

# Social Responsibilities Round Table

OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

## N E W S L E T T E R

number 130

December 1998

### from the srrt coordinator:

From the Coordinator

Greetings. If you've been following the discussions on the SRRT and ALACOUN listservs, you're probably well aware of what SRRT Action Council members have been discussing this Fall. If not, read on.

In September, I received a letter from ALA President Ann Symons, writing on behalf of ALA Executive Board. Once again, SRRT is being accused of speaking on behalf of the entire Association, and the Executive Board is asking us not to send our resolutions or letters outside of the Association. Symons letter is reprinted, with permission, in this issue; along with SRRT Action Council's response. This is an extremely important issue, with huge free speech implications, and it is an ongoing topic of discussion as this issue goes to press (mid-October). I expect this to be a priority agenda item for discussion at Midwinter.

Speaking of Midwinter, you will receive this issue before the conference, so please let me know if there are agenda items for Action Council I and II. As always, we will have the All Task Force meeting on Saturday, January 30, from 8:00-9:30am, followed by Action Council I, from 9:30-11:30am. (Note: Action Council I usually runs from 9:30-11, but in response to popular demand, we are extending Action Council I until 11:30. The time slot in the program will say 9:30-12:30, but I hope to end the meeting at 11:30 to avoid conflicts.) Action Council II will be on Monday, February, from 2:00-4:30pm— this time slot has also been extended.

Another item on our agenda will be the new Round Table Councilor position. Last year, ALA members voted to give round tables council representation. At Annual, the powers-that-be decided that these round table councilors would be elected during the Spring 1999 ALA election process, to begin serving right after ALA Annual in 1999. In order to avoid having all the round table councilors change terms simultaneously, it was decided to stagger the terms at the beginning. The initial terms of the round table councilors were determined by lot, and SRRT drew a one-year term. So, the first councilor we elect will serve for one-year, and then in the year 2000, we'll elect a SRRT councilor to serve for the three-year term. We will be discussing the job duties for this position and looking for candidates to run for election at Midwinter.

Lastly, if you've been looking for a way to get involved with SRRT, we have an immediate opportunity. Ron Landskroner, our Membership Coordinator, has resigned, and we need a few volunteers to help contact new SRRT members to welcome them to SRRT. If you are interested, please let me know— and please join me in thanking Ron for his efforts!

Wendy Thomas, SRRT Coordinator  
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WHAT WILL THE MAI DO TO  
LIBRARIES?



# Cease and Desist?

[Or Else What?]

by Rory Litwin

RECENT EVENTS

As a relatively new member of SRRT who is watching its activities and relationship with the larger body via SRRTAC-L, I am concerned about the hostility SRRT has been experiencing recently. Elsewhere in this issue there is coverage of the controversy over SRRT's letters to outside organizations sent on its own stationery. SRRT's response (see next page) to a letter from Ann Symons (this page) reminding us on behalf of council that we are not to "speak for the association" seemed reasonable and unproblematic to SRRT members who discussed it in advance, but it received a generally hostile response from non-SRRT council members. What is going on? It seems to be an opportune time to take stock of our situation within the ALA and to work out strategies for the future. I'll take a step toward that here, with a description of some recent history and a summary of some strategic projects that have been started.

In the 1994 ALA elections, members voted to raise the quorum at membership meetings to a number that practically guarantees that they will not have an official voice. SRRT members voiced opposition to the change and felt the measure was given a biased presentation by a council that had a vested interest in its outcome, and the vote would never have gone the way it did if members knew what the measure was really about. (There has been conflict and controversy surrounding SRRT going back to its inception, but I'm not qualified to talk about it yet, nor do I have the space, so I'm beginning with the 1994 vote. An article in the upcoming issue of *Progressive Librarian* (#15) gives some of the historical background to these issues.)

Since 1994, the vote on the membership issue and SRRT members' agitation for democracy in ALA have been milked by Councilors and members of the library press for their own public relations purposes, at times in clear opposition to the goals of SRRT. As Al Kagan points out in his letter to *American Libraries* (Sept. 1998, p. 34), the previous issue's coverage of the Membership Meeting ("Membership Still Chatting", *AL*, Aug. p.98) calls the opposition to the quorum change only "a handful of ALA members," and brings out the suggestion that we are "radicals bent on bogging down the association over social issues." Kagan mentions in passing that SRRT is one of the Association's largest Round Tables, a fact that would seem surprising to people whose only knowledge of us is gleaned from the library press and the member-forum discussion list, which at times seems to be a hangout for our angriest antagonists.

