



PRISM

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Teleconference broadcast to 48 sites

The American Library Association (ALA) Committee on Accreditation (COA) Teleconference was broadcast to 650 participants at 48 sites on September 8, 1994. This teleconference continues the process of implementing the *1992 Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*. The teleconference program explains the new accreditation process and prepares participant librarians, educators, and other information professionals to implement the *1992 Standards*.

The teleconference was funded jointly by the H.W. Wilson Foundation and the American Library Association. Organizational sponsors include the American Association of Law Libraries, the American Society for Information Science, the Association for Library and Information Studies Education, the Canadian Library Association, the Medical Library Association, the Special Libraries Association, and the Society of American Archivists.

Prudence Dalrymple, director of the Office of Accreditation, provides introductory com-

ments to the teleconference. She notes that this event marks the first-time use of this technology by an accrediting agency for educational purposes. She outlines the following themes of the new accreditation process:

- Dialogue and community. The 1992 Standards implementation process is one of open communication and dialogue between COA and the schools whose master's programs are accredited.
- Change. The new process recognizes continuing change in higher education and accreditation.
- Accountability. The accrediting process appreciates the expectation by parents, students and employers that accredited programs are quality programs.
- Flexibility. The new process is flexible in recognizing the diversity of institutions and programs.
- Autonomy. Institutional autonomy is recognized and respected.

Other presentators include Carla Hayden, director of the Enoch Pratt Free Library and

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Cianciolo appointed to COA

Patricia Jean Cianciolo, professor of Children and Adolescent Literature in the Department of Teacher Education, Michigan State University, was appointed to a four year term to COA. Dr. Cianciolo holds a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Ohio State University. Her research is in the teaching and learning of litera-

ture-based literacy in professional development with faculties in grades K through 5. She served as a member or chair of several ALA Committees including: Arbuthnot Honour Lecture Committee, Newbery and Caldecott Committee, and Mildred Batchelder Award for Children's Literature in Translation Committee. ▲

First impressions

Carla Hayden

As the new chair of COA, I found the Fall meeting to be exciting, thought provoking, and memorable. Many of the Committee members participated in the teleconference and brought the enthusiasm it generated to the meeting. We received extensive orientation, held stimulating discussions regarding issues of concern and consideration, and most importantly kept to the spirit of the new standards—more openness, flexibility, and collegiality. The committee implemented the revisions to the interim reporting process which were approved at the 1994 Spring planning and evaluation meeting. Specifically, more in-depth analysis of the narrative reports was accomplished and more in-

formative letters to the deans and directors were drafted.

An exchange with Elizabeth Martinez provided us with insight into future directions of ALA and how accreditation and education might be included. The committee spent a significant portion of additional time outlining strategic planning and evaluation issues in the context of where the profession and accreditation in general are heading.

I hope you will take special notice of the Caspa Harris interview about benchmarking and accountability. The COA is embarking on a similar road that will hopefully contribute to the progress of the information professions. The committee continues our assessment of the process and further refinement of procedures. We welcome your input at every stage. ▲

Teleconference (cont. fr. page 1)

COA chair. Carla reviews the 1992 *Standards* and the context of accreditation. Ann Prentice, dean, College of Library and Information Services, University of Maryland, addresses *New Approaches to Accreditation through Accountability*. Philip Turner, dean, School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa presents *The External Review Panel Visit and Report* activities.

The teleconference curriculum features COA's new accreditation materials which include:

- *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library & Information Studies, 1992*, adopted by the Council of the American Library Association, January 28, 1992; effective January 1, 1993. Chicago. American Library Association. 29 pp.
- *An Overview*, ALA, 1994, 20 pp.

- *Guidelines for the Program Presentation*, ALA, 1994, 7 pp.
- *Guidelines for the External Review Panel*, ALA, 1994, 8 pp.

All teleconference participants are encouraged to send in the application for External Review Panels which was distributed at the teleconference. A brochure describing the accreditation of library and information studies programs and another brochure listing currently accredited programs were also distributed.

