libraries. In June of 1991 the Board of Directors commended Woodvall Moore for the excellent work he did in developing OCLC group access, with the official name of Christian Librarian Association Group Access (CL@N). It started with about 40 institutional members. Group Access was later changed to the Christian Library Network, otherwise known as CLN.
- In 1999 the Board of Directors changed Institutional Membership to the Christian Library Consortium (CLC). Throughout its development, the Consortium has added benefits beyond CLN to include an array of vendor discounts, conference discount, and a

subscription to *The Christian Librarian*. Under Elizabeth Werner's leadership, the Consortium has grown to over 90 members.

- In the mid nineties Janice Bosma led the Association into a new era of communication called the ACL Discussion List. The Association is grateful for Cedarville University's graciousness in hosting ACL's list since its creation over a decade ago. Members now enjoy daily, rather than once a year, contact.

**Total Individual ACL Members**



- In 2002 the Association started DUPEX (Duplicate Exchange) online service to facilitate the exchange needs of book, periodical, and microform collections. DUPEX lists created by ACL members or institutions are sent to the ACL DUPEX Service monitored effectively by Ruth McGuire since its creation.

- ACL's first website was designed by Leanne Gardner Strum from Regent University in Virginia in the mid nineties. The Home Page Team, later called Website Team, in conjunction with the Director of Operations helped develop content of the website, including a password protected section for members only. With this security feature the Association implemented an electronic membership directory, allowing for same day updating rather than once a year. The servicing of the website is now outsourced.

Another vital approach to achieving the ACL mission is fostering the spiritual growth of its members.

*It is estimated that members will volunteer over 7,000 hours between June 2005 and June 2006 to assure the effectiveness of the operations and services.*

- The Association remains committed to a common statement of faith that keeps its members united.
  - The Board of Directors and teams continually seek God's wisdom and guidance in their decisions.
  - Annual conferences are still enriched through daily devotions and times of worship.
  - The ACL Discussion List allows members to share prayer requests, encouraging each other to bring the Association and its members before God in prayer.
  - Each spring during National Library Week the Board of Directors calls the entire membership into a time of daily prayer for the Association itself, its leaders, the teams and services, and the individual members.
- ACL's mission is also realized through expanding the effectiveness and influence of the Association.
- The leadership remains committed to assimilating and deepening the involvement of members in the community of ACL. It is estimated that members will volunteer over 7,000 hours between June 2005 and June 2006 to assure the effectiveness of the operations and services.
  - In December of 1999 ACL opened its first office in rented office space in the town of Cedarville, Ohio. Membership, publication, conference, and the rest of the Association's mailings were sent and received from this office.
  - On May 2, 2002 the Foundation for the Advancement of Christian Libraries (FACL) was incorporated and is a duly organized Illinois Not-For-Profit 501 (c)(3) Corporation. The Foundation is an auxiliary, a support, a behind-the-scenes mechanism to promote and lift up the Association by funding selected projects.

- On October 27, 2005, the ACL and FACL Boards of Directors, the Director of Operations Janice Bosma, and invited guests met to celebrate a major milestone in the life of the Association of Christian Librarians and the Foundation for the Advancement of Christian Libraries – the dedication of the new 1,000 sq. ft. ACL owned office space that can strengthen and enhance the strategic direction of both the Association and the Foundation. The closing lines of the dedication litany capture the vision that has been cast through the new office space located in Cedarville, Ohio:

*“Executive Director: For the teams, coordinators, and members who will benefit from and use this space and its resources as a tool to perform the tasks upon which the Association depends*

*ACL/FACL Board Members: Grant them wisdom and strength for each task.*

*Executive Director: Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, we thank you for the Association of Christian Librarians and the Foundation for the Advancement of Christian Libraries and for the impact it has made for you upon its members around the world, the unique place it fills in the library world, and this community of Cedarville, Ohio.*

*People: With confidence in your infinite wisdom, we dedicate this building, those who serve in it, and those who use it, to your service.*

*Everyone: For your continued guidance and direction in the work and service of ACL and FACL and this office, we give you all the praise and glory, now and forevermore. Amen.”*

*The Association of Christian Librarians, in order to bring honor to the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is an influential, vibrant, growing community that integrates faith, ministry, and academic librarianship through development of members, services, and scholarship! (ACL's Vision Statement) ✚*