SRRT members have had other ideas about what is bogging down ALA council. In his August 1st editorial in

*Library Journal*, John Berry called the council's leadership of ALA into question and explained its inaction on major issues as a consequence of its makeup: "In truth, Council can't act because its membership is dominated by administrators, the

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August 27, 1998

Dear Wendy:

At the close of Annual Conference Councilor Mark Rosenzweig posted to the Council listserv the resolutions passed by the SRRT Action Council at the 1998 Annual Conference. The resolutions were also transmitted in letters to me and to Executive Director William Gordon by SRRT Action Council Secretary Elaine Harger.

I have been asked by the ALA Executive Board to express our concern to SRRT. In reviewing the resolutions, the Board noted that they had been sent to a number of government officials and outside agencies. The Board is quite concerned that this action was taken by SRRT, since the resolutions imply that SRRT is speaking for the American Library Association on these matters.

The ALA Executive Board is charged to act on behalf of Council between meetings, particularly on matters of ALA policy. Council expects us to take that responsibility quite seriously and we do. Nowhere in the ALA Constitution, Bylaws or Policy Manual does it say that roundtables may speak externally for the Association. The ALA Bylaws expressly say that "... [no] round table [shall] commit the Association by any declaration of policy," i.e., round tables may not speak on behalf of the Association, whether in accordance with ALA policy or not. In the judgment of the Board, SRRT's sending these resolutions to outside agencies or government officials has the effect of speaking on behalf of the 58,000 members of ALA.

The Executive Board is distressed that it is necessary to remind SRRT again that it may not speak on behalf of the Association, nor may it send out notices, letters, or resolutions that appear to be policy statements or positions of ALA. The Board has asked me to express in the strongest possible terms its dismay at SRRT's recent action and to state that the Board expects SRRT to comply with Association policy. It is not our intention to stifle SRRT's ability to speak on issues of concern to its members. It is, however, our intention to insure that all ALA roundtables adhere to ALA policies.

SRRT is always welcome to bring its resolutions to ALA Council. If you and members of the SRRT Action Council would like to meet with the Board at Midwinter to talk about the seriousness of these issues or if you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,  
Ann K. Symons  
President, ALA

majority of whom see librarianship as a management problem.” They delegate responsibility for resolving problems to groups composed of “experts” on the question, but tend to be imbalanced in their composition. They are predisposed to outcomes that the force of gravity has already presented to us in the form of the problems: outsourcing, privatization, disappearance of the concept of the library in library education, etc.)

WHAT THE HECK?

Reaction to Berry’s editorial on the Council’s discussion list was predictably sharp, and scapegoated a “minority (that) drives the issues” as the cause of Council’s foundering. (Kent Oliver’s phrase.) It is as easy to say that the opposite is true, that a stubborn opposition to any social elements in the agenda is keeping Council from part of its appropriate business, at the cost of much wasted time. But this perspective is nearly undetectable in the

# To Accredite, or Not To Accredite?

*A couple of meetings ago, SRRT had a discus-*

ALA ACTIVITIES RPT.

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and possibly helping to get it started, contact Fred Stoss at [fstoss@acsu.buffalo.edu](mailto:fstoss@acsu.buffalo.edu).

Also under discussion is the idea of getting the *American Libraries* editors to start a regular column to allow Round Tables to discuss their interests and voice their concerns. Something like that could go a long way toward correcting the anti-SRRT bias that is detectable at the moment. Unfortunately, this fact in itself might reduce the likelihood of the column seeing the light of day in the first place. Al Kagan has written about this idea on SRRTAC-L. If you have specific ideas in relation to this, you can contact him at [akagan@uiuc.edu](mailto:akagan@uiuc.edu).

What we are seeing might just be a spate of bad weather, or it might represent an actual climatic change. Certainly there has always been opposition, and the future of SRRT has always been in our own hands, but right now might be good time to face our situation with a strategic attitude and to bring more SRRT members into the work of maintaining our place and effectiveness within the ALA.

named members with diverse backgrounds and experiences to a total of 18 members

**Issues**

The “problems” related to graduate education of professional librarians, whether real or imagined, pervade our professional and academic discourse and literatures. These were initially identified by Council and others as the growing elimination of the “L” word [Library] from the names of programs of graduate education, the seeming lack of attention to core competencies [cataloguing was often mentioned], and the national shortage of professionals to work with particular groups [specifically young people in public libraries and disadvantaged populations] and particular environments [such as schools].

