Biblio-Notes

Notes from the Chair

Soon after the current presidential administration took power, several of our professional organizations issued statements reaffirming their core values. Many of you have seen the statements from ALA and ACRL. Perhaps your library posted a statement, or made some kind of public gesture affirming social justice, equity, diversity, inclusion, and intellectual freedom. The ARL posted a list of statements from its membership; John Overholt, Chair of RBMS, has collected additional statements from affiliated professions.

LES could generate its own statement, as some of us discussed at ALA Midwinter in Atlanta and at ACRL in Baltimore. (And there have been many, many discussions on listservs, Twitter, and other social media of the strengths and weaknesses of both the statements and the acts of making them.) As I said in an earlier message to LES membership, I don't believe that just making a statement would go far enough. We should remind ourselves that such statements help us more than they help the people we serve. That doesn't mean we shouldn't make them or that they don't serve a purpose -- like many of you, I feel comforted when we reaffirm shared values in the face of threats. But comfort isn't enough.

Photo provided by Laura Braunstein

What, then, can we do? When I wrote to the section in January, I asked for your feedback and suggestions. I'd like to share some of these, particularly those that challenge us to take action:

"I agree that these statements don't go far enough, in part because they only react to what's already happened, in part because I think they point to serious problems that really need to involve a call to action. Some of the places I see a need for a more activist stance: the disappearance of government websites; the silencing of climate scientists and others; the immigration ban, which affects students, staff, and scholars in our institutions; and the looming threat of defunding the NEH and the NEA." -- Alexis Logsdon

"When designing programs for the conference, [let's] address these issues explicitly and collaborate with relevant sections and community groups … [Let's] plan an action or join an existing community effort that occurs concurrent to upcoming conferences; basically use our voices to amplify and support the hard work that's already being done and reach more folks." -- Lydia Willoughby

"I can imagine there are already things planned for ALA focused around these topics, but perhaps some discussion topics for LES sessions focused on how to collect resources or offer services in our current climate. What that climate will be in June 2017... who knows....[I]t's [also] worth considering a concerted effort to increase conference attendee engagement with the President, Council, etc. There are always sessions to go to, always vendors to meet with, but I am not personally all that sanguine about ALA's future. Even with ALA's back-and-forth on its public response to the evolving political situation, it's an easy, obvious target for administrations that don't like dissent." -- John Glover

The section has sometimes seemed to have a tension between its stated mission for humanities librarians and our interest in engaging with librarianship in general. My vision is that we should use our strengths -- our specific knowledge and experience -- to ally with larger efforts. We should continue to advocate for the value of the humanities (and humanities librarianship) precisely as something to which certain kinds of value (i.e. of the market) cannot necessarily be assigned. We must advocate for a society that believes it good to read books -- and that literature (however we define it) is worth fostering, protecting, preserving, and disseminating. I also believe that we can change our profession to prioritize dissent rather than maintain a consensus that preserves the status quo or makes token gestures toward inclusion.

We do a very good job in ALA/ACRL of support and maintenance; that is, we give our membership the tools they need to do their jobs. I'd like to see us go further. How can we challenge ourselves to take risks? We will have an opportunity to do this soon, since ALA will be changing the structure of its Annual conferences; LES, like other sections, will potentially have less time allotted at the conference for our activities. We can use the next year to think critically about implementing change to our meeting schedule, for instance (this year, however, it's still business as usual).

I want us to work together to uphold, affirm, and extend the values that we share -- and to argue productively when we disagree. I am looking forward to lively discussions in person at ALA Annual in Chicago, continued virtual participation from colleagues around the world, and to passing the torch to Harriett Green, Chris Ruotolo, and all of our new committee chairs and members as their terms of leadership commence.

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ACRL Instruction Section preconference @ 2017 ALA Annual Conference

The ACRL Instruction Section is offering a full-day preconference in conjunction with the 2017 ALA Annual Conference in Orlando on Friday, June 23, 2017. Complete details, including descriptions, learning outcomes, and registration materials, are online.