The curriculum materials, brochures, and a videotape of the teleconference are available through the ALA Information Center, 50 E. Huron, Chicago, IL 60611, 800-545-2433 x2153. For further information, please contact the ALA Office for Accreditation, 800-545-2433 x2432. ▲



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Accreditation update

Prudence W. Dalrymple

I have been using this space in the last few issues of Prism to update you on changes in the climate of accreditation. As you know, last March we received notice of the Secretary's intent to de-recognize, (remove from the Secretary's list of approved accrediting agencies), the Committee on Accreditation of the American Library Association. Our response to this news was mixed. On the one hand, the promise of freedom from burdensome regulations that could exacerbate some educators' belief that accreditation is intrusive and counterproductive was welcome. On the other hand, the closing of LIS programs in the recent past made us particularly sensitive to any potentially negative perceptions of ALA accreditation.

Last spring, senior staff in the Office of Postsecondary Education advised that to retain recognition, we needed to show that ALA accreditation was a required element in establishing eligibility for federal funds. Accordingly, we noted that the regulations for HEA Title II-B fellowships cite "standards recognized by the library and information science profession" as a selection criterion. In June, COA Chair Herman Totten, and COA public member John Gray, ALA's counsel, and I appeared before the Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity. What followed was characterized by our attorney as confused and chaotic: "the Advisory Committee hearing...was rife with confusion, leading to serious procedural and substantive errors that prejudiced ALA and violated its right to due process."

Thus, we submitted an appeal on August 22, 1994. A month later, we were notified that the Department of Education's Office of General Counsel had another interpretation of the statutes, one that had never been raised before, and which flew in the face of staff advice received last spring. If this interpretation is indeed correct, there are no longer any grounds

for our continued recognition. This is because **only** those agencies that accredit free-standing programs (those not located in regionally-accredited institutions of higher education) or those whose accreditation is used as a gateway to federal funding **other than** those authorized by HEA can continue to be recognized by the Secretary.

"the Advisory Committee hearing... was rife with confusion, leading to serious procedural and substantive errors that prejudiced ALA and violated its right to due process."

We anticipate that this de-recognition will not affect our day-to-day accreditation activities; indeed, many regard this turn of events as a reprieve from further governmental intrusion into the voluntary, self-regulating system of accreditation in higher education. In addition, several conclusions emerge from this experience:

- The days of assuming that accreditation operates in political isolation are over. Even something as apparently simple as the fact that ALA accreditation is not mentioned by name in eligibility standards or selection criteria for federal funding turned out to have important unforeseen consequences.
- There are few federal funds available for LIS education, and accreditation is not a required component of any licensure or certification to practice weakens our position at the bargaining table.
- Some accreditors, such as the prestigious American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, have taken the stand that their accreditation is sufficiently beneficial and cost-effective to institutions regardless of its recognition by an outside group such as the Department of Education. COA and ALA must continue to develop and refine its accreditation process, so that it too is immediately recognized by institutions of higher education as a credible mark of excellence and an effective means of development and improvement.

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Benchmarks in higher education

Dr. Caspa Harris, executive director of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), commented in a recent interview, on using benchmarks to establish accountability in higher education. NACUBO has been working with the Association of Research Libraries to establish benchmarks for academic libraries. Dr. Harris refers to this project in his remarks which are reprinted here to amplify references to benchmarking which occurred in the recent accreditation teleconference. Dr. Harris was interviewed by Pru Dalrymple in April 1994. The Office for Accreditation would like to express its appreciation to Dr. Harris for contributing his time and insight.