These problems might more appropriately be labeled issues; the tension around these issues is increasing - and is not necessarily “creative” in terms of seeking resolution.

Among the issues related to accreditation and raised by the Steering Committee are recruitment, staffing levels, learning to learn by all library workers, continuing education, certification and licensing, and foreign credentials. The Steering Committee will focus on the first professional degree in the broader context of these related issues

**Content and Process**

The Steering Committee formed four working groups, three of which will deal with “content” issues and one with “process” issues. The committees and members are listed below.

The three content areas are:

**[1] Issues in the Higher Education**— Joe Mika, chair; Jim Baughman; Jonathan Franklin; Lisa Biblo; Ann O’Neill, staff liaison -issues of the context for graduate professional program

**[2] Issues in Library and Information Studies Education** [note: this is the term used on the Council-approved standards]— Bob Martin, chair; Fred Roper; Shirley Fitzgibbons; Mary Dempsey; Mary Ghikas, staff liaison - issues related to the graduate programs themselves.

**[3] Issues on The Profession**—Ed Erazo, chair; Jennifer Gallant; Suzi Hayes; Connie Van Fleet; Lorelle Swader, staff liaison. -issues emanating from the profession(s).

At this juncture, the content groups will set context, develop means of examining content in that area, commission background papers, determine speakers and help ensure people are informed before they get to the summit.

**Background Material**

The content groups will consult with individuals and groups regarding selected background papers but all stakeholders will be invited to submit papers on any or all of the areas. These papers will be posted to a specific web site and open for comment. Invited papers would be reviewed and commented upon. Interested groups (e.g., divisions, roundtables, associations, councilors, members, etc.) will be invited to contribute papers (probable deadline: March 31).

**The Summit Planning/Process working group—**

Sharon Hogan; Maureen Sullivan; Dawn Vaughn, Judy Card.

The Committee renamed the Education Summit to the Congress on Professional Education. These preliminary outcomes were articulated for the Congress: · Philosophy, principles, ethics of the field [term used in the Standards]: what is “the field” and is it singular or plural? · Understanding of accreditation: role, function and purpose-what does ALA accredit? One profession or many? · Discussion and possible consensus on core values · Discussion and possible consensus on core competencies · Understanding of what is happening in LIS education · Clarification of roles — individual, association, employer, educator · Development of relationship of professional education to training and Is there program-specific strategy for “listening” to the field - i.e. advisory councils, practica or internships; can we reach consensus on “practical next steps”; including addressing the related issues noted above.

Every effort will be made to use technology to make the Congress as participatory as possible. It is intended that part of the congress will form an interactive teleconference with interested members.

**Participants at the Congress**

Invitations will be handled in two tiers: (1) a letter will be sent to national associations asking them to name a representative. (2) an invitations subcommittee will review the named representatives and invite others, to assure broadly defined diversity. The press will be invited to report. There will be no observers.

**Other information**

The Committee meets again in early January. Individual Steering Committee members will be charged with meeting with/listening to various groups at MidWinter.

Dr. Ken Haycock, Professor and Director  
The University of British Columbia  
School of Library, Archival and Information Studies

## International Responsibilities

August 3, 1998

**TASK FORCE REPORTS**  
Statement of Purpose The SRRT International Responsibilities Task Force provides a forum for discussion and work on the international dimensions of SRRT issues, including organizational alliances. As globalization proceeds, it is imperative that SRRT understand its mission in the international context, and work with sister organizations in other countries to address common concerns and problems.

Two kinds of activities are addressed: foreign policy and international relations:

Foreign policy includes bilateral and multilateral relations with governments, corporations, and organizations in various countries. Particular attention is given to current situations where United States policy is likely to have a major impact.

International relations includes alliances and relationships with library and related organizations throughout the world. Issues addressed include foreign policy as well as issues that may be seen as

local but similar in many countries.

### Functions

1. To provide information and advocate socially responsible positions on issues of international concern within SRRT, ALA, and the international library arena through programs, resolutions, and reports.

2. To change ALA policies to reflect socially responsible positions, make such policies known within ALA and internationally, and implement these policies.

3. To promote international human rights, including implementation of Article 19 on freedom of expression, of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

4. To serve as liaison with other progressive library and related organizations worldwide, and promote cooperative endeavors.

### Membership

SRRT members who state their interest in or attend at least one International Responsibilities Task Force meeting per year will be considered IRTF members.