Going with (and Growing with) the Framework: Teaching Information Literacy with a Social Justice Lens

Through panel presentations and hands-on workshops, develop strategies and approaches for teaching the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* that also incorporate a social justice lens. The transition from the Standards to the Framework has been challenging for many librarians, especially because the Framework calls for a conceptual approach to information literacy instruction, instead of relying on measurable, skills-based outcomes. Yet the Framework may provide opportunities for deeper, more transformative learning and challenge students to think more critically about their own power and privilege, as well as the lack of certain voices, within the information ecosystem.

The preconference will focus on those ways in which the Framework overlaps, or is compatible with, critical information literacy – information literacy that focuses more on social justice, specifically on challenging systems and structures of power associated with the information ecosystem and helping students reflect upon their identities and positions within those systems and structures. Presentations will focus on specific frames, such as Information Has Value and Research as Inquiry, using contexts that range from one-shots to credit-bearing courses to curriculum design at a variety of university and college settings.

Contact Margot Conahan at mconahan@ala.org or call 312-280-2522 with questions.

ACRL Consulting Services
ACRL offers consulting and facilitation services delivered by a team of experienced consultant-practitioners and facilitators. Is your library:
- Embarking on an environmental scan or strategic planning to integrate with your institution?
- Engaging in organizational change or redesign of your library's structure or roles?
- Applying the ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education?
- Planning and executing a library program review or preparing for accreditation self-study?
- Holding retreats for administrative teams, departments, or all staff?
- Growing the leadership abilities of your staff?

ACRL Consulting Services consultants can help you! We help plan, design, and facilitate academic library processes and events. To discuss your library's needs, contact Howard Prager at hprager@ala.org; tel. (312) 280-2511. www.acrl.org/acrl/consulting

RBMS 2017 Conference – Early Bird deadline May 19!
The Stories We Tell
Iowa City, Iowa
Tuesday, June 20, 2017 – Friday, June 23, 2017
http://conference.rbms.info/2017/
Conference housing, tours and workshops are filling fast for what is sure to be an exciting program in Iowa City. If you have yet to register, join us for all of the engaging plenary speakers, fantastic seminars and panel sessions, as well as interactive participatory, poster and experience sessions.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Melissa A. Hubbard and Juli McLoone
RBMS 2017 Conference Program Planning Co-Chairs

2017 Modern Language Association Report

This was my first year as a member of the Modern Language Association's (MLA) Delegate Assembly (DA), representing the Libraries and Research Forum. And what a year it was! It was certainly a contentious one in the MLA to begin to understand MLA governance. We had three quite contested resolutions regarding boycotts of Israeli and Palestinian Universities, a dues increase, and an "emergency resolution" to align the organization with the then-recent statement released by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (https://www.aaup.org/news/higher-education-after-2016-election#.WHZ1XHryxdw) to consider. To recount five hours in a sentence, the MLA DA voted to recommend that MLA not participate in the boycotts; for a dues increase of 2.5%; and, to align the organization with the AAUP statement. I was able to act as a reference librarian when a member wished to add a reference to a non-existent UN document to the emergency resolution and I spoke against her amendment, having verified that the document to which she referred was not what she thought it was.

This year the presidential theme was "Boundary Conditions" (https://www.mla.org/Convention/MLA-2017/2017-Presidential-Theme).

In general, some of the things that I noticed were that, as I track changes that occur in the digital humanities (occasionally "digital scholarship") and the rest of the "digital" realm, it was notable that, while there were a few panels that addressed how digital practices change scholarship, in general the topic of most interest was "digital pedagogy." It seems to me that we librarians may find ourselves involved in these sorts of projects – if we're not already -- and may want to pay close attention to the trend. A session at ACRL or ALA on "digital pedagogy" would be very interesting.

Another important topic was Open Access, which generally focused more on software than on content. However, where questions of content arose, there was a sense that large corporations had simply taken a public good and were using it for profit. I heard one call to "hack" a particular vendor. As librarians with signed licensing agreements with these vendors, I wonder if we will end up caught in the middle at some point. Regardless, there was not an understanding of the amount of work and cost it takes to digitize and provide metadata for sets of documents or newspapers, either by vendors or by libraries. Is it our role to educate faculty in this way? If so, how?

I was pleased to hear faculty members on occasion invoke information literacy and institutional repositories quite naturally. Compared to the complete lack of understanding I witnessed at my first MLA convention in 2011, it would seem that we are making headway on our campuses.

