

From the Chair

Arlene Weible

couple of events that occurred this fall have generated discussions about the future of GODORT activities, and I would like to address some of these issues in this installment of the chair's column.

First, there was the very difficult decision to cancel the scheduled GODORT preconference on international government information for the 2006 Annual Conference. A number of factors led to this decision, including concern among the planners about infrastructure in New Orleans to support an off-site program, apprehension about the program's ability to attract sufficient attendance to generate revenue for GODORT, and the perception that a preconference on this topic may be more appropriate for the 2007 Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Throughout this discussion, it had become clear that GODORT should explore programming opportunities that are not necessarily tied to conferences and take advantage of technologies that would allow virtual attendance. The Program Committee is currently exploring the possibilities, and they will be challenged to find a model that will allow GODORT to continue to generate revenue from continuing education activities. However, virtual programming would definitely address concerns raised that GODORT needs to reach out to librarians who are not able to attend conferences, and is the direction in which we should be moving.

Another issue that has been raised recently is GODORT's representation on ALA Council. Declining GODORT membership, combined with the growing membership of other ALA round tables, has led to GODORT to drop out of the top five largest round tables group. This means that GODORT will lose its single councilor and will have to share a councilor with other, smaller round tables after Cathy Hartman's term expires in

2007. Round tables are the only units within ALA that can gain representation based on the size of their membership. This is inherently unfair, given that some of these "smaller" round tables are bigger than some divisions and state chapters, which each have their own councilor. Because other round tables are affected by this inequity, we hope to use the Round Table Coordinator's Assembly, plus our currently strong representation on ALA Council, to begin the steps needed to change the ALA Bylaws.

Finally, I have been asked if GODORT will be working on its own vision document on the future of the Federal Depository Library Program. I believe that the Depository Library Council has done an excellent job of offering an open process for developing a vision document, one that has allowed many GODORT members to provide input. Also, council members will be specifically seeking GODORT members' feedback at the Federal Documents Task Force's Midwinter meeting. I think it is important for GODORT members to participate in the council's process, and wait for the results of the process before determining any further actions.

By the time this column is published, the Midwinter Meeting in San Antonio will have concluded and we will have tried out the new GODORT meeting schedule. I am eager to hear your feedback and suggestions on how we can continue to improve GODORT members' conference experience.

