

## **Some Final Thoughts from ACRL-LA's Past President**

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You never know where you will be part of living history. Only later do you realize and find out that you are part of it. This is one of the joys of life.

--Ursula Irene Anna Goldsmith, 2007

When I began my ACRL-LA Presidency back in July 2010, my mother was still alive. The month before, when it became official through the election, we attended the Thirteenth International Symposium of the NDLTD (Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations) at the University of Texas at Austin.<sup>1</sup> The conference, ETD 2010, focused on issues about electronic theses and dissertations (ETDS) as well as looked forward to ETD 2011, which meant going to its next international destination, Cape Town, South Africa. Even prior to this conference, the idea of electronic theses and dissertations in South Africa opened up research ruminations about have and have-not universities. The difference between South Africa and South Louisiana is that South Africa is dealing with the issues of sharing scholarship through electronic dissemination as well as its past inequality between institutions, whereas South Louisiana is not. The number of institutions in Louisiana as a whole that have ETD requirements is still minimal, and most librarians, library administrators, academic administrators, and academic boards have failed to move forward.

My mother was an early advocate of ETDs, which was her dissertation topic at Louisiana State University.<sup>2</sup> While working on that project, and attending the early NDLTD conferences, she shared what she learned with the LSU Graduate School, which came on to the scene early, compared to other institutions.<sup>3</sup> We were both excited about

the opportunities ETDs promised (and still do) for opening up ideas about what kinds of new format possibilities could exist (plain text, text with hyperlinks, partly multimedia, for example), what changes may take place on the academic playing field when many institutions would be able to showcase their scholarship, and what an institutional repository should be. This was back in 1999; by 2010 many institutions have not joined NDLTD yet, or created their own electronic submission system through other means, even though they can join NDLTD at a minimal membership cost and use tried and true templates to avoid reinventing the wheel.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the founding members of NDLTD, as well as those involved in the innovation stage, are still wonderfully approachable. At this conference, the one message that remains the same is that librarians, libraries, and graduate school administration together need to champion ETDs, as well as open access, in order to have a successful ETD program and electronic repository.

During my own research for this conference, the idea of an ETD consortium came to mind. Why not? Texas and Ohio have well established ones. But who in Louisiana would be at the center, helping new institutions come into the fold? LOUIS? ACRL-LA? A flagship institution that already had a successful program in place? The idea of a Louisiana consortium for ETDs was the focus of my presentation.<sup>5</sup> Members of ACRL-LA were already working with LOUIS on LOCKSS/CLOCKSS, which would have given academic libraries in Louisiana the ability to save copies of journal articles and other published materials found in databases.<sup>6</sup> The state funding issues with LOUIS were just around the corner. Without LOCKSS/CLOCKSS in place, electronic access to journal articles and other publications held at most Louisiana institutions would have become dicey. Nicholls State University, through the support of Associate Professor/Automation

Librarian Jeremy Landry, would have been the BETA site for LOCKSS/CLOCKSS. In addition, my colleague, Tony Fonseca (also on the ACRL-LA Executive Board as Past President), attended ETD 2010 and presented a paper that focused on getting primarily undergraduate institutions like Nicholls to look into starting an electronic submission program for its honors theses and senior projects. This paper stressed the importance of sharing undergraduate research as well as the need for other primarily undergraduate institutions to disseminate and showcase research at this level for the purposes of sharing, recruitment, retention, and engagement.<sup>7</sup> The Executive Board of ACRL-LA was gaining expertise on both the LOCKSS/CLOCKSS and ETDs fronts. In point of fact, ACRL-LA was also gaining expertise on the open access and scholarly communications fronts with Megan Lowe's editing of *Codex*, the chapter's open access peer-reviewed journal as well as Mike Matthews' success at bringing to Baton Rouge a workshop about scholarly communications, open access, and copyright through ARL. Having the opportunities to work out glitches, collaborate with LOUIS and others at various academic libraries in Louisiana as well as outside of the state, and to do a LOCKSS/CLOCKSS workshop, ACRL-LA as a chapter was well poised to take on a role as a leader for electronic preservation and sharing, and for assisting Louisiana institutions to look into beginning their own ETD programs as well as institutional repositories.