Sessions and topics of interest include the white paper from the Future of the Print Record group, "Concerted Thought, Collaborative Action, and the Future of the Print Record": https://printrecord.mla.hcommons.org/concerted-thought-collaborative-action-and-the-future-of-the-print-record/. I have several thoughts about it and it's worthy of discussion, especially as the group moves forward.

The program offered by the Libraries & Research Forum was stimulating as the speakers addressed "Acknowledging Boundary Conditions: Opening the Black Box of Creating Access to Digitized Collections." What in part was interesting as a librarian is that the faculty members speaking had very different perspectives on what constituted access and even called into question our concept of an interface as relying exclusively on screen and optics.

"Open Source Lit, Open Source Crit" included a discussion of the "Gitlit" movement, which uses github to apply version control to the digitization of 50,000 scholarly editions. They also referenced GITenberg (https://github.com/GITenberg), which works with the texts in Project Gutenberg. One of the interesting things to me about this project is that they're interested in stripping out coding and reducing the text to plain text, whereas we've been working for a fair number of years to code text in particular ways. If you're interested in finding out more about the project or assisting by proofreading a text and submitting changes, you can go to http://Git-lit.github.io or http://github.com/git-lit. Also at that session DHBox (http://dhbox.org) was introduced to me, a sandbox for Digital Humanities, described as a cloud-based, virtual computer with pre-installed DH tools, thus an instant learning environment allowing for fear-free experimentation.

Among the presentations on digital pedagogy that interested me was "Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities," in which participants brought examples of their uses of digital pedagogy that also raise questions about teaching and using these models. One example generated a discussion around opportunities to share syllabi, allowing for national curricula on a particular topic of interest, such as the Brexit syllabus developed across the UK. However, the very openness that permits such sharing also puts students at risk when they post to the web, especially if they use their real names. The open tools that we create and use such as github are free to use; however, they require work to master. We may be comfortable with some chaos as a means to an end, but are our students? What can we ask of them? (A complete & total aside: How does this relate to teaching students about using a library?)

One question raised that continues to nag at me is that we consistently tell students to evaluate websites and be careful of where they put their data while at the same time insist that they give us their data and put it in our systems – just trust us.

The presidential theme for 2018 is "#States of Insecurity" (https://news.mla.hcommons.org/2016/12/27/2018-presidential-theme-states-of-insecurity/). We shall see what programs and events the theme inspires.

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Call for Peer Reviewers—ACRL/Choice Core bibliography

Resources for College Libraries (RCL), a co-publication of CHOICE, a publishing unit of ACRL, together with ProQuest, is currently seeking subject specialists to participate as peer reviewers. RCL provides a list of 85,000+ core titles across 61 subjects that are essential for academic libraries and is available online at http://rclweb.net.

We are currently seeking experienced bibliographers to serve as referees in the following arts and humanities subject disciplines:

* American Literature
* British Literature
* Classical Languages and Literatures

* Dance
* Drama and Theater
* French Language and Literature
* General Language and Literature
* Germanic Languages and Literatures
* Italian Language and Literature
* Music
* Other Literatures in English
* Philosophy
* Religion
* Russian and Eastern European Languages and Literatures
* Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures
* Visual Arts

Referees will be responsible for comprehensively evaluating the RCL subject's bibliographic content, along with its taxonomic organization. All referee work is scheduled for completion by August 15, 2017. Referees will receive access to the RCL database and supporting materials to complete the review.

Please consider submitting your name to participate in this one-time professional service opportunity. A past referee tells us: "I have found this peer review process for RCL to be thoroughly rewarding. I have gained valuable insight into a wealth of new and existing titles that would be an asset to any academic library collection."

To volunteer as a reviewer, send an email to adoherty@ala-choice.org with your contact information, CV/resume, and a brief description of your qualifications, particularly any experience maintaining or assessing core collections or teaching in the subject area. For more information, visit: http://rclinfo.net.

Contact:
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Project Editor, Resources for College Libraries
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Writer's Guide to Government Information: Resources to Inject Real Life Detail Into Your Fiction

Website address: https://writersguidetogovinfo.wordpress.com

As a reference librarian in the Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress, 28 years of answering questions on a huge range of subjects has led me to conclude that my favorite sort of inquiries come from researchers writing historical novels.

