

*Amendment 2 and a divisive
editorial draw fire at meeting,
January 22-28*

Under Protest: ALA Midwinter in Denver

By John Berry, Francine Fialkoff, Evan St. Lifer,
& Michael Rogers

BURDENED BY ITS cumbersome processes, the usual turf-centered infighting, a nasty ad hominem Council debate, and protest actions for gay rights, sessions at the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting still displayed the standard mix of committee work in excruciating detail; a huge show of sparsely attended exhibits; endless hours of meetings; and convivial shop talk and gossip over food and drink.

ALA's response to the much ballyhooed national boycott to protest Colorado's Amendment 2 contributed to the decline in paid registration of some 500 librarians (a potential loss of \$500,000 from library tourists). Registration was down to 4,942 from record highs (5,505 and 5,462) at the two prior Midwinters.

A resolution moved the 1998 conference out of Denver, and several other resolutions supported gay rights. Attendees sported a variety of boycott buttons (e.g., I'M HERE UNDER PROTEST), and some 200 hardy souls actually marched on the capitol. (For more details on gay and lesbian activities, see "Quiet Unity," p. 34).

Sparks flew when ALA presidential candidates were asked to comment on an editorial in the January *American Libraries* (AL) in which editor Tom Gaughan rationalized his rejection of an inflammatory essay charging overspending at conferences by ALA Executive Board members and officers (see Editorial, *LJ*, February 15, p. 104; Late Bulletin, p. 109). The ensuing brouhaha turned charges of suppression and censorship into questions about Gaughan's judgment and AL policy.

More serious concerns, including the fate of President Marilyn Miller's Billions of Books/Billions of Bucks program, ALA's ambitious federal lobbying program, and the ALA self-study, never attracted the levels of Council and member attention that were lavished on the unpleasant, more trivial matters.

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ALA Lobbying Aims Set

Sessions soured by American Libraries' battle

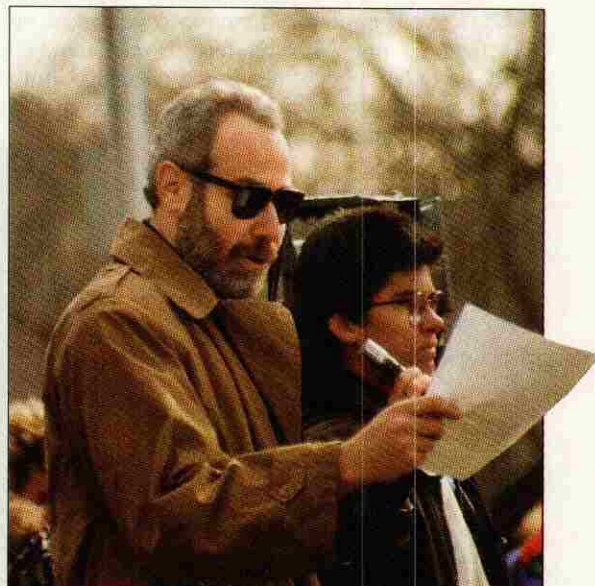
THE FUROR over conference spending by the ALA officers and Executive Board, reported in various versions of Executive Board Document 12.2, consumed hours of ALA Council time. Debate centered on the rejection by editors of *American Libraries* (AL), ALA's official organ, of a vicious attack on the ALA Executive Board and officers by councillor Tony Leisner. Leisner is a close associate of Linda Crismond, the former ALA executive director terminated in a dispute with the board. A January 1993 editorial in *AL* "explaining" the rejection further confused things, prompting a series of resolutions, personal statements from candidates for ALA office, and name calling and accusations at the first ALA Council session.