But then more statewide budget cuts to higher education took place, and there were funding issues with LOUIS, in addition to LSU's School of Library and Information Science's nearing the chopping block. Members of ACRL-LA fought to help save LOUIS and supported saving LSU's School of Library and Information Science. Executive Board members Matthews and Karen Niemla organized a movement to get the

message to academic faculty, administrators, the general public, and legislators that LOUIS was essential to the lives of academic libraries in the state. Much to their credit, they both jumped into helping out in this situation with both feet, without having to be asked to do so. At this low point, all of these threats became central to ACRL-LA's attention as they should have been.

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My mother passed away in March 2011, just a couple days before the Louisiana Library Association annual conference.<sup>8</sup> Looking back to that time, I remember that she was aware of some of these new challenges to academic libraries in Louisiana. One of the early changes I made as new President of ACRL-LA was to create a level of membership, the Associate level, that would encourage the inclusion of retired and unemployed librarians, past academic librarians who worked in the state but moved on to working in other states, as well as non-librarian scholars outside the library and information science field who were interested in academic libraries in Louisiana.<sup>9</sup> Made to be equally affordable as the student membership, this kind of membership enabled those who wanted a voice regarding academic libraries in the state to belong to our community and express their concerns. And for these people, having the ability to be heard, to be recognized for their ideas, and having a statewide chapter that welcomed their interests in academic librarianship was essential. My mother was one of these people: she had a Certificate in Advanced Studies in library and information science, but in her late 60s and early 70s she found it impossible to find a position in academic libraries in Louisiana; nevertheless, she continued as a student until she died, she contributed as a scholar of both library and information science as well as technology in education, and she kept her

connections to those innovators and early adopters of ETDs. Thinking of the long-term effect of this membership, I viewed that it would encourage this important and often missing voice to begin or to continue dialogues about academic librarianship in the state, as well as to share ideas through attending ACRL-LA events and workshops and contributing to its peer-review journal *Codex*. As ACRL-LA moves forward with its many projects, it helps to have members with expertise to share information.

It should go without saying that my term as President of ACRL-LA was eventful. It was the first two-year term presidency in the chapter's history. At the beginning of my term, I would have never believed that academic libraries in Louisiana would be facing such an extreme set of budget cuts that would put their resources or LSU's SLIS program in such jeopardy. These budget cuts were manifest in librarians' inability to attend conferences, even valuable workshops like LOCKSS/CLOCKSS (which was cancelled due to lack of registrants for the October 2010 LUC conference, yet was part of the LLA preconference workshop held by ACRL-LA in March 2011). In the state, we are beginning to see a staffing out of librarian positions, rather than the continued hiring of faculty-level librarians. Making a turn towards valuing business over the best of education, institutions began replacing librarians who had master's degrees in library and information science with support staff. They began opting to ignore the best education has to offer, replacing it with reactive rather than anticipatory collections, claiming that attention was being given to the curriculum yet disposing of thousands of volumes (often in good condition) of resources helpful to studying history, ethics, and culture of all scholarly fields. Newly enforced cataloging approaches began disregarding the goal of offering the most efficient access points and best information about resources. The

shortsighted combination of cutting out degreed librarians and reactively collecting, using the excuse of budget cuts, is already beginning to make academic libraries (and their parent institutions) fall further behind, lagging even further in cutting edge and/or best practices. The new business model, even to the minutest detail, is leading to the cutting, pasting, and creation of McLibraries—academic libraries with a one-size-fits-all approach, pushing aside individuated scholarly needs while finding ways to rationalize ignoring expertise.<sup>10</sup> And this goes beyond the academic library; the move to “restructure” in order to marginalize educated, expert faculty is ubiquitous in Louisiana, having been allowed for and sometimes even rationalized in university policy and procedure manuals. Well-respected faculty, including librarians with information theory expertise, are preparing to leave the state in response to this new business model and to those who administer it. As usual, the state’s higher education system is too willing to look the other way, distracted by the promise of saving a few bucks here and there, mired in the business as usual model that allows for favoritism. Meanwhile, Louisiana suffers yet another brain drain.

