

# PRISM

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## New council to recognize accreditors

At its meeting on August 18, 1996, the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation voted to dissolve and to turn over the recognition process to the newly formed Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

The Council is an association of higher education institutions. Membership is open to all degree-granting colleges and universities that pay the membership fee and are accredited by a body recognized by the Council. Recognized accrediting bodies are those recognized by either the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) or subsequently by CORPA. The American Library Association has been continuously recognized by both COPA and CORPA.

According to its mission statement, CHEA will "serve students and their families, col-

leges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments, and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation through accreditation."

The responsibilities of CHEA are to: recognize sound and effective higher education accrediting bodies; coordinate research and debate to improve accreditation; serve as a national advocate for voluntary self-regulation through accreditation; collect and disseminate data and information about accreditation; mediate disputes and foster communication between and among accrediting bodies and the higher education community; and work to preserve the quality and diversity of colleges and universities.

CHEA differs from its predecessors in that  
*(continued on page 6)*

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## COA announces accreditation actions

At the Committee on Accreditation meeting, July 5-July 8, 1996, in New York, COA took action to continue accreditation, under the 1992 *Standards for Accreditation of Master's Programs in Library and Information Studies*, of the following graduate programs leading to the first professional degree: Master of Science in Library Science, College of Communication, Computer Information Science and Library

Science, Clarion University of Pennsylvania; Master of Library and Information Studies, Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, University of Rhode Island; Master of Library Science, School of Communication, Information and Library Science, Southern Connecticut State University; Master of Library Science and Master of Arts in Library Science, School of Library and Information

*(continued on page 6)*

## COA service offers unique opportunity

*Carla D. Hayden*

As I begin this year as chair of the Committee on Accreditation, I am filled with appreciation for my previous experience as a committee member. That experience forcefully demonstrated the contributions members are making to the accreditation process during the implementation of the revised standards and new process. Not only are members constantly considering refinements and clarifications but they are seriously planning for the future and the next revision process. And so this initial column is a call for nominations to membership on COA.

It is especially important to consider working on the Committee during this time. The issues and concerns facing COA reflect the larger contexts of higher education and the information environment. The area of accreditation is receiving intense review on many levels and our efforts are certainly contributing to the considerations. On a more specialized level, the work of COA benefits greatly from members varied experiences and backgrounds. Varied viewpoints and perspectives give depth to considerations and review of issues, planning efforts, and discussion of practical concerns as well. The infusion of new members at regular intervals also insures a level of objectivity and integrity. It is a unique opportunity to contribute to the future of the profession.

This is also a very exciting and challenging time to be involved with accreditation. Discussions were recently held regarding specialization in the library and information profession, our relationship with other specialized accreditation programs, and issues of international education. The Committee's planning sessions have produced guidelines and a timeline for continued evaluation of the current accreditation process. COA working groups

provide continuity in review of reports and add perspective to discussions. A significant addition to the continuous improvement process is the expansion of training opportunities for External Review Panel chairs and members.

In closing, I ask you to consider Committee service. Your participation will aid immeasurably in insuring the success of the accreditation process. Your contribution will be appreciated and I can assure you that your efforts will be well worth the time and commitment. ▲

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## COA nominations invited

The Committee on Accreditation is responsible for executing the ALA accreditation program and for developing and formulating standards of education for library and information studies.

There are twelve Committee members; three member terms expire in 1997. Two members will be appointed from the broad spectrum of library and information studies education and practice. One member will be appointed from the public at large to represent the public interest. The public member may not be a librarian and should not be employed in an institution in which there is a program accredited by ALA or one that is in candidacy status.

Public members are appointed for two years and may be re-appointed once. The other two members will be appointed for four-year terms and may not be appointed for a second term.

Barbara Ford, ALA President-elect, has released a call for volunteers. If you are interested in serving or if you would like to nominate someone to serve on the COA, please send your nomination by October 15 to the Office for Accreditation. Each application or nomination should include a brief summary of qualifications. All will be reviewed by the Committee on Accreditation searching for expertise, experience, and interests relevant to the Committee work. ▲



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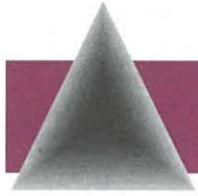
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## Parallel process

*Prudence W. Dalrymple*

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in a peer review of another accrediting body in a cognate field to library and information studies. The Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation has recently introduced a peer review component into its recognition process. In addition to the petition for recognition which is read and evaluated by the Committee on Recognition (COR), a staff member from another accrediting body is identified (subject to approval by the accreditor under review) who visits the agency or observes a meeting of its accrediting body, and writes a report. This report, along with the evaluations by two readers assigned by COR, is sent both to the accreditor agency and the Commission. The agency has an opportunity to respond to the report in writing. The peer reviewer and the readers make presentations to the Committee on Recognition.

Representatives from the accrediting body also meet with the Committee on Recognition. The COR deliberates and delivers its decision.

Sound familiar? It should, as there are many parallels between the recognition process and the accreditation process. Having had this opportunity to serve as a peer reviewer, I have the following observations to make.

