

Messages from MARS

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1. From the Chair.....	73
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MARS is now twenty-five years old! 2001 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Machine-Assisted Reference Services (MARS) Discussion Group within RUSA. 1976 was also the year that Viking I landed on that eponymous red planet. A year later the Discussion Group became the Machine-Assisted Reference Section, retaining the familiar acronym, and within a year the new section claimed 1600 members. The birthday party we held in San Francisco brought together both old Martians and new to celebrate, reminisce, and eat birthday cake. Many thanks to Naomi Lederer, Mary Streif, and all who helped to organize the party. And also thanks certainly to the party's sponsors: Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, Lexis-Nexis, Bell & Howell, Libraries Unlimited, and Facts.com.

Along one wall of the room in which we held our festivities was a detailed timeline of the section's activities, compiled by MARS Historian Pat Riesenman, showing the many changes and activities over the years. It was possible to see MARS addressing the ever-changing hot issues of the day. Looking back it was certainly possible to see how far we have come, but what has been constant was the attention to how electronic services have been delivered. Over the years that has meant focusing on charging for online searching, end-user searching, nonbibliographic databases, technostress, optical disc technology, Gopher, the Web, services to persons with disabilities, virtual reference and 24/7. The timeline also showed MARS in the forefront of such issues as asking RQ to begin reviewing databases, and encouraging

ALA to include PCs in their offices at conference for the use of committees and officers.

Of course, as Chair Nancy Buchanan noted in her remarks, for many of us it is the attention to the challenging issues of the day that attracts us initially to the section, but it is the friendships and close working relationships that keep us involved. Certainly one of the things that has kept me involved in the section is that we do have fun while working hard, and that Martians do work well together and are tremendously supportive of each other. As I have been working over the past months to fill the many committee posts, and am now organizing two ad hoc committees (one to write guidelines for virtual reference and the other to conduct a section review), I am often astonished at how eager people are to volunteer and contribute.

And certainly the San Francisco conference was a busy one. The MARS program "Ships Passing in the Night: Library-Vendor Relations" explored an often vexing issue from the point of view of both the library and the vendor, with suggestions for improving communications. Look for the presentations from this program to be posted on the MARS web site soon. You will also find the presentations from the Hot Topics Discussion Group, whose program "OpenURL and Link Servers (SFX, Openly Jake) Take Aim at the 'Appropriate Copy' Problem " attracted an overflow crowd (and the unwanted attention of the fire marshal). Lively discussions were also held on 24/7 service, hosted by the Managers in MARS discussion Group, and on "Librarians at the On-line Reference Desk Live or Real Time Virtual Reference Service" hosted by the Public Libraries Committee. And this is not mention the wonderful program on "Having It All? Work and Family" planned by Martians Amy Tracy Wells and Pam Sieving, or all the work done on projects and publications, both Web and print, by MARS committees and Task Forces.

One very special event of the Annual Conference is the awarding of the MARS Achievement Recognition, more familiarly known as "My Favorite Martian." I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate this year's recipient, Amy Tracy Wells. Amy was Chair of MARS the first year I was on the Executive Committee as a brand-new Member at Large. I was very quickly impressed with Amy's energy and her ability to get things done. She has remained a very supportive and valued colleague for many of us, and it was a delight to see her contributions recognized.

I am very honored to have been selected to chair such a vital and productive organization, and look forward very much to working with all of you in making this a productive and exciting year.

Bill McHugh

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2. MARS Outreach Task Force Report.....27

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The MARS 25th Birthday party, which took place Friday June 15th was attended by over 100 people. The timeline (content provided by Pat Riesenman; artwork and design by Anne Mitchell) was very well received! The food was much enjoyed by attendees. The following vendors contributed funds for the food at the party: Cambridge Scientific, Lexis-Nexis, Bell & Howell, Libraries Unlimited, and

Facts.com. We even got a photograph on p. 22 of the Sunday June 17th Cognotes. While the Chair of Outreach pulled things together, many thanks go to Mary Strife for making preliminary arrangements, Amy Tracy Wells for her contributions, and Eileen Hardy (RUSA) for her coordination with the hotel.

At the Outreach meeting, the Mentor program was discussed; it may be revived, although it probably will be adapted as a way to introduce new members to ongoing members at Meet MARTianS gatherings.

Outreach is now represented on the MARS Web page, as a check for committee appointments on the Web form, and in the Web handbook.

There is room on the committee for a virtual member or two, so do consider joining, even if you can't make it to conferences!

Meet MARTianS will take place in New Orleans from 5:30-7:30pm on Friday January 18th. Location to be announced. See you there!