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The two years of my term passed by quickly. As I have concluded it, I am partly grateful that my mother did not encounter some of the problems that resulted from the newest corporate business-minded trends in education. Having earned an MBA in accounting herself, in addition to her interests in technology, education, and academic librarianship, I am certain she would have offered to me her perspective of this mess and how it has negatively impacted academic libraries. She would have been equally upset over where some academic libraries have gone recently with their gutting out of

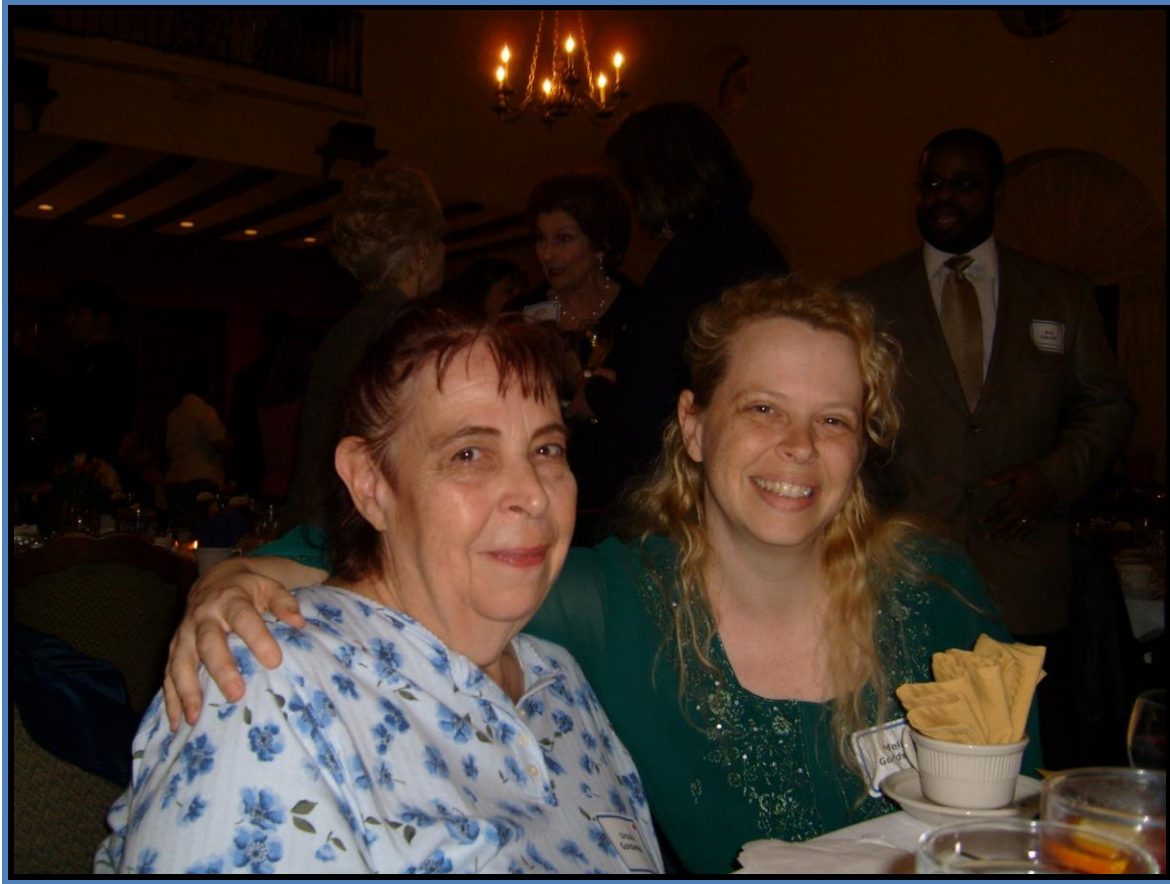
resources—both material and human—and the administrations that have not only condoned it, but also initiated it. Neither one of us studied library and information science, nor moved ahead by earning advanced certificates in the subject as well as PhDs in our areas of scholarly specialization, in order to work as librarians in such a hostile environment—one that seems reminiscent of earlier times when certain resources and people were ousted regardless of expertise, education, merit, or accomplishment. She has always reminded me that one lesson learned from our relatives is that when the writing is on the wall, when the inmates actually do run the asylum and there is no fighting chance, it is best to move on—if your survival depends on moving on.

I am pleased that despite these statewide storms, ACRL-LA has held firm, holding fast to meet the many challenges it faced during my term. I am proud that it is well positioned to meet its potential to continue doing so under new President Karen Niemla. Even though the organization had to overcome our elected Vice President/President elect's decision to step down nearly a year ago, leaving it rudderless, the members of the Executive Board kept treading water until a special election was held. I am confident that as the person chosen during that special election, Karen will keep the chapter motivated and lead it to many successes. The best aspect about being a Past President for ACRL-LA is that I will still be on the Executive Board, working with the ad hoc committee chairs, and helping out with the chapter's transition to new leadership. In this respect, I am grateful to the help of Past Presidents Tony and Mike, who stayed on their entire terms with the Executive Board. This practice has enabled earlier ongoing projects performed by ad hoc committees like the STAR Committee (Successful Transitions to Academic Research, chaired by Deborah Rollins) to come to fruition

during my term, resulting in its having an article accepted for publication.<sup>11</sup> ACRL-LA was also able to continue its work with LSU's SLIS Program by sponsoring some student memberships and having members present on academic poster sessions in Alma Dawson's academic libraries course on the LSU campus.