CH: We developed about two years ago a project called Benchmark. Now this encompasses just about every area of higher education. The idea is that we would set up benchmarks from student personnel to accounting to accounts payable to cash management to overall management, anything that you can think of, for two reasons. First, institutions really don't have any guidelines to see how well they are doing or how well they have done. Many of them in the past have looked in the mirror and said, "Gee, I'm great, we're a great institution." Compared to what? To what we did last year or what accomplishments we made last year? But how do we compare with our peers? And when you start looking at how you compare with your peers, that's very difficult. It's easier said than done. Just to give you an example of both academic and administrative computer centers it depends upon what unit in an institution it's under. In one institution it may be under the Provost and in another one it could be under the Vice President for Student Affairs; when you start trying to make those comparisons it's very difficult. That's one reason that we're trying to get some degree of uniformity so institutions can take a look and see exactly how they have fared in the past and how well some of their peers have done. And then, of course, that gives you a better idea of where you are. The other side of it is to let the industry [higher education] set its own benchmarks. There have been proposals by several govern-

mental units that perhaps the federal government ought to establish all of the benchmarks for higher education and I don't think any industry wants the government to come in and to do that type of thing.

"project Benchmark...encompasses just about every area of higher education."

PD: Sounds a lot like accreditation.

CH: [In this Benchmark project] we're going beyond [accreditation]. We're looking at every aspect of running an institution, and we're trying to get some uniformity and definitions and criteria and accounting so you can compare. Right now we're comparing grapefruits with apples in some areas and it's very difficult. But we're trying to get higher education, whether it's public or private, to come to some standard uniform terms, so one can look back and say "Okay, this is what our costs really were in this area." And if that's so, how did we compare with others. Hopefully, you're way up in the first quartile. But some will be shocked to find themselves at the absolute bottom when they thought they were doing very well. And we don't have to reinvent the wheel in everything. We can learn from others and that's another purpose of the benchmarking project.

PD: Accreditors usually say we don't rank programs, we evaluate them in terms of their own standards and their own mission. How different is that from what you just described?

CH: I think it's a lot different. You've got to compare it with something and if you're just going to look in the mirror and compare, that's one thing. But the industry is not looking at that any more, the government is not looking, states are not looking. They want to know "How do you compare with your peers?" So many fields are no longer just saying "How do you compare overall. They want to get far more definitive and I just think with the competition today, and particularly the competi-

tion for federal dollars, not only in student aid but also in research, you just simply have to be able to show that your operation is a little bit more effective than some others. Therefore, we ought to get the grant instead of somebody else. It's very competitive.

PD: How do you determine these peer groups?

CH: Well, we leave that to some degree up to the institution. I'll just pick on Harvard because it is one of the better institutions we all know. It has a medical school, it has a law school, and so obviously they would not be compared with a school that doesn't have anything but the pure liberal arts. You'd want to look at the number of students and the faculty in a broad sense. How many of your faculty have doctorates? Do you have doctoral granting authority, are you a research institution? It would be unfair to compare Harvard with a two-year community college. That's not to say that two-year community colleges in certain areas wouldn't come out ahead of Harvard. It's just, you know, we want to take a look at how are we doing compared to others. Where do we rank on the scale rather than saying mirror, on the wall, we're the best of all. And that's what so many institutions have been doing. And a number of them in the past have said, "We can't compare ourselves with anyone else because we are different."

That won't fly in the future, it just simply will not fly. Different in which way? What is the mission of an educational institution? Quite frankly, I don't think many educators have taken a look at their mission. Most of them will say it is to provide quality education at a low cost. That's the mission of all 3,300 institutions. What makes you different? And some are truly different, but we need to articulate it a lot better than just to say "to provide quality education." We must be sensitive to that diversity but at the same time hold people to some kind of common benchmark.

We want your input because we realize the way we're asking it may not be the right way. And so far, to my knowledge, we haven't had any real disputes. Associations like yours have in essence said, "You know, what you're doing

here looks good from your perspective, but let us bring you back to the real world now. In our association this is the way it goes." Well, we take that all into consideration and sit with the officers of the association and try to come to a common denominator on this. Now, I have to say that, because remember I've got the government over my shoulders breathing down my neck on these benchmarks as well saying we can't let each association establish its own benchmarks; it's self-serving. So we try to work it out to some degree. Failing to do that I can assure you that the government will establish the benchmarks. They're not going to just buy what we say. We have to have some criteria that they will buy into.

"There have been proposals by several governmental units that perhaps the federal government ought to establish all of the benchmarks for higher education and I don't think any industry wants the government to come in and to do that type of thing."

