

## **Overview of the Next Steps Documents Developed by the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) Sections (Acquisitions, Cataloging and Classification, Collection Management and Development, Preservation and Reformatting, and Serials) and the ALCTS Council of Regional Groups**

In recent years, the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) and the American Library Association (ALA) have extensively discussed the future roles of libraries and library staff. The Library of Congress's April 2006 announcement that it would discontinue series authority record creation brought the discussion of the future of bibliographic control into sharper focus for many ALCTS members.

In July 2006, the ALCTS Cataloging and Classification Section (CCS) Executive Committee was charged with "developing a series of recommendations or discussion points for next steps that ALCTS should take to enhance its leadership position with respect to the changing nature of bibliographic control (cataloging and classification)." The resulting document was entitled, *ALCTS and the Future of Bibliographic Control: Challenges, Actions, and Values* and has been generically referred to as the ALCTS "Next Steps" document.

Subsequently, Bruce Johnson, ALCTS President, asked Executive Committees of the Council of Regional Groups (CRG) and the other ALCTS sections (Acquisitions (AS), Collection Management and Development (CMDS), Preservation and Reformatting (PARS), and Serials (SS)) to use the Next Steps document as a catalyst for further discussion. The resulting analyses were subsequently discussed by the ALCTS Board at the 2007 ALA Midwinter Meeting in Seattle. The three ALCTS Directors-at-Large, Karen Darling, M. Dina Giambi, and Katherine Walter were then asked by President Johnson to summarize the issues discussed in these documents.

The Next Steps document has been described as a "philosophical statement." Rather than attempting to rewrite that document, this report will liberally quote from it as well as the CRG and section analyses.

The changing role of the Library of Congress in the bibliographic control community is merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of the profound changes and new and unexpected ventures and technologies that are affecting libraries. The long-term effects of the massive digitization projects by Google, Microsoft, and Yahoo are uncertain, but they have been used to fuel an argument that the end of libraries is near. The role of libraries is certainly in a state of transformation.

Also having a profound affect on bibliographic control is the change in library user expectations. Users no longer assume they must come to the library to obtain needed information. They expect the World Wide Web to provide them the information. Libraries and librarians are struggling to come to terms with the implication of this.

The preamble of the ALCTS Strategic Plan 2006-2011 states that the plan "positions the division to advance changing models of the library collections and technical services profession, new

roles and skills for library staff, and the evolving nature of the library in the digital environment.”

### Environmental Challenges

“ALCTS as an organization needs a stronger focus on the revolutionary changes in the larger environment (publishing, communications, Internet, etc.) of which libraries are a part. ALCTS needs to more forcefully relate those changes to what we do to provide valuable services within that larger environment. This need may also be true for many ALCTS members (active, inactive, and potential).”

“We face the challenge of developing our standards and practices to work well in both the spheres of revolutionary change and of traditional services. Despite many predictions to the contrary, physical media, and a broad range of patron desires for items in those media, are neither going away nor significantly lessening in importance. A dozen years after the rise of the World Wide Web, the evidence still points to a broadening of media choices, rather than the wholesale replacement of traditional by digital.”

“We face a great challenge in working with colleagues inside librarianship, and potential partners outside the profession, who apparently tenaciously believe the opposite of the above. They seem to regard physical media and the desires for them as always-about-to-disappear, and appear uninterested in, or barely tolerant of, a more inclusive view.”

### Values

The Next Steps document identified a set of values that were referred to as “frames” or “viewpoints.” One of these was described as follows:

“The future is longer than the past. Our work is situated in time. This implies that, first, while it is of course necessary to act on the basis of present expectations and resources, policy and practice decisions have multiple ripple effects extending further forward in time than we are able to imagine. Second, remembering the continuity of actions in time will help us to explore new ideas for improving access to information resources, while continuing to understand and value the best of our accomplishments to date.”