Naomi Lederer, Outgoing Chair  
nlederer@manta.library.colostate.edu

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3. Planning Committee Report .....90

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(PART I) MARS PLANNING ACTIVITIES AT ALA ANNUAL CONFERENCE June 2001

Members of MARS Planning facilitated a brainstorming session to review and revise Tickler file of MARS discussion/program topics (<http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/tickler.html>) at the Friday June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the MARS Executive Committee. An updated list will be posted this fall.

Scott Garton, Northwestern University, has joined the committee as an intern. He will be working with the Planning Committee and Web Coordinator Alesia McManus to reformat the MARS handbook on the Web. MARS members are reminded the definitive edition of the handbook is the Web edition.

The Planning Committee, along with the current and past co-chairs of the MARS Best Task Force, discussed the work of the Task Force. The outcome of the meeting was a recommendation that a MARS Best Committee be established. The committee charge states that most of the members of this committee be virtual members, but the Co-Chairs will be required to come to meetings. The MARS Executive Committee voted to establish the Committee at the Tuesday June 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Executive Committee approved the position description for MARS Scheduling Coordinator which will be added to the handbook.

The Planning Committee will be adding updated information on publicity outlets and sample program evaluation questions to Martian to Martian Transmissions (<http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/transmissions.html>). When the updates have been completed, messages will be posted to MARS-L.

Marcella Stark  
Chair, MARS Planning

(PART II) MARS Goals for 2001-2002

1. Conduct the MARS Section review scheduled for 2001-2002.
2. Focus on critical areas of change in machine-assisted reference, such as:
  - a. Examining methods, standards, and effectiveness of the delivery of live reference over the Internet.
  - b. Helping to ensure that technology is implemented in a user-centered way, in such areas as the negotiation of licenses and the development of interfaces.
  - c. Supporting the role of public services librarians as advocates for the user both within their organizations and in relations with vendors.
  - d. examining issues of the continuing access to and preservation of electronic materials as they affect users today and in the future.
  - e. Looking at the competencies, skills and knowledge needed by public-services librarians in the emerging library, and examining methods for helping librarians to attain these skills.
  - f. Exploring the relationship of services offered by libraries with those of the various commercial services increasingly perceived as alternatives to the library.
3. Improve communication between the Executive Committee and the committee chairs by establishing of a listserv for this purpose.
4. Build on the work of the "MARSBest" Selection Task Force by:
  - a. Considering the establishment of a permanent committee to compile an annual list of the best free Web reference resources.
  - b. Investigating the creation of a comparable task force for fee-based Web reference resources.

Both groups will make extensive use of virtual members.
5. Continue to enhance the MARS Web site.
6. Continue to enhance the MARS Handbook, and continue to update the MARS Bylaws.

Marcella Stark, Chair  
MARS Planning  
mstark@mail.smu.edu

Bill McHugh  
Vice Chair/Chair-elect 2001-2002  
bmchugh@northwestern.edu

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4. Education, Training and Support Committee.....23

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ETS had a very focused committee meeting in San Francisco. We have approval for a two hour program for Annual 2002 in Atlanta with the working title: "Care and Feeding of the Virtual Librarian: Training and Support for Electronic Reference." MARS/Management of Electronic Reference Services Committee is co-sponsoring the program with us. The time slot is probably Saturday, June 15, 2002 1:30 - 3:30.

There was very animated discussion on the potential makeup of the 3-4 member panel for this program. At this point under discussion are representatives from a public library, academic library, special library and library school faculty. The committee also confirmed that we must keep the focus on the training and support aspects of virtual reference since there are going to be many programs on the general "hot" topic of virtual reference services.

We also discussed and will offer a Discussion Forum at Midwinter 2002 in New Orleans with the possible title "The 24/7 Reference Desk: So Now Do I Have to Work the Third Shift?" MARS/MERS joins us in co-sponsoring this discussion forum as well.

Submitted by Marianna Fitzgerald, Co-chair with Arlie Sims, Co-chair  
ETS

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5. Hot Topics Discussion Group.....79

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Summary of the Hot Topics Discussion at San Francisco

OpenURL and Link Servers (SFX, Openly Jake) Take Aim at the "Appropriate Copy" Problem. The ALA Annual 2001 MARS Hot Topics Discussion Group met Saturday, June 16, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Moscone Convention Center, Room 236. Attendance was 102 with at least an equal number turned away for lack of seats.

Linda Keiter, Hot Topics Chair, opened the session by introducing herself and George Porter, Hot Topics Vice Chair. She welcomed attendees and asked that anyone interested in becoming more involved in MARS contact her after the session.