"Was a whale ever stranded in the Thames?"

"How can I find 1831 schedules for the ferries between New York City and West Point?"

A recent email from a colleague directed me to a terrific new resource: *Writer's Guide to Government Information* (https://writersguidetogovinfo.wordpress.com/). The email came with a plea from the creator of the website, Daniel Cornwall, a librarian from Juneau, Alaska, asking for someone to take over the site or it would be mothballed.

Daniel was pleased to report that re-posting that plea on LES-L led to a rapid response from Kari Mofford, an Undergraduate and User Services Librarian at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, who will soon be site's editor.

From various "about" portions of the site, I learned that Daniel has been involved with the Federal Depository Program and state agency documents in Alaska. It was his own writing endeavors and work answering reference questions posted on the National Novel Writing Month (NaNoRiMo) site that led to the creation of *The Writer's Guide to Government Information*. It's clearly a labor of love.

The site states that "the government information is either information directly published by a local, state/provincial, national, or international government agency OR any information indexed by a government agency," e.g. Medline. I particularly enjoyed the explanation to writers that they've "paid for this information with their tax dollars, that government documents are fairly balanced and reasonably comprehensive, and that they've been written by subject experts from within and without government agencies" – like those rocket scientists at NASA.

Daniel's easy conversational tone and sense of humor shine throughout the site with table of contents chapter entries such as "Health Issues and Tragic Complications," "When Bad Things Happen," "What If Your Story Isn't Set on Earth?" and "Everything and Everyone Dies." Under the latter category, there are sections on faking one's own or others' deaths, as well as on wills and probate and autopsies and pathology. There are links to photo libraries; military history sources specific to wars from the Revolution up through Iraq; climate and geology sites; and occupational resources – the worlds of espionage, farming, and business. Some of the sources are great for those historical novelists, while others, such as wildlife webcams, provide up-to-the-minute information.

Fellow librarians can particularly appreciate that some of the sections start with sample questions that might be answered by the sources:

· What were some manuals 20th century farmers might have used to identify insects?
· How would farmers ship their produce overseas?
· What are common chicken feeding techniques?

Novelist Louis Bayard, a frequent researcher at the Library of Congress, asked the questions above. I decided to test the website on him to get the writer's perspective and got this response: *Wow! What a resource. When I saw "government information," I thought it meant information about government, but it's everything!* So please keep up the excellent work, Daniel, and we look forward to seeing your contributions, Kari!

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ACRL Books

ACRL publishes a range of books to assist academic librarians in developing their professional careers, managing their institutions, and increasing their awareness of developments in librarianship, providing timely, thought-provoking, and practical content and research to academic and research librarians worldwide. Some recent titles:
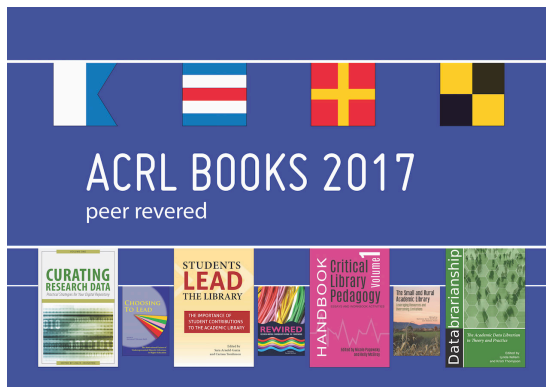
- The First-Year Experience Cookbook
- Students Lead the Library: The Importance of Student Contributions to the Academic Library
- Choosing to Lead: The Motivational Factors of Underrepresented Minority Librarians in Higher Education
- Curating Research Data, Volumes One and Two

Interested in writing for ACRL? Contact Erin Nevius, ACRL's Content Strategist, at enevius@ala.org or (312) 280-2529 for more information, or visit www.ala.org/acrl/publications/publishing to learn more about our book publishing program and submit a proposal.