When I first informed my mother that I was going to be President of the only statewide chapter of ACRL for academic librarians and libraries in Louisiana, she was both excited for and proud of me. Having written the first dissertation focusing on the perceptions of faculty across the disciplines on ETDs, she understood well about resistance (to technology in her case) and what fighting that resistance meant. I realize how lucky I was to be able to come home and to discuss academic librarianship issues with her and to be offered the thoughts and ideas of an engaged library scholar. At conferences, we were able to enjoy together when other librarians finally discovered and thoroughly understood what an institutional repository could do for them and their institutions. I am proud that ACRL-LA has welcomed ideas like these and has offered a listening ear to those who have retired, been unemployed, or have moved to another state. These exchanges need to continue. To Karen I offer these words of advice: Even with all the constant obstacles, fighting for good by taking on the many challenges to academic librarians and libraries makes a person sleep better at night.





Ursula Goldsmith with Melissa Goldsmith during the 2008 meeting of the Beta Zeta Chapter of Beta Phi Mu, Louisiana State University Faculty Club

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<sup>1</sup> Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, *NDLTD*, “News,” <http://www.ndltd.org/news>, accessed on 4 August 2012, provides information about its past, present, and future conferences. For my Ursula Goldsmith’s last presentation at ETD 2010, see UT Austin Libraries, *Texas Digital Library Conference System, ETD 2010*, “General Papers,” <https://conferences.tdl.org/utlibraries/etd2010/paper/view/44>, accessed on 1 August 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Ursula’s dissertation can be found by browsing LSU, *ETDs Library*, [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-0709102-111850/unrestricted/Goldsmith\\_dis.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-0709102-111850/unrestricted/Goldsmith_dis.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> At the time, the LSU Graduate School Senior Associate Dean was John M. Larkin. He attended ETD 2000, which was the Third International Symposium of the NDLTD, where my mother and I both presented. That year, the conference was in St. Petersburg, Florida.

<sup>4</sup> *NDLTD*, “About NDLTD,” <http://www.ndltd.org/about>, accessed on 5 August 2012.

<sup>5</sup> See UT Austin Libraries, *Texas Digital Library Conference System, ETD 2010*, “General Papers,” <https://conferences.tdl.org/utlibraries/etd2010/paper/view/30>, accessed on 1 August 2012.

<sup>6</sup> See Stanford University, *LOCKSS: Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe*, “How LOCKSS Works,” <http://www.lockss.org/about/how-it-works>, accessed on 4 August 2012, and *CLOCKSS*, “How CLOCKSS Works,” [http://www.clockss.org/clockss/How\\_CLOCKSS\\_Works](http://www.clockss.org/clockss/How_CLOCKSS_Works), accessed on 1 August 2012.

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<sup>7</sup> See UT Austin Libraries, *Texas Digital Library Conference System, ETD 2010*, “General Papers,” <https://conferences.tdl.org/utlibraries/etd2010/paper/view/29>, accessed on 1 August 2012.

<sup>8</sup> See [Melissa Ursula Dawn Goldsmith], *Santa Barbara Independent*, “Ursula Irene Anna Goldsmith, PhD: 1940-2011,” <http://www.independent.com/obits/2011/apr/04/ursula-goldsmith-phd/>, accessed on 29 July 2012.

<sup>9</sup> ACRL-LA, “Join,” <http://www.acrlla.org/join/>, accessed on 31 July 2012, describes the various levels of chapter membership.

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed discussion about McLibraries, see my last President’s article, “Have It Your Way? No Way. On *Bozo sapiens*, the McLibrary, and the Need to Re-Incorporate Faculty Driven Decision-Making into the Academic Library,” *Codex* 1, no. 4 (2012): 3-14.

<sup>11</sup> For more information about ACRL-LA’s projects, See ACRL-LA, “Projects: Ongoing Initiatives,” <http://www.acrlla.org/projects>, accessed on 29 July 2012. The website links out to specific ad hoc committee projects.