In introducing the discussion topic, Linda described the relevance to public services of using linking servers to solve the appropriate copy problem: providing users with a direct link from an electronic index to all copies of the full text of an article to which those users are entitled to access.

Linda introduced Eric Hellman, founder and President of Openly Informatics. Eric received a Ph.D. in physics from Stanford and worked for 10 years at Bell Labs before he began developing Internet technologies in 1995. He explained that he approaches the scientific literature from a scientist's perspective and is applying his own information seeking behaviors and preferences to the problem. His goal is one click access to everything because that's what users want. Eric gave an overview of the OpenURL, explaining that it will codify a vocabulary for putting bibliographic metadata into an Internet

hyperlink. He encouraged librarians to demand OpenURLs from publishers and aggregators (many already supply OpenURLs), to install and use a link server, and to support the National Information Standards Organization (NISO).

Linda next introduced Margery Tibbetts, California Digital Library (CDL). For over 16 years she has been involved in the design and creation of such projects as the MELVYL/MEDLINE database, TULIP and IEEE full text, and CDL's production Z39.50 server. She is currently working on a local CDL article linking system. After briefly describing the CDL, Margery described the issues involved in creating dynamic links between CDL's A&I databases and full text files. She then discussed linking strategies with examples from specific databases and full text sources. After reviewing problems and issues that arose during development, she explained that the CLD is making a major transition to Ex Libris platforms for their catalog, journals, and linking (SFX) and to various vendors for their A&I databases.

George Porter demonstrated the SFX linking system through Web of Science, as implemented at Caltech. In addition to links from citations to full text articles from electronic journals subscribed to by Caltech, George showed links to other resources for locating full text such as the library catalog, the Internet, and ILL.

Issues that came up during the discussion included:

Setting up linking with publishers—not too difficult! The products utilizing OpenURL technology are developing collaborative knowledge bases. Once the pattern for generating an article level URL for a journal/publisher is established, all libraries have access to the pattern.

Paperback vs hardback—If books have multiple ISBNs or journals have multiple ISSNs, what happens? Multiple standard numbers can be configured to resolve to the appropriate copy(ies).

Aggregators—Eric indicated most/all of the major aggregators are OpenURL-aware or are publicly committed to doing so.

Time commitment—Margery estimated that by mid-2002, it will take a library approximately half a day to configure their SFX-aware databases to interoperate with their online journals subscriptions.

The handout for this Hot Topics Discussion Group session, including links to the presentation slides, is available at [http://www.lib.utah.edu/genref/lkeiter/hot\\_topics.htm](http://www.lib.utah.edu/genref/lkeiter/hot_topics.htm)

Linda Keiter, Chair (outgoing); George Porter, Vice Chair (incoming Chair)

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6. MARS Web Coordinator report.....17

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This upcoming year, the Publications Committee will continue to work on the MARS web site review which is part of the overall section review process. We will be creating a web-based survey to ask members for feedback about the MARS web site. This survey will be

announced in the next issue of Messages to MARS. In addition, Mary Popp is leading a group that is creating an index and site map for the MARS web site. I'm looking forward to the assistance of Daisy Benson, the new MARS Web Coordinator Intern.

The MARS home page is available at  
<http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/index.html>

Please direct questions or comments to [am245@umail.umd.edu](mailto:am245@umail.umd.edu).

Alesia McManus  
MARS Web Coordinator

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7. "My Favorite Martian" Award.....60

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Amy Tracy Wells received the RUSA MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate for 2001. This honor is better known as the "My Favorite Martian" award and seeks to recognize individuals for excellence in service to MARS. The certificate was presented to Amy by Nancy Buchanan, chair of MARS, with the following citation: "This honor is awarded to Amy Tracy Wells for her excellent service and dedication to MARS and her fellow Martians; for her work throughout MARS, especially for providing organization and leadership to the newly formed MARSBEST Task Force; and for her willingness to take on new projects and to be innovative in her work for MARS."

Amy first joined MARS back in the age of the gopher in 1994, as the Gopher/Web Coordinator and took the initiative then to be the first moderator of MARS-L. During this time, she also served as the editor of *Messages from MARS* and as a member of the Publications Committee. After making significant contributions to the communication process of MARS, in 1996, Amy joined the Executive Committee and the Section Review Task Force. In 1997, she served as Chair of MARS and as a member of the Planning Committee. She served as a member of the Nominations Committee in 1998 and as the chair in 1999. In a relatively short period of time, Amy provided a great deal of organization, leadership, and energy to many of the MARS committees and initiatives.