PD: Who is the intended audience for the benchmarks?

CH: Well, the intended audience primarily will be the institutions. The institutions themselves, their own management. Once we come up with all of the benchmarks and it's what we might call generally accepted, then an institution can evaluate itself first against its own self as to how it has done in the past against its own mission, against its peers, and against what the standard for the country hopefully will be whether public or private. Then you can see where you are.

PD: So you're not eliminating a need to measure yourself against your own goals and objectives?

CH: You may decide that, when you look at your peers, your mission is so greatly different that, even though there are benchmarks out

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Outcomes assessment manual distributed

A resource manual on outcomes assessment will be distributed to all accredited LIS programs. Jointly authored by Prudence Dalrymple and Hilary Newman, the publication defines outcomes assessment and explains its use in accreditation of specialized and professional accreditation. It describes the planning and evaluation cycle and gives examples and illustrations of the process of setting goals and objectives, operationalizing their measurement, setting benchmarks for achievement and feeding back the results to achieve improved

outcomes. It also includes an annotated bibliography of related materials.

The Resource Manual will be the fifth module of the accreditation packet and is intended to assist LIS programs to incorporate outcomes assessment into the planning and assessment activities required under the 1992 *Standards*. The writing, publication, and distribution of the Manual is funded by the U.S. Department of Education through a sub-contract with the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. ▲

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Committee on Accreditation
American Library Association

Upcoming Meetings

WINTER

- ALA 1995 Midwinter Meeting
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
February 4 – 6, 1995
February 3 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(Deans/Directors meeting)
February 4* 8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
February 4* 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
February 5* 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
February 5 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
February 5 8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.
February 6 8:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
February 6* 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

SPRING

- COA Spring Meeting* – Chicago, Illinois
April 7-9, 1995

SUMMER

- ALA 1995 Annual Conference –
Chicago, Illinois, June 24 – 26, 1995
June 24 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
June 24 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
June 25 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
June 25 2:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
June 26 8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
June 26 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

*Closed meetings

Outlook (cont. fr. page 3)

Meanwhile, we have continued to participate in the recognition process carried out by the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA). Our petition for continued recognition was filed on October 14 and COA Chair Carla Hayden and I will appear at the hearing in February. We also continue our membership and participation in the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA).

In addition, I will attend an invitational meeting here in Chicago of the National Policy Board (NPB) to discuss establishing a recognition process with increased public participation in accreditation, and greater accountability, and more openness about accreditation activities. This is seen as a direct response to calls for higher education reform. The outcome is still unclear, but the world of accreditation will undergo significant change over the next 18 months, and ALA must continue to invest resources to maintain a place and a voice in this arena. ▲

Interview (cont. fr. page 5)

there, it doesn't help your board, your administration, to really meet its mission. We're not going to try to get all of this information out there and say these are the benchmarks that you should be looking at.

So, again, that gets back to that balancing act; you look at yourself and that's important because that's a measure over time. You're also looking at yourself compared to others, which is an across-the-board measurement.

You set the criteria. Have you determined that you are a good liberal arts college? Have you determined that you want to be the best liberal arts college? Compared to what? Are you going to be a research institution or just what do you want to be? Don't, please don't tell me in this sense you want to provide quality education at a low cost; that's everybody's mission. ▲

OA names new assistant director

Mary Taylor has been named the new assistant director in the Office for Accreditation. Mary was most recently director of Member Services with the Association of College of Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association. Formerly she was communications manager in the Office of Research at OCLC and editor of their *Annual Review of Research*. She is an active member of the American Society for Information Science (ASIS) and has held several posi-

tions in the Ohio Chapter and in the Chicago Chapter. She is currently the past-chair of the Chicago Chapter. Mary started with OA on November 10, 1994. She said, "I am excited about joining the Office for Accreditation and I look forward to contributing to this important activity. The schools are of vital importance to the profession and I am honored to be able to work with them to help them achieve the greatest rewards from the accreditation process." ▲



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