Free Online Teaching Resources for MLA International Bibliography

The Modern Language Association is developing free online resources to teach research using the *MLA International Bibliography*. Designed for use in information literacy sessions and courses in research methods in the humanities, the teaching resources will include project-based research assignments, in-class exercises and discussion guides, and a five-unit online course that awards students open badges. The full set of resources is scheduled to launch in May. If you are interested in testing the materials before their release, please contact Angela Ecklund at aecklund@mla.org.

Biblio-Throwback!

[Some things never change. In the Spring 1997 issue of Biblio-Notes*, past LES Chair Perry Willett writes about problems facing academic librarians that probably sound eerily familiar to our current members:]*

"What is the future of bibliographers in academic libraries? With the Internet, shrinking budgets, approval plans, and an ever-increasing complexity and number of responsibilities, it seems that the role of collection building has been relegated to a low priority."

Bring an ACRL Roadshow to Your Campus!

Looking to strengthen your library's professional skills? ACRL offers a variety of licensed workshops that can be brought upon request to your campus, chapter, or consortia. Led by expert presenters, these full-day immersive workshops are designed to engage participants and help academic librarians strengthen competencies in multiple areas of concentration. Contact Chase Ollis at collis@ala.org for details on pricing and how to bring a workshop to your institution. Current workshops include:

- Assessment in Action: Demonstrating and Communicating Library Contributions to Student Learning and Success
- Building Your Research Data Management Toolkit: Integrating RDM into Your Liaison Work
- Planning, Assessing, and Communicating Library Impact: Putting the *Standards for Libraries in Higher Education* into Action
- Scholarly Communication: From Understanding to Engagement
- Two Paths Converge: Designing Educational Opportunities on the Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy
- Using the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education (Coming Summer 2017)

For more information about each of these workshops, including program descriptions, learning outcomes, and a sample schedule for the day, visit www.ala.org/acrl/licensedworkshops.

The End of the Ink: Comic Books, Race, and Politics

Recently, my scholarly and professional work has centered on comic books. I'm collaborating with a colleague of mine -- a Metadata Librarian -- on a sabbatical project: we're developing a course that would examine comics to teach Text Encoding Initiative schemas and other digital humanities tools. I'm also providing collection development expertise for an English professor here at James Madison University who is teaching a class on African American Comics and Graphic Novels in the Fall semester. We won a Provost's Diversity Curriculum Grant to fund the purchase of comic books to support this class. Our first two major purchases were *Fantastic Four* #52 (1966), which features the first appearance of Black Panther, Marvel Comics' first black superhero, and *Hero for Hire* #1 (1972), the first appearance of Luke Cage. We are truly excited to have these two historic comic books in our collection!

The cultural politics that led to the creation of these Black Panther and Luke Cage speaks more broadly to the systemic problem diversity continues to pose to the comic book industry. For instance, white artists and writers created Black Panther and Luke Cage. (Black Panther was created by industry legends Stan Lee and Jack Kirby while Luke Cage -- later known as Power Man -- was created by Archie Goodwin, John Romita, and George Tuska). And prior to Black Panther's first appearance in 1966, there were few positive portrayals of African Americans in overground comic books, nearly all of them written or drawn by white creators. There are a few notable exceptions. In 1947, a one-shot, *All-Negro Comics* #1, appeared. This independently produced comic was the first written, drawn by, and featuring content exclusively related to African Americans. Following this issue, comics were published that focused on some of the first black Major League Baseball stars (Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, Larry Doby, Roy Campanella, and Don Newcombe) and other notable black figures (see the 1947 series *Negro Heroes*, which lasted two issues). Other important titles from before *Fantastic Four* #52 include the short-lived *Negro Romance[s]* (lasting four issues from 1950-1955), a bio-comic about Martin Luther King (which is referenced in John Lewis's series *March*) in 1957, and the two-issue series *Lobo* (1965), about a black cowboy, which became the first comic book with a black title character.

Outside of these Afrocentric titles, there were very few positive representations of African Americans in comic books. In his essay "'No Sweat!': EC Comics, Cold War Censorship, and the Troublesome Colors of 'Judgment Day!'" Daniel F. Yezbick points out three such comics in *World's Finest Comics* #17 (1944), which features a brief story about a black World War II vet, *Is This Tomorrow: America Under Communism* (1947), a Cold War comic put out by the Catechetical Guild Educational Society (!), and, most famously, the EC Comic *Weird Fantasy* #18 (1953), which features a ten-page story titled "Judgment Day" whose main plot twist is the revelation that its protagonist, an astronaut whose face has been obscured by his face shield throughout, is a black man. Though controversial, provocative, and progressive at the time, the surprise ending hinges upon the presumption of a racist readership that would be shocked at the notion of a black astronaut.