In 1998, Amy took on the challenge of organizing a task force to produce a list of the best reference web sites. The call came from RUSA board for such a list and at the same time, the editor of *Reference and User Services Quarterly* wanted to publish the list. Amy said no problem to both and began recruiting her fellow Martians to help her. Becki Whitaker co-chaired the task force with Amy and 12 Martians agreed to review web sites. Her initial organization and leadership given to the once new MARS project helped greatly to establish the foundation on which this successful endeavor rests three years later.

Amy has numerous publications, presentations and awards to her name. In 1999, she was an editor and contributor to *The Amazing Internet Challenge: How Leading Projects Use Library Skills to Organize the Web*. In March of 2000, she presented her work on "The Digital Asian Library," an online archive of pan-Asia Internet resources, at the Annual Conference of the Association for Asian Studies. She has been

the recipient of the Louis Shores-Oryx Press Award and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

She received a B.A. in English literature from the University of Florida and an M.A. from the University of South Florida. She is currently a reference and grants librarian at Michigan State University where she provides technical leadership in planning digital library projects. From 1996 to 2000, Amy served as the Coordinator of the ever-popular Internet Scout Project from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

She continues to be an active member of ALA and RUSA committees. We look forward to working with Amy in the future. She is indeed a worthy Martian!

Andrea Copeland  
acopelan@shiva.hunter.cuny.edu

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8. Section Review Task Force.....11

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MARS has begun the process for its regular "Section Review," an opportunity to make sure our committee structure and communication channels are as effective and responsive as we need them to be. Existing MARS committees will be surveyed at the Midwinter conference. MARS members (and would-be members) will be invited to submit comments, concerns and praises via a web-based survey in the months to come (please watch for further details). In the meantime, if you have anything you would like to contribute to Section Review discussions, please contact the Section Review Task Force chair, Paige Weston, at weston1@uiuc.edu or 217-244-7593. Thank you.

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9. Products and Services Committee.....11

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The committee began planning for its Sunday, January 20, 2002, 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m., Midwinter discussion forum, "We Deliver! Bringing Live Reference to Our Users." Representatives from three libraries that are using a virtual reference product will be invited to talk about what criteria was used to decide which product was best for them, and how they promoted and implemented the service to their users.

José Aguiñaga, Chair  
jaguinag@csulb.edu

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10. Local Systems and Services.....25

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Local Systems and Services met twice during Annual to discuss issues related to its Innovative Services list and to continue planning a program the group recently proposed for Annual 2002 in Atlanta.

The committee planned improvements to the Innovative Web-Based Reference Services: A Selected List, (available at <http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/lasinnovative.html>). We discussed questions to ask the librarians who developed these services, planning to enhance our list with their responses. We also determined



the process by which we will contact the developers and post their comments. Committee members also selected areas of interest for the planned update of the List. If you have suggestions for services that should be included, please e-mail them to one of the co-chairs (listed below). Work on the update will proceed during the fall. The questionnaire/comments section is expected to be complete and posted in the fall.

LSAS is planning a program for Annual 2002 in Atlanta on Usability Testing. We discussed possible speakers and specific topics of interest to our intended audience. Look for more information on this program after Midwinter.

Martha Walker (maw6@cornell.edu) and Kathleen Kern (katkern@uiuc.edu), co-chairs

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11. Publications Committee Report.....103

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The Publications Committee is responsible for facilitating development and distribution of print and electronic publications by MARS committees and units. We also maintain oversight of the MARS Website, the Messages from MARS section of RUSA Update, and the MARS-L discussion list.

At ALA Annual, the committee met on the following dates:

June 16, 2001: 9:30 - 12:30, CRO (Crowne Plaza Union Square), Sutter III

June 17, 2001: 2:00 - 4:00, SIR (Sir Francis Drake), Monterey

The meeting began with the MARS Web Coordinator Search: The committee interviewed three candidates and reviewed notes from an earlier conference with a fourth candidate. The candidate selected for recommendation to the MARS Executive Committee was Daisy Benson.

The selection committee included Nancy Crane Portnow, chair, Valerie Edwards, Toby A. Lyles, Alesia McManus, and Mary Pagliero Popp.

During the committee review of the MARS Web site, we discussed a proposed plan and timetable for the MARS web site review. We decided to carry out a survey of the MARS membership between now and the 2002 annual conference. The audience for the survey are individual MARS members and MARS Committees. We expect to have the survey results compiled and analyzed by Annual 2002 so we can determine the next steps. Our goal is to prepare a report and recommendations for the MARS web site by the 2003 Midwinter conference so a final report can be presented to the Executive Committee. Alesia volunteered to coordinate the survey effort.