The "independence" of the ALA organ

Initial impulses to "protect" the editors of *AL* from board and officer intervention were turned into questions about the purpose of *American Libraries* and the editor's judgment. The Council asked ALA's Publishing Committee, in conjunction with the AL Advisory Committee (chosen by the editor), "to review the circumstances" of the editorial. An attempt to allow the editor to discontinue printing recorded votes of Council in the magazine was



ALA President Marilyn Miller reports to the ALA Council (top); librarians gather to demonstrate against Colorado's antigay Amendment 2 (middle, l.); Mark Rosenzweig of the Progressive Librarians Guild (PLG) speaks at the protest (middle, r.); candidates for ALA president, Sharon Hogan (Univ. of Illinois at Chicago) and Arthur Curley (Boston PL), after the ALA campaign forum (bottom)



The ALA assault on Washington

A massive lobbying program was mounted by the ALA Committee on Legislation, and the Council went along quietly. Despite hours of debate squandered on mudslinging and internal tinkering, the Council barely discussed major legislation initiatives, agreeing to a long, complicated ALA legislative policy by "consent," without edifying debate or discussion. Thus, ALA went on record for equitable, easy access to all government-produced information regardless of format. The ALA policy advocates lower Government Printing Office (GPO) prices, inexpensive access to govern-

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Cold War government information policies and urges massive, systematic declassification of information to insure public access to previously classified information. The ALA legislation cadres are particularly concerned about public access to information in the National Archives, Office of Management and Budget, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Justice Department offices with FOIA duties, and the GPO.

ALA supports a supplementary appropriation to the GPO to avoid announced cuts in government publication. The Council put ALA on record with the Freedom To Read Foundation commending President Clinton for his executive order removing the ban on abortion counseling at federally funded clinics.

The Self-Study Question

Does ALA need more than a quick fix?

"IF NO ONE thinks this organization is broken, then someone's not looking very closely," cautioned Irene Hoadley, director of Texas A&M's Sterling C. Evans Library, at a self-study hearing debating the current state and composition of ALA and its hierarchy. The Self-Study Committee, mandated to develop a plan for a comprehensive organizational review of ALA, is scheduled to submit a report on its efforts with a recommendation to the ALA Council at the 1995 annual meeting.

While the committee's conclusions are not due for two years, members are already clamoring over the potential for substantive change to ALA's infrastructure. Several in the audience made suggestions to the committee on what kinds of recommendations it should include in its report. Dallas Shaffer, county librarian for the Monterey County Free Libraries, CA, said she was bothered by ALA Council's ineffectiveness and its propensity to waste time. She asked the committee to take a hard look at the role of the Council and how it operates. Pat Berger, recently retired director of the Office of Information Services for the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Gaithersburg, MD, suggested in order to "give emerging leaders a forum in which to grow," Council members be limited to two consecutive terms, after which time a former councillor would be ineligible to run for at least two years.

However, while listening to a litany of suggestions as well as debate on how to "fix" ALA, committee chair F. William Summers asked rhetorically if ALA was broken at all. "The dilemma the committee has is that people are saying change a number of things," said Summers, who is also dean of the School of Library and Information Studies at Florida State University, Tallahassee. "But [ALA] members and revenue



Tête-à-têtes: (top) the ALA Social Responsibilities Round Table's Elizabeth Morrissett confers with Alfred Kagan of the Progressive Librarians Guild; (bottom) ALA Deputy Executive Director Roger Parent consults with Evelyn Shaevel, Director of Marketing at ALA Publishing

are growing at a consistent rate, and it sells out all its convention space, plus they have a healthy member retention rate of 90 percent from one year to the next."

Quiet Unity

*Gays rally against Amendment 2;
ALA dumps Denver in 1998*

"SHOULD WE GO or shouldn't we?" was the big question librarians asked one another before traveling to a city resting in the shadow of a state amendment banning laws protecting homosexuals from discrimination. Some librarians answered the question of whether to attend with a resounding NO, evidenced by a smaller paid attendance, which dropped by about ten percent, or 500 attendees, from the previous year's Midwinter in San Antonio. However, with the exception of city employees in Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Broward County, FL, who were prevented from attending by local rulings, ALA officials had no way of confirming how many of the 500 had actually boycotted the meeting as a political statement.

