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Interview with Grace Baysinger

A New Reality for Academic Chemistry Librarians: An Interview with Grace Baysinger

by Svetla Baykoucheva

Grace Baysinger is the Head Librarian and Bibliographer of the Swain Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Library at Stanford University (<http://lib.stanford.edu/swain>). She served as Head of Stanford's Science and Engineering Libraries from 1999-2005. Prior to coming to Stanford, she worked at the University of Michigan Libraries. Her professional interests include collection development and management, scholarly communication and publishing issues, online searching and interface design, and user instruction. She is currently a member of the American Chemical Society (ACS) Committee on Chemical Abstracts Service, ACS Chemical Information Division-German Chemical Society's Computer in Chemistry Collaborative Working Group, Chemical Structure Association Trust, *CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics* Advisory Committee, Thieme's *Science of Synthesis* Advisory Board, and the *Journal of Chemical Education* Advisory Board. Previous professional activities include serving as a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry's Journals Committee, a member and the Chair of the ACS Publications Committee and Copyright Subcommittees, and Chair of an ACS Task Force on the Electronic Dissemination of Meeting Content. Grace has a B.S. in Botany and an M.S. in Library Science from the University of Michigan, and an A.S. in Science from Kalamazoo Valley Community College in Michigan. Grace was awarded the Stanford University Marshall D. O'Neill Award in 1996, the Stanford University Libraries' Distinguished Service Award in 1997, the ACS CINF Meritorious Service Award in 2004, and the SLA Chemistry Division's Wiggins-Roth Award for Outstanding Service in 2011.



Svetla Baykoucheva: You have been a fixture for members of the Chemical Information Division (CINF) of the American Chemical Society (ACS) for many years. Is there at least one ACS national meeting that you have missed in the last 15 years? Which are your favorite cities to go to for an ACS national meeting?

Grace Baysinger: I've been to all of the ACS national meetings in the past 15 years. I don't really have any favorite cities and I have enjoyed going to all of them. Being able to visit different parts of the country is great. My favorite part of attending ACS meetings is seeing colleagues! Learning new things, having in-depth conversations, participating in team efforts, and lobbying to help shape the information landscape are other reasons why I think it is essential to attend every ACS national meeting.

SB: During the years, you have been able to see many developments at ACS, in general, and CINF, in particular. Could you name some of the important ones which, in your opinion, have brought significant changes to ACS and/or CINF?

GB: Technical sessions have remained a strong, core benefit for CINF members and across ACS. The knowledge and experience of people involved in CINF and ACS activities is impressive. Strategic planning has grown in importance both as a roadmap and as a foundation for evaluating effectiveness of activities. Fostering the next generation of leaders within CINF and ACS has become more purposeful. As it has been throughout society, technology has been an important factor driving change. Celebrating its 20th birthday, CHMINF-L has enabled a global community of chemical information professionals to communicate quickly and easily with one another. Web sites provide an easy way to share information and distribute publications. Debbie Molina and Barden Shimbo, from Stanford's Swain Library, digitized CINF documents such as the Procedures Manual, Education Committee workshops, and the booklet celebrating CINF's 50th Anniversary (<https://lib.stanford.edu/swain/projects>). In 1999, when I was the Chair of CINF, I spearheaded efforts to launch CINF E-News. CINF has always been a leader and early adopter within ACS, providing access to CINF presentations given at ACS national meetings. ACS has made great strides in the past couple of years and now provides access to hundreds of presentations from these meetings. ACS plans to hold a career fair at the upcoming meeting that will include forums for virtual participants. Task forces, committees, and other governance work often include virtual meetings. The ability to work, play, and communicate using mobile devices is becoming ubiquitous. While technology tools have changed the way we all do business, the talent and expertise in CINF and ACS have resulted in creative, thoughtful deployment that helps catalyze our activities.

SB: The nature of the work chemistry librarians are doing today has changed and many chemistry libraries closed in the last 10 years. How does this affect the morale and self-esteem of chemistry librarians professionally?