Next steps:

1. Develop a goal statement for the survey.
2. Alesia, with the help of Daisy Benson, will develop the questions for the survey of MARS members. Ann Robinson will draft questions directed to MARS committees. We will ask the Publications Committee, Committee Chairs and ExComm to review the draft questions.
3. Work with Donavan Vicha to design a web-based survey form.

4. If time allows, we will try to pre-test the survey with a small sample population.
5. Write an article for the fall issue of Messages to MARS to announce the survey.
6. Make the survey available on the MARS web site following publication of Messages to MARS.
7. Publicize the survey via listservs and send individual invitations to participate. An email message will also be sent to all committee chairs to solicit committee input.
8. The deadline for responses will be post-Midwinter 2002.

We also discussed the need to form a subgroup of the MARS Publication Committee to review the ALA web server usage logs.

The review group included Mary Pagliero Popp, chair, Toby A. Lyles, Anne Haynes, and Ann E. Robinson. Mary Pagliero Popp will continue to lead the effort to develop an index and site map of the MARS webs site.

The Publications Committee reviewed drafts of both the "Procedures for selection of the MARS Web Coordinator" and "MARS Web Coordinator Position Description." <http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/webmastdraft.html> Both drafts were reviewed and minor revisions were recommended. Elliot Kanter took the substance of agreed upon changes in the position description to the planning committee meeting, where it was on the agenda for their review of handbook documents. He was to request that the changes be approved in principle pending receipt of the precise changed wording from publications.

MARS Web Coordinator Alesia McManus reported on committees that do not have web sites, the possibilities of a MARS search engine, and conversion of the MARS handbook to pdf. She will relay information regarding the committee MARS web site review to the RUSA Webmaster.

There was one publication proposal scheduled: Checklist for Planning, Designing and Developing Reference Web Pages. David Hovde, outgoing Chair of the Management Committee, attended the Sunday meeting in order to reinstate the Management Committee's interest in this publication. The Management Committee will edit the bibliography, deleting the second section.

The Messages from MARS/MARS-L Moderator left a written report stating that there are now 546 subscribers to MARS-L. She also mentioned that Pat Riesenmann, MARS Historian, has found instances of the print version of "Messages" being edited from the electronic version after it is submitted to the RUSA editor.

The web version of 25 Years of MARS in Print will be added to the MARS website, along with an invitation to readers to contribute missing items. This publication, along with Messages from MARS will be reviewed for potential RUSQ submission. Valerie Edwards will contact RUSQ regarding deadlines for submission.

The committee was informed that MARS Chair Bill McHugh has suggested making the MARS representative to RUSA Standards & Guidelines an ex officio member of MARS Publications or appointing the MARS representative to Standards & Guidelines to Planning.

The committee will continue to search for broader RUSA/MARS publication venues in effort to better market MARS Publications Committee services.

Toby A. Lyles <mailto:tlyles@newsobserver.edu>  
Chair, Publications Committee

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12. Public Libraries Committee Report.....29

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At Annual in San Francisco the Public Libraries Committee hosted a discussion group on real time virtual reference service. The discussion was led by Nancy O'Neill, Principal Librarian for Reference Services at the Santa Monica Public Library. Discussion was lively and benefited from the contrast between the experiences of Santa Monica, a system which had been doing virtual reference for about a year, and Cleveland Public Library, which had started only about a week before the discussion. A summary of the discussion will be posted to MARS-L.

The Committee will host a discussion group at the 2002 Midwinter Conference in New Orleans. Its working title is "I use Google and I feel guilty!" More and more reference librarians find themselves drawn to this seemly indispensable resource - are we unfairly neglecting other valuable sources (print and electronic)? Do we rely too heavily on this one tool? How exactly does it work? What tradeoffs are we (unknowingly?) making when we use this (or any) Internet search engine?

The Committee also made plans for updating its Web page, "Internet Training and Learning: A Guide to Web Resources for Public Librarians (<http://www.ala.org/rusa/mars/itlpub.html>). The Committee will have a virtual member in the coming year and it was decided that the job of maintaining this page would be primarily theirs - it is a task that can keep someone who will not be attending conferences meaningfully involved in the Committee's activities.

John Hinchcliffe  
2000-2001 chair of the  
Public Libraries Committee

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13. MARS-L Subscription Instructions.....3

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To subscribe to [MARS-L](mailto:marl@ala.org), send the following message to [listproc@ala.org](mailto:listproc@ala.org) (but leave the subject line blank):

**subscribe mars-l Firstname Lastname**