ALA covered substantial ground on gay rights issues by adopting several resolutions, getting play in Denver's local media through an organized march to Denver's capitol, and stimulating debate on the issue through the sale of buttons and in sundry discussions at committee meetings throughout the conference.

Resolution drafted

Attendance at the first meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force was greater than usual even though it was held at 8 p.m. Friday. However, as outraged as they were over the state's having "legalized" discrimination, members remained poised, devoting half the meeting to wording the text of the resolution they later presented to ALA. The measure demanded that future conferences be held only in locales that "do not explicitly discriminate against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people." The Council later passed the resolution.

Thirteen additional states are considering similar anti-gay legislation, which, if passed, would greatly diminish prospective locations for future ALA conferences, a major concern of task force members.

Out of Denver in 1998

In other actions on gay rights, ALA Council also voted to move the site of the 1998 Denver Midwinter Meet-

ing. They took a strong position on intellectual freedom, reaffirming ALA's stand on gay materials and on the right to library service regardless of sexual orientation and directing ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee to present an interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights on these issues at ALA in New Orleans. They also voted to support federal legislation against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

At a Monday afternoon rally staged by the Gay and Lesbian Task Force and attended by roughly 200, ALA President Marilyn Miller addressed the crowd at the convention center, before they marched to the capitol. In part, Miller said: "We are gathered here today to make a statement to the citizens of Colorado. We are concerned about the passage of Amendment 2 . . . Amendment 2 has implications for librarians beyond the issue of protecting basic human rights to employment and safety. As a profession, librarians are committed to providing information and resources that reflect the diversity of human experience and promote understanding of all people . . . We know how the line can blur between access to information and denial of our human rights. Any erosion of human liberty can lead to an erosion of intellectual freedom . . ."

Miller also read a letter from an anonymous Denver hotel employee who thanked ALA for its opposition to

Sullivan: A Leadership Model for ALA

"**T**RUST IS THE only solution," said Peggy Sullivan when asked about the obvious strains in the relationship between the ALA Executive Board and senior ALA staff. She is right. Process and structure won't fix that relationship. Sullivan is just a few months into a two-year appointment as executive director of the venerable association, begging the question: Why would a seasoned veteran accept appointment to one of librarianship's most difficult jobs?

Part of Sullivan's job is to fix the volunteer/staff relationship or to fix ALA so that things work better. The last two holders of the job left after disputes with the ALA board. In fact, every person who has ever held that job left it because of disputes with the Executive Board.

Since Sullivan has watched and served, indeed endured, ALA from more vantage points than anyone, she has a leg up on understanding. Her *Carl H. Milam and the American Library Association* (Wilson, 1976), a political history and biography of ALA's most illustrious executive, reveals some of her insights. One could say: "she wrote the book on ALA."

Sullivan honed her management and political skills with two stints on the ALA staff, a third as its president, several academic appointments, including dean of graduate studies and university librarian at Northern Illinois University, and four years as assistant commissioner of the Chicago Public Library. Her background hints at the qualities she brings to ALA: deep experience in libraries, ALA, and



PHOTO BY RANDY BROWN/PICTURE GROUP

library education plus strong management and administrative skills.

Observers add more to the Sullivan profile. She is tough. She has been forced to take it on the chin without flinching. She is direct and known to cut through amenities and hype to get to substance.

Displaying characteristic candor, Sullivan said that often ALA staff act like "competing prima donnas." On the other hand she said the Executive Board "only deals with what boils up." She lamented that in the current federated organization "ALA doesn't benefit from the expertise of the leaders of its divisions, including staff."

Perhaps her most important qualification is her obvious love for the old association. You see it in her book, hear it in her conversation. At ALA's President's Program it was obvious when she talked about the coming search for the *next* ALA executive director:

An executive director can be smothered . . . just as effectively as one can be buried in paper or protocols, bylaws or budgets. An executive director ought to startle the association occasionally. A dozen things—the pervasiveness and the insistence of the media on prompt responses or announcements, the need to anticipate and interpret what is in the best interests of the association, the commitment to the future that is distinctive to an association's identity—these require leadership that is consistent yet flexible, outspoken yet thoughtful . . .