Although peer review is time-consuming, peer reviewers learn a great deal from their participation. Each of us is an "expert" in a particular area but much is to be gained from observing how others conduct their business. Although the charge is to determine whether the accrediting body meets the criteria (standards), not to compare one accreditor with another, there is considerable diversity among accrediting bodies and it is always useful to see how others approach issues. Just as there is no single "right way" to educate students in library and information studies, there is no

single "right way" to conduct accreditation. There are, however, "best practices." These best practices emerge from the consolidated insights and efforts of the stakeholders. In establishing policy and procedures, each accrediting body strikes a balance between established criteria, best practices, and the particular characteristics of the profession it serves.

Although evaluation is an activity that all of us engage in continually, some anxiety is inevitable on everyone's part. In a bilateral process, the reviewer's comments undergo scrutiny, too. And a reviewer must weigh carefully the potential effect of his or her comments and observations.

The accreditation community owns its recognition process. The commitment that each agency makes when it holds itself accountable to an external authority is the only guarantee of quality that we have, outside of government regulation. Similarly, the accreditation process in LIS is the only guarantee of quality for the LIS profession. Stewardship of the process is a joint responsibility of each external review panel member, as well as faculty, students, and employers, and particularly the Committee on Accreditation.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in this parallel process, and for the opportunity to look at peer review "from the other side." ▲

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## LIS programs deans, directors, and chairs to meet

All Library and Information Studies programs deans, directors and chairs are invited to suggest agenda items for the annual meeting with the Office for Accreditation staff. The meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 14, 1997 from 4:15 to 5:30 at the J.W. Marriott hotel in Washington, DC. ▲

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## Accreditation materials available at ALISE conference

The Office for Accreditation invites LIS programs who have been reaccredited under the 1992 *Standards* to share Program Presentations and other materials at the 1997 ALISE conference. Programs preparing for reaccreditation frequently request assistance in designing instruments or in identifying ones that are particularly effective. The Office particularly encourages programs who have developed surveys for use with alumni and/or employers to share both the instruments and techniques for displaying the results with other programs. Collaboration can reduce the effort needed to create such instruments and can lead to future data sharing across programs, if desired.

The 1992 *Standards* call for evidence of ongoing involvement of the constituents that the program serves. In addition to students and faculty, these include employers, alumni and others. Programs use many approaches to solicit involvement such as surveys, structured interviews, advisory groups and focus groups.

Following last year's successful display of accreditation materials at the ALISE conference, program presentations and survey instruments will be available once again at the ALISE meeting at the J.W. Marriott hotel in Washington, D.C. February 11-14, 1997. Comments and suggestions should be directed to the Office for Accreditation. ▲

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### Committee on Accreditation American Library Association Upcoming Meetings

*All agenda items are due in to the Office for Accreditation no later than one month prior to the Committee on Accreditation meetings. Currently scheduled meetings of COA are as follows:*

#### **FALL**

- COA Fall Meeting\*  
Chicago, Illinois, November 22-24, 1996

#### **WINTER (preliminary)**

- ALA 1997 Midwinter Meeting  
Washington, DC, February 14-17, 1997  
February 14 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.  
February 15 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.  
February 16 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
February 17 2:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

*\*Closed meetings*

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## Former COA members continue service

At the COA spring meeting, considerable time and effort was devoted to analyzing the accreditation process in terms of validity and reliability (see the Spring 1996 issue of Prism). The Committee continued their evaluation of the accreditation process at Annual Conference. One result of that evaluation is the pilot test of a draft External Review Panel Report format. The three retiring members of COA, John Gray, Diane Mittermeyer and Fred Roper, have agreed to analyze this new addition to the accreditation process and report to the Committee at the Midwinter Meeting. ▲

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## COA welcomes new members

Mary Somerville, ALA President, appointed three new members to the Committee on Accreditation for terms which began in July 1996. Martha (Marty) L. Hale and Vivienne Monty have been appointed for four year terms. Dr. Hale, professor, School of Library and Information Management, Emporia State University, holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Southern California. Ms. Monty, senior librarian, Scott Library, York University, Glendon Campus, holds the Master of Library and Information

Science from the University of Toronto. Edward Quattrocchi has been appointed as a public member of the Committee for a two year term. Dr. Quattrocchi, commodities trader, Chicago Mercantile Exchange, holds a Ph.D. in English from Loyola University.

COA will welcome these new members at their fall meeting in Chicago, November 22-24, 1996. This is the meeting when the Committee receives interim reports from all of the accredited programs. ▲

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## New council (cont. fr. page 1)

it does not include accreditors as voting members, although it plans to name advisory groups chosen from accrediting bodies. It also excludes institutions that do not grant degrees. Membership in both COPA and CORPA was open to non-degree granting, postsecondary institutions.

Robert Glidden, president, Ohio University, chairs the fourteen member Board which is composed of college and university presidents and three public members. The Board has named Larry Braskamp, dean, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago, interim executive director during 1996-97. CHEA will be headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. ▲

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## COA actions (cont. fr. page 1)

Studies, Texas Woman's University; Master of Information Studies, Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto.

COA took action to admit the University of Denver program to candidacy, effective immediately. Candidacy status is a preliminary step prior to initial accreditation. A program may maintain candidacy status for a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years. A program may voluntarily withdraw from candidacy at any time.

Individuals wishing further information about a particular program should contact the school. ▲



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