GB: Budget reductions, space competition, deferred facilities maintenance, and rapidly expanding digital collections have resulted in a number of branch libraries being closed, consolidated, or downsized. These radical changes may include a profound sense of loss but also offer a range of new opportunities and possibilities. No longer working to keep daily operations on an even keel, chemistry librarians can focus on collections and services. While the format of materials has changed from print to electronic, the need to acquire content to meet programmatic needs has not diminished. Financial crises offer the perfect opportunity to do an in-depth analysis of collection use to help ensure you get the biggest bang for your buck. Developing sustainable models to provide instruction and develop course/research guides offer ways chemistry librarians keep in sync with users' needs. Systematic communication to keep the dialogue open is essential. Digital collections are powerful, yet intuitive, discovery tools provide a foundation for a 21st century library but don't just happen by themselves. They need input from specialists like chemistry librarians, who are used to dealing with large, complex resources. Point-of-use needs

should be addressed through online self-service so that staffing resources may be used for complex information needs. Through digital collections and services, we have the opportunity to act locally but think globally!

SB: How do we move from reference to eScience? What are the plans at Stanford with respect to this new area for librarians, and in what way are you involved in it?

GB: Librarian colleagues in the life sciences, earth sciences, social sciences, and government documents have dealt with data for a number of years. Having conversations with these colleagues could provide insight into practices that might be adopted in chemistry. Deposition of crystallographic data associated with research papers is the norm. Chemistry librarians have in-depth experience searching numeric databases, such as Reaxys and CHEMNetBASE resources. So, I feel like we are doing eScience already. The aspect that is new is to become involved much earlier in the process: trying to understand practices used by researchers when data are being generated, being involved in metadata creation for these data, working with our colleagues who manage our institutional repositories to help ensure methods area viable for our researchers, etc. This will be followed later on by requests to locate multiple data sets that contain x type of information that were generated under y conditions, requests that are common in the GIS realm. So support for researchers is going to be interesting in ways that will require new skill sets for chemistry librarians.

Regarding eScience activities at Stanford, about a year and a half ago Lynn Yarmey was hired in a new Data Science Librarian position (*First Science Data Librarian Named*, ReMix, November 18, 2010, Issue 34. <http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/260487/cde16e8198/TESTTEST#Four>). Data will be deposited into Stanford's Digital Repository (<http://lib.stanford.edu/sdr>). Last summer, Lynn and Joe Wible, Head Librarian at Stanford's Hopkins Marine Station, did a pilot project to learn more about data needs (*Science Data and Libraries*, ReMix, May 21, 2010, Issue 28 <http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/260487/4f8510f69b/TESTTEST#1>). More recent efforts have included doing faculty interviews. I'm still in the learning phase and will be working closely with Lynn as things move ahead to address data curation needs for the chemists and chemical engineers.

SB: You have been involved in many initiatives at ACS. Which of these you have found to be particularly interesting, challenging, and/or rewarding?

GB: ACS is a large and interesting organization. I thoroughly enjoyed being on the Joint Board-Council Committee on Publications (JBCCP). I was Chair of JBCCP (the first librarian to be appointed to this position; the JBCCP Chair is also the Chair of the *Chemical & Engineering News* (C&EN) Editorial Board, whose members include the Chair of the ACS Board of Directors and the President of ACS). Both of these meetings were always interesting, challenging, and rewarding. In January, the JBCCP Chair is invited to attend an ACS Editors Conference whose attendees include the Editor-in-Chief for each of the ACS journals. Listening to their comments and learning more about scholarly publishing issues from their perspective was wonderful and thought-provoking. I'm currently a member of the Joint Board-Council Committee on Chemical Abstracts, which also deals with an array of interesting topics and issues. Being on the ACS Committee on Community Activities was a lot of fun. I've been on three ACS task forces, two as a member and one as a Chair. When Chairing the Electronic Dissemination of ACS National Content Group (<http://www.acs.org/meetingcontent>), I had the opportunity to work with a different cross-section of the organization, to benchmark what other organizations were doing, and to learn more about the impact sharing meeting content online has on prior publication. Richard Love, along with ACS staff, did a wonderful job of implementing a pilot program that has subsequently grown into a library of about 500 presentations per meeting (<http://www.acs.org/meetingcontent>).