### Themes

The review of the analyses developed by the ALCTS sections and the Council of Regional Groups identified five common themes:

- Leadership;
- Advocacy;
- Communication;
- Continuing education;
- Research.

All of these themes are represented in the ALCTS Strategic Plan. Although the word research is not specifically mentioned in the Strategic Plan, it is certainly implied in the statement that ALCTS “develops innovative programs and publications that are responsive to the needs of the membership...”

Several statements from the analyses are included below. Many are written in the style that is normally used for strategic plan action items. It is expected that many of the statements will be used to populate the ALCTS tactical initiatives database of the ALCTS Strategic Plan 2006-2011 as action items.

Significantly, it was difficult to distinguish between leadership and advocacy in some of the statements. As a consequence, similar statements are included below in more than one theme. Some statements have been rephrased to clarify their relevance to multiple groups.

### **ALCTS should assume a stronger leadership role**

As the Library of Congress’s role in the library community changes, ALCTS will need to take a leadership role in determining if and how to best fill the void, as we move to a new, as yet undefined professional collaboration model. (CCS)

ALCTS needs to assure its inclusion in policy and best practices discussions by the various agencies (e.g. LC, NISO, OCLC, PCC, system vendors, agents) that support our profession. (AS, SS, CCS, and others)

ALCTS should encourage and facilitate research on user behavior, use of classification, etc., raising money to support such research. (CRG)

ALCTS should promote the development of better OPACs. (CRG)

ALCTS should collaborate with faculty and researchers to advance new forms of scholarly communication. (CMDS)

ALCTS needs to aggressively and collaboratively work with library administrators, librarians, and library schools to redefine what constitutes bibliographic access. (SS)

ALCTS is strongly encouraged to continue its active participation in standards development and to advocate the adoption and implementation of approved standards. (SS)

### **ALCTS should adopt a stronger advocacy role**

ALCTS should seek opportunities to represent its members “at the table” when the major policy and standards discussions are taking place. ALCTS needs to assure its inclusion in discussions of policy and best practice by the various agencies (e.g. LC, NISO, OCLC, system vendors, agents) that support our profession. (AS)

ALCTS should lead discussions on key issues such as the purpose of the catalog, the need for print copies in the digital age, the value of vendor produced cataloging and metadata, access rather than acquisition of content, new roles for tech services staff. (AS)

ALCTS should build alliances with both skeptics within the profession, and with creative individuals outside the profession, to reach a mutual goal of positively transforming bibliographic control. (CCS)

ALCTS should position itself as a collaborator, rather than as a competitor. (CCS)

ALCTS as an organization needs a stronger focus on the revolutionary changes in the larger environment (e.g., publishing, communications, Internet) of which libraries are a part. ALCTS needs to more forcefully relate those changes to what its members do to provide valuable services within that larger environment. This need may also be true for many ALCTS members (active, inactive, and potential). (CCS)

Because most active ALCTS committee members are drawn from academic and government libraries, ALCTS must be vigilant to keep in mind the needs of other library types (e.g., public, school). Additionally, ALCTS must understand that more technologically advanced libraries do not speak for librarianship in general. (CCS)

ALCTS should solicit and share information about how their libraries deal with challenges (e.g., how local libraries are responding to changes in LC series cataloging, how libraries are using non-MARC metadata; how academic libraries are responding to calls for outcomes-based assessment). (CRG)

ALCTS should aggressively and collaboratively work with library administrators, librarians, and library schools to redefine what constitutes bibliographic access. (SS)

### **ALCTS should enhance communication and discussion**

ALCTS should take advantage of new digital technologies, such as blogs, wikis, online communities software, webcasts, podcasts, and RSS feeds, to increase communication and collaboration both within and outside ALCTS. (CCS and most other sections)

ALCTS should propagate the knowledge of wiki use within CCS, with the intention that CCS will be represented well on the 2007 Annual Conference wiki. (CCS)

