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In My Opinion

Professional Life In An Era of “Continuous Planning”—Or, We’ve Come A Long Way Since The “Salmon Report”

This is my first “In My Opinion” column, which I will add to over the course of the academic year. The Executive Board has endorsed this column concept, with a guiding policy that it should be devoted to “Items and ideas related to the professional concerns of LAUC members.” The opinions expressed here are solely my own, and are not intended to convey any formal positions taken by LAUC.

A History of Engagement and Collaboration

In my first email letter to the membership (September 1, 2004) I outlined several goals for LAUC during this academic year. Although these initiatives range widely across the terrain of professional practice, the Executive Board’s thinking has been influenced by one unifying consensus. Simply stated, the “culture” of systemwide library planning within the University has come of age. LAUC’s role within that “culture” is the subject of my first column.

The Office of Systemwide Library Planning has posted a very helpful historical overview on its Web site, titled “A Short History of Library Planning and Budgeting in the University of California, 1977-2002” (see <http://www.slp.ucop.edu/docs.html>). This document describes the creation of the “One University, One

Library” principal that continues to guide library planning and policies throughout the UC system. When this document, popularly known as the “Salmon Report” was written, it could not help but sound idealistic. The Division of Library Automation was hard at work on an online union catalogue, and LAUC members were heavily involved in collection development and public services at the campus level. “One University, One Library” was a bold vision to advance within the “federal” culture of the University.

25 years later, professional life for Librarians at the University of California is deeply influenced by the robust state of collaborative work among the many stakeholders who care about libraries. This culture is so extensive that it can be daunting keep track of all of the advisory activity that is underway. Yet more than ever before, LAUC’s voice is heard throughout the overall planning environment, as is outlined on the [University Libraries’ Web site](#).

Service to Patrons: The Soul of the Profession

As a community of professionals, we broadly agree that our service to the University revolves around library users and library collections. Within that context of academic service, we are continually reminded to articulate the needs of library users in the planning process, as well as those of librarians. Regardless of whatever encouraging and forward looking planning may be underway within the University, academic librarians continue to be energetically involved in a professional dialogue about library users and their evolving needs. For this reason, we are often in a position to contribute important perspectives, which we have formed through teaching, counseling and interacting with our users.

Sharing this perspective can be enormously beneficial within any sort of planning activity. Our “anecdotal knowledge” of user needs and behaviors, coupled with our awareness of research patterns and pitfalls, is a unique knowledge base. At the same time, LAUC members have an uncanny ability to anticipate the unintended consequences that planning processes often create. Finally, and most importantly, our strong links with the faculty ensure that we are keenly aware of the curriculum and the directions it is evolving in. The practice of academic librarianship emphasizes the human interactions that surround collections and services, the conduct of research—and, by extension the planning processes that are necessary for the University Libraries to continue to thrive. Therefore we can be especially appreciative of the many opportunities that exist for LAUC members to offer constructive, supportive and collegial advice to University leaders.

If we examine our own internal planning processes over the years, both at divisional and systemwide levels, it is clear that we have always sought to advance our advisory role more deeply into the long term planning processes of the University Libraries. The most basic motive for this sustained interest lies in our relationship with the faculty, students and citizens who use the University Libraries: essentially, ours is a “helping profession.” This is an especially noteworthy professional bias, as LAUC is unique in its formal charge to advise the University President, the Provost, the Chancellors, the University Librarians, and the faculty. We have risen to that occasion—and we have remembered the central importance of our users, and their experience within the intellectual sphere of the library.

Two Objectives for 2004-2005

As the University’s the culture of continuous strategic planning grows, LAUC’s advisory role also grows. With that in mind, the Executive Board has identified two projects that will help the membership take stock of our current activities.

First, as has been broadly announced, the LAUC Fall 2004 Assembly will take the shape of a “summit” meeting, with two important programs. The Systemwide Operations and Planning Group (SOPAG) will enter into a collegial dialogue with Linda Kennedy, Tammy Dearie and me, assessing their recent activities. This promises to be a very interesting event.

Following the SOPAG program, we will hear from the faculty. Our distinguished panel of professors includes

the following persons, who hail from a total of five UC campuses:

- Professor Ben Crow (SC), Sociology & Incoming Chair, Academic Senate Systemwide University Committee on Library
- Martin London (SF), member of the Academic Senate Systemwide University Committee on Library
- Andre Oullette (I), member of the UCI Academic Senate Committee on Research, Computing, and Library Resources (CORCLR)
- Rogers Brubaker (Los Angeles), Chair of the UCLA Academic Senate Committee on Library
- Elaine Tennant (B), Chair of the Academic Senate Library Committee at Berkeley.

The presenters will offer a broad faculty perspective on library planning initiatives, including the concept of scholarly communications within the academy.

Second, beyond the Fall Assembly, the Executive Board has identified an interesting long-term project. Working with the Executive Board, I will lead an effort to bring the many LAUC representatives into closer dialogue with each other and the LAUC leadership. Our members are deeply involved in fascinating and highly important initiatives; LAUC as an organization will benefit from an enhanced two-way dialogue with them as they serve their terms. This will involve a conference call at the least, but may quickly evolve into a new Ad Hoc Committee that will serve as a clearinghouse for sharing useful information.

See You In Berkeley

In consideration of the interesting programming that will happen at the Fall Assembly I have sent special invitations to the LAUC membership at large to visit Berkeley and attend the event. I have also invited the staff of the California Digital Library to attend.

Please join us! I hope to see you in Berkeley at the [LAUC Fall Assembly!](#)

[Terence K. Huwe's Web Page](#)

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The opinions expressed in this column are the responsibility of the author and do not reflect the opinion of the Librarians Association of the University of California, the Institute of Industrial Relations, The University of California, or the Regents of the University of California