Black Panther, Luke Cage, and characters like Falcon, Green Lantern (John Stewart), Storm, Nubia, Black Lightning, Misty Knight, Black Goliath, Deathlok, Vixen, Bumblebee, Cyborg, Storm, or even the non-hero Robbie Robertson (one of Peter Parker's editors at *The Daily Bugle* in the *Spider-Man* comics) in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s diversified the cultural representation of comic book characters. However, these characters were still primarily the creations of white writers and artists. As scholars Jeffrey Brown and Deborah Elizabeth Whaley

point out, many if not most of these characters were inspired by the problematic blaxploitation films of the 1970s or by colonialist stereotypes about people from Africa and its diaspora. Comic books at the moment of their widest circulation (1940-1953) were frequently used as nationalistic propaganda (see *The 10 Cent War: Comic Books, Propaganda, and World War II* [2016], edited by Trischa Goodnow and James J. Kimble) that often relied on racist stereotypes. Thus, although this lack of diversity is disappointing, it is not surprising.

The world of comic books -- both in terms of the characters that populate them and the people who create them -- has become more diverse in the last twenty-five years. Retconned or reimagined characters such as Ms. Marvel, Captain America, Firestorm, Nick Fury, and Spider-Man have gained attention, as have more recent characters like *Bitch Planet*'s Kamau Kogo, Spawn, War Machine, X-Men's Bishop, and *The Walking Dead*'s Michonne. Furthermore, comics creators such as Ta-Nehisi Coates (*Black Panther*), Roxane Gay (*World of Wakanda*), Reginald Hudlin, G. Willow Wilson (*Ms. Marvel*), Afua Richardson, Valentine De Landro (*Bitch Planet*), Felicia D. Henderson, Jim Lee, Whilce Portacio, Erika Alexander (*Concrete Park*), Joe Quesada, Mat Johnson (*Incognegro*), Mario Gully, Kyle Baker (*Nat Turner*), John Jennings, and Brian Stelfreeze, just to name a few, have infused the comic book industry with [much-needed new perspectives and aesthetics](#).

Is there reason for continued optimism given the uptick in the diversity within the comic book industry in recent years? The US election of President Donald Trump, who campaigned behind the loaded slogan "Make America Great Again," should sound alarm bells. The comic book industry is and has always been driven by its perception of "mainstream" culture. For most of its history, "mainstream" has been read as "white" (and male). It's the "Again" part of Trump's campaign slogan that is especially troubling, when we recall that the industry's "Greatest" period in terms of sales occurred during the Jim Crow era. "Again," in terms of the comic book industry, can send us back to anytime before 1993, when Milestone Comics, the first widely distributed black-owned comic book company, emerged. Prior to that date, it would not be incorrect to imply that mainstream comics were primarily aimed at white males of all ages. And one can certainly argue that even with recent attempts to diversify the comic book industry, it still reads the "mainstream" as "white male." For an industry whose very foundation is rooted in these "mainstream" values, President Trump's emergence could be a signal to the industry to revisit this "Again." Recently, an executive from Marvel Comics, David Gabriel, appeared to blame [diversity](#) for the company's lagging sales. Strong reactions to Gabriel's comments suggest a resistance to the "Again" Trump promised.

The material that we collect and curate as literature librarians can appeal to our highest and lowest values, often simultaneously. As we enter a different phase of American history, we can continue to think about the collections we shepherd and provide access to -- ranging from Shakespeare quartos and Mickey Spillane novels to Luke Cage comic books and proprietary databases -- as preserving these traditions of expression and interpretation. We can also echo LES Chair Laura Braunstein's earlier call to "change our profession to prioritize dissent rather than maintain a consensus that preserves the status quo or makes token gestures toward inclusion." I look forward to seeing those of you who can make it to ALA 2017 in Chicago and discussing how we can do more to transform our libraries.

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Editorial information