### Structure

A Coordinator and Secretary will be elected for two-years terms by a method agreeable to IRTF members. Other officers or liaisons may be elected if the need arises. The Coordinator or Secretary will make regular reports to be published in the *SRRT Newsletter*.

Al Kagan  
akagan@uiuc.edu

## Alternatives in Print

AIP is entering a transition period as Charles Willett gradually transfers responsibilities to Rory Litwin. He has led the AIP through five years of consistent high activity and success. He is looking forward to focussing his energies on

*Counterpoise*, the 1999 edition of *Alternative Publishers of Books in North America*, and *Librarians at Liberty* (see the websites located at <http://www.LibLib.com/>); the activities of CRISES Press; writing and lecturing; and enjoying life. His title for the present is "coordinator for external affairs."

Rory Litwin, "coordinator for internal affairs," is in charge of day to day operations and represents AIP on SRRT Action Council. Rory is finishing his MLIS at San Jose State University and is relatively new to SRRT and AIP. He is the publisher of the email-based current awareness service *Library Juice* and works for the Progressive Librarians Guild, managing their discussion list and website and serving as review editor for *Progressive Librarian*. (See the websites located at <http://www.libr.org>) He is learning the ropes with the help of AIP members and looks forward to coordinating their efforts and drawing in new participants. Projects: As usual, AIP has a full slate of projects underway. Immediately upcoming is a midwinter discussion group on "Really Banned Books." The organizers and other participants will discuss the hidden economic and structural forms of censorship and their impact on library collections. The year's most quietly censored titles, as determined by a study of OCLC holdings of titles reviewed in *Counterpoise*, will be described. The inspiration for this event was of course Banned Books Week, which gives a conspicuous lack of attention to the alternative press.

In the early planning stages for the annual conference are programs on Street Newspapers, chaired by James Danky with the help Chris Dodge; *Erotica in Libraries*, chaired by Chuck Munson with the help of Martha Cornog; and The Alternative Press and Intellectual Freedom, chaired by Charles Willett with the help of Rory Litwin. Other AIP members, such as Sandy Berman, Byron Anderson, and Steve Harris, have also been noticeably active in getting these projects off the ground. If you are interested in participating with the planning of these events, please contact Rory Litwin at [rlitwin@earthlink.net](mailto:rlitwin@earthlink.net).

## Environment

### EPA Open House at Midwinter

TFOE initiated an interesting and hopefully mutually beneficial exchange with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) National Library Network in 1995 at the ALA Annual Meeting. The arrangement provides ALA members an EPA Library to visit in exchange for EPA Libraries to enhance their outreach to ALA members. It's been a win-win arrangement and will be continued at the Midwinter Meeting, when ALA goes to Philadelphia, home of the Region 3 EPA Library. The EPA Open House will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on Monday, 25 January 1999. Dianne McCreary, Director of the Region 3 Library will be our host for the open house.

Public, school, and academic librarians will find many of the new resources for libraries, teachers, and researchers of interest. The EPA has invested much time and energy

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developing its electronic information resources, especially its Web-based services and products. A substantial portion of this development has been undertaken with librarians in mind.

The Region 3 Library is open to the public Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm. We are closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays. The Library is located on the second floor of the EPA regional office building at 1650 Arch Street (on the southeast corner of 17th and Arch Streets, 215/814-5254, email: *library-reg3@epa.gov*) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A map of the area, directions, and photographs of their recent move are available from the Region 3 EPA Office Web site at: <http://www.epa.gov/region03/r3lib/index.htm>

The Region 3 Library as well as other libraries in the EPA Library Network is committed to providing the best, most timely, and most accurate information that is available to their community of users within our funding and staffing resources. Many of their services are directed towards support for the Region 3 offices of the EPA, but every citizen who lives or works in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, or the District of Columbia is our client and will be given our best efforts.

EPA and contract Librarians will be on hand to provide an introduction to the EPA Library Network, demonstrate several of the EPA's new databases (including its

national OPAC), provide a tour of the EPA's exciting Web site (whose extensive revision was unveiled at the 1997 ALA Annual Meeting in San Francisco), and a tour of the Region 3 facilities.

#### **TFOE Setting Plans for Annual Meeting**

The TFOE will be holding special programs on Environmental Education and Environmental Justice at the ALA Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Details of TFOE programs for the Annual will appear in future issues of the SRRT Newsletter and the SRRT and TFOE Websites.

TASK FORCE REPORT

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Views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of ALA/SRRT. The editors reserve the right to edit submitted material as necessary or as whimsy strikes. Next deadline 1/15

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