ALCTS should collect, review, revise and post online “how to” section-level documents that have already been developed. (PARS)

ALCTS should post links to ALCTS forms and related documents on section websites. (PARS)

ALCTS should encourage posting of minutes and related documents on section committees and discussion group Web pages. (PARS)

Virtual interest groups should be developed to enhance ALCTS' reach to members who are unable to attend conferences, and to individuals who are not ALCTS members. (SS)

**Strengthen ALCTS' role in presenting continuing education and learning opportunities, both face-to-face and through new technologies**

ALCTS should continue to offer forums at ALA conferences. These have short planning timelines and can focus on hot issues. (CCS)

Training and other educational opportunities should be offered to address CMDS interest areas, such as:

- Collection analysis process and tools;
- Building and managing new types of collections (e.g. institutional repositories, blogs, new media);
- Selection issues and processes for electronic resources;
- Digitization;
- New roles for collection managers and effective organizational structures;
- Relationships between collection managers and technical services.

ALCTS should develop a corps of trainers who can help ALCTS members and committee chairs become comfortable utilizing new technologies, such as online communities and wikis. Every committee chair or members should receive a rudimentary introduction to the new electronic services that ALCTS provides. (SS)

**ALCTS should encourage and foster more research**

ALCTS should sponsor, promote, and publish research on hot issues. This research should be disseminated on the Web so it doesn't take years to become widely available.

As emerging topics are identified (through forums or other avenues), task forces should be quickly established to facilitate broad-based consultation and development of ALCTS position white papers. (CCS)

ALCTS should create a comprehensive, online database that indexes the professional literature for all aspects of the library profession covered by ALCTS. ALCTS should also provide its members with free access to *LRTS* back issues, as well as electronic access to ALCTS monographs. (CCS)

ALCTS should promote user-focused research. CRG could help potential researchers find collaborators. ALCTS is encouraged to explore whether some of its fundraising activities could be focused on supporting such research. (CRG)

Some specific research recommendations:

- Encourage and facilitate research on the use of classification;
- Collect and disseminate results of relevant research from other disciplines such as information science, computer science, psychology, commerce;

- Expand the availability of progress, pre-prints, and conference materials research. CRG

ALCTS should identify bibliographic, technical services, and collections issues that need to be researched. In some cases, ALCTS might commission qualified individuals or groups to conduct the research. ALCTS should explore new methods for publishing/disseminating research. Such methods should ensure that the studies and relevant data are appropriately archived. (SS)

ALCTS should set the example by moving toward open access publishing and becoming a hybrid publisher. Funding strategies that generate more revenue from educational programs and less from publishing should be assessed. The cost/benefit of moving *LRTS* to an electronic-only format should be evaluated. (CMDS)

ALCTS should collaborate with faculty and researchers to advance new forms of scholarly communication. (CMDS)

### Conclusion

The ALCTS Council of Regional Groups and the association's five sections (Acquisitions, Cataloging and Classification, Collection Management and Development, Preservation and Reformatting, and Serials) have given thoughtful consideration to the professional issues that face ALCTS and its membership. This report identified specific steps that ALCTS as an association and its component units can undertake to meet these challenges. In addressing the "Next Steps" questions, ALCTS has many opportunities to influence the profession and to create an effective, innovative association for the future.

### REFERENCES:

*ALCTS and the Future of Bibliographic Control: Challenges, Actions, and Values*

Available at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/alctscontent/alctspubsbucket/bibcontrol/NextSteps2006.pdf>

*Association for Library Collections & Technical Services Strategic Plan 2006-2011*

Available at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/alcts/planning/06plan.htm>

The documents from the five sections and the Council of Regional Groups were also quoted in the overview.

This overview was prepared by the 2006/2007 ALCTS Directors-at-Large, Karen D. Darling, M. Dina Giambi, and Katherine L. Walter with input from ALCTS President Bruce Chr. Johnson.

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