

In My Opinion

Keeping an Outward Focus: Notes from the Fall Assembly

Our [Fall 2004 Assembly](#), held on November 4 at Berkeley was a resounding success. Including last-minute registrations, attendance exceeded 110 persons. Berkeley's University Library joined LAUC in co-sponsoring the event. Attendees included LAUC members, colleagues from the California Digital Library and UCOP, faculty and staff from Berkeley, and retirees, too. Not only was the turnout good, but there were also "good vibrations." I have yet to hear from anyone who did not appreciate the "outward focus" of our Assembly: we invited our many friends and colleagues to attend our world, and they came in large numbers.

With that event behind us (but [archived as a Webcast](#)), I'd like to follow up on some trends, news and theories that were vetted at the Assembly. My objective in doing so is to frame some of the "big ideas" as a the basis for a [Call for Guest Opinions](#) for the LAUC Web. It's not possible to cover all of the great ideas we heard from the Systemwide Operations and Planning Group (SOPAG) and the faculty, but here are a few highlights.

"We're At Our Best When We Collaborate"

SOPAG Chair Bernie Hurley (B) made an interesting comment, early in the program development process. He said that within the University Libraries, "...There is a pent-up demand for collaboration." His point is well taken. Technology has driven the University campuses closer together, and it is now the norm for us to be in very close contact with collection specialists and like-minded colleagues throughout the state. Past SOPAG Chair John Tanno (D) added a historical note, describing the not-too-distant era when the "federal" system dominated how library collections grew, distances seems vastly greater, and each campus was building its collections primarily for its local community. That paradigm has been shifting for years, first with Melvyl and the Division of Library Automation, and more recently with the California Digital Library. Not only is collaboration a good idea, it is standard practice.

Call for Guest Opinions

As academic professionals it's our job to make these changes understandable to the faculty and students of the University. I would also argue that it is LAUC's job to provide a forum for the profession to build shared understandings of how to do so.

SOPAG offered an earnest invitation to LAUC to suggest projects worthy of followup and review, and I will discuss this invitation with the Executive Board this year. In the mean time: what are your ideas about how libraries can collaborate? You are invited to share them—within the [guidelines of the Guest Opinion format](#).

"Shared Services:" Stay Tuned

One of the most important issues to emerge from our collaborative culture is the theory of shared services. This concept builds upon our longstanding goals to coordinate collection development and find economies of scale in technical services. As a guiding strategy, it is poised to open new territory.

SOPAG member Patricia Cruse (CDL) addressed the strategies under discussion at some length, and you can listen in on the Webcast. The terrain seems open, including coordinated technical solutions, coordinated reference, new digital library features, and on. LAUC members would benefit from doing some serious thinking about how to take advantage of this paradigm—and keep our patron needs in the forefront. Once again: please consider commenting in a Guest Column.

“Systemwide Strategic Directions for Libraries and Scholarly Information”

Well, if you haven't heard a lot about this document by now, you may be living in alternative reality. Shared Services is but one facet of the planning strategies this planning document proposes. The Fall Assembly illustrated that this document is moving into the forefront of everyone's thinking. The University Librarians, the Academic Senate and LAUC have all been asked to comment. In response, I have asked our Divisions to discuss the document, and report back to the Executive Board in the Spring 2005. Our divisions will also coordinate their deliberations with the University Librarians at each campus.

In my opinion, now is the time for LAUC to advance its collective voice in a timely fashion. You have an opportunity to comment as an individual on the LAUC Web, too.

The Faculty: Many Voices of Support

I'll just be frank and tell you: I believe that every LAUC member needs to watch the Webcast of the faculty panel. What it revealed was a rich and varied dialogue about the Library within the University, in all its forms and perceptions. With five campuses represented, and with the humanities, social sciences and hard science represented, the panel quickly launched an intense dialogue with each other.

“I need to touch things that were written on skins,” Berkeley Professor Elaine Tennant, a medievalist said. In response, Martin London, Professor of Anesthesia at San Francisco praised the effectiveness of the digital library, and how it improves a clinician's daily life. “I don't really care what the Romans did,” he said, even though he respected the needs of other scholars. Rogers Brubaker (Los Angeles) spoke at length about the importance of understanding the “mixed” environment we still contend with: print plus digital, and all the doubled up workloads we are talking about less than we might. Indeed, UCLA's Senate Committee on Library has been surveying perceptions of the UCLA Libraries, and given UCLA's prominence in the library world, these data will be very significant. Santa Cruz's Ben Crow made an impassioned plea for collaborative teaching, modeled along the lines of London's Open University. Andy Ouellette, a pathologist at Irvine, described how Irvine's broadly charged Senate committee has engaged the Irvine community.

So—any takers out there? Got anything to say? Point your browsers at the [Call for Guest Opinions](#).

What Mattered The Most

I had the privilege of moderating these two fascinating programs, and the entire process, both of building the programs and witnessing them unfold, made two things clear to me. First and foremost, we envisioned our Assembly as a public venue that can be and should be open to all members of our community with a stake in the University Libraries, and this open-door policy was welcomed by all. This suggests that LAUC can play an active advisory role within the University, even taking the lead at times, in opening up dialogue on the challenges facing our profession.

Second, although the faculty is a diverse group with vastly divergent opinions and ideas about libraries, a phenomenal level of good will exists in their ranks. Yes, not all faculty members use the libraries enough, and yes, some don't care too much about the nuts and bolts of our working lives—but it's enormously rewarding to witness the collective voices of five campus faculty panelists, united in praising both our historic roles as preservers of knowledge, and our activist stance in mastering the digital technologies we now rely upon.

Yes, the vibrance of both programs forms an excellent basis for launching the Guest Opinion column. Therefore I am pleased to invite the members of LAUC, together with others who are interested in the University Libraries, to submit a guest column for the LAUC Web.

Send comments regarding this site to [Frank Lester](#), LAUC Web Manager. Last updated: 03/12/2013