Watch Peggy Sullivan if you want to see a sample, no, a model of that leadership.—JB



Amendment 2: "Your stand for equality and tolerance won't be forgotten by those who live here. Thank you for the intelligence of your group."

Undo 2

Once supporters marched en masse through the Colorado cold to the capitol, the 90-minute rally began with a moment of silence followed by a reading of the final version of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force's resolution against the 1998 Denver meeting and a rereading of Miller's speech by Task Force cochair Karen Whittlesey-First. The battle cry of "Undo 2" resounded as speakers, including Mark Rosenzweig of the Progressive Librarians Guild, denounced the "violent bigots" who passed Amendment 2 and similar laws. The Social Responsibilities Round Table's Sandy Berman warned the crowd to "watch your rear. They're coming for you in your state, too." The Gay and Lesbian Task Force is planning additional action for the summer conference in New Orleans.

Exhibits Remain High-Tech

CD-ROM strong; ADA and self-checkout rising

DESPITE THE Amendment 2 concerns, vendors were there aplenty at Midwinter. Many exhibitors supported the gay cause by distributing buttons bearing the slogan "I'M HERE UNDER PROTEST." A few vendors cancelled their trips in protest, including Neal-Schuman Publishers and Mohawk Furniture. Neal-Schuman donated its space, already paid for, to Equality Colorado, which distributed gay rights materials at the booth.

The 15 aisles of exhibits were dominated by high-tech wizardry, causing one smaller book distributor to lament, "People want to see lights, bells, and whistles. They want to see anything that's electronic. I spend 90 percent of my time pacing the floor." Splashy displays of books, however, were also found throughout the exhibit floor. Among trade publishers, children's books ruled the roost, with Random House, Viking, and Simon & Schuster notable for bringing adult titles.

CD-ROM alive and well

Those owning black armbands in anticipation of the the death of CD-ROM will have to keep them in the drawer a while longer. The much debated event appears even less of a reality despite predictions to the contrary by infotech savants. In fact, the silver disc-lined road to information storage is growing steadily. CD-ROM use also is growing in corporate circles, which will extend its life span and position it one step closer to the home market. Everything from President Clinton's Economic Conference (from Journal Graphics) to the Official Report of the

House of Commons and the Bibliography of Biography (both from Chadwyck-Healey) are available on CD-ROM.

ADA gets attention

The number of vendors addressing the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is on the upswing. Though not everyone has ADA-friendly goods, more and more of them are appearing at conferences. Workstations allow for customizing in ways that paper never could, and many vendors now feature large-type screens and screens that can alternate type and background color—light type on a dark screen or dark type on a light screen—to meet the needs of the visually impaired user.

Several vendors are offering systems that read the screen aloud for blind users. One vendor making a big push to comply with ADA is Dynix, which debuted its Image Enlargement and Voice Speech software. Both Dynix and Data Trek have made arrangements with TeleSensory, a California company pioneering ADA electronics. TeleSensory offers a line of closed-circuit television text magnifiers, optical character recognition systems that read type and reprint it in Braille, and systems that transfer type into synthetic speech. To stay competitive within the market, more vendors will no doubt be offering ADA-friendly software and hardware in the near future.

Check it out yourself

Librarians who feel as though they spend their lives checking out books can take heart: self-checkout has arrived. 3M has taken the idea of self-checkout and mated it to a security system, giving birth to the Tattle-Tape™ Self-Check System. The system allows users to check out materials and desensitize the security strip. It also prints a date due slip. If patrons have overdue books or owe fines, the system notifies them onscreen. Self-checkout was also among Dynix's new offerings, and its system includes security measures, too. (Additional exhibits coverage appears in Automation News, p. 22.)



Bright displays of books and the latest in library automation technology were a feast for librarians on the bustling exhibit floor at Midwinter