At the CINF Level, one of the most interesting and rewarding initiatives I've been involved in is the CIC-CINF Working Group, the first division-to-division collaboration between ACS and GDCh (Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker). Led by Guenter Grethe and René Deplanque, we developed XCITR (<http://www.xcitr.org>) which stands for eXplore Chemical Information Teaching Resources, a repository of instructional materials, and have co-organized symposia. We meet at ACS national meetings and have met in Germany several times.

SB: You are also very involved in scholarly publishing. How do you see the developments in this area in the near future? How does scholarly publishing relate to eScience?

GB: In the near future, digitization of older materials, along with born digital materials, will provide a vast online library to scholars. Structured databases, complemented by semantic web technologies in full-text resources, will aid discovery. Visualization tools of content and search results will help provide users a bird's eye view of results and will aid them in identifying areas of deeper inquiry. Interdisciplinary research will continue to grow, as addressing complex problems will require researchers from different domains. While new forms of publications will grow and old ones will be mashed up in new ways, I don't see the traditional journal going away in the sciences or publishers being replaced by institutional repositories. Instead, we will have both the traditional and new forms of scholarly communication.

Regarding eScience and focusing on data, knowing the provenance of the data will be important. Being able to compare data sets or interpret a particular data set requires knowing a broad array of information about that data. Having more "raw" data for research linked to a published article would be helpful in a number of ways. For example, it would help readers who want to look at data from a different perspective than the author did or who want to replicate an experiment. As part of the publishing process, I expect automated methods to grow that will help in detecting error, fraud, or plagiarism. If formatted properly, live data could be the foundation for more specialized databases, as there is now for crystallographic data. For authors, eScience data offer an opportunity to be recognized and cited in new ways. To promote data deposition, a reward system needs to be built in for authors. So stay tuned for adventure as eScience activities move forward!

SB: What is the most pleasant thing you enjoy doing at work? Tell us about something that even people like me who have known you for a long time don't know about you.

GB: Helping people find what they need is very rewarding. Building collections and understanding the ecosystems of the collections themselves is a close second. Because interface design and discovery, as well as licensing and pricing, impact access and delivery of the content, I am interested in those aspects of collection building, too.

Regarding something most people don't know about me, one of my earliest volunteer efforts some 30 years ago was volunteering with another University of

Michigan librarian colleague at a women's prison in Michigan. While legal libraries are required in prisons, no requirements existed for educational or recreational reading. The non-legal materials had all been donated and were sitting on shelves unorganized. There were probably 10 linear feet of math textbooks sitting on the shelves (talk about being punished!). During our weekly visits over three years, we weeded, organized, labeled, and cataloged materials so that the collection could be used more effectively and efficiently. It was a memorable experience about an underserved population in our society.

Academically, I have a B.S. in Botany and you may wonder how I ended up being a Chemistry Librarian. My interests have always been broad. As an undergraduate I took a number of graduate level classes because I enjoyed doing library research. I was curious about the history of the earth and how plant populations have changed and evolved over time. Coursework included a number of paleobotany classes as well as geology classes in geomorphology and sedimentology. One prominent method for studying what kind of plants existed in a geographic region was studying what pollen was preserved from these plants (palynology). Learning about life during the Ice Age was fascinating! I considered becoming a palynologist but decided that I liked working with people too much and didn't want to spend my days in front of a microscope. Most jobs for palynologists were either working for an oil company analyzing cores or becoming an academic. I decided neither option was appealing. While I was thinking about what career path to choose, I took a paraprofessional job at the University of Michigan's Natural Sciences Library and subsequently attended library school and was hired as a reference librarian in the same library. Some of my most intriguing and challenging reference questions were biochemistry ones. My interest in chemistry continued to grow and when the Head of the Chemistry Library position at the University of Michigan became available, I decided to apply for it, and, as they say, the rest is history. Patricia Yocum was a strong mentor during my entire decade at the University of Michigan Libraries. Patricia helped me build a strong foundation that has served me well throughout my career. In 1989, I was recruited to apply for the Head of Stanford's Swain Chemistry and Chemical Engineering Library. It has been a wonderful place to work. The people are great and there's never a dull moment!

SB: Thanks, Grace, for this information-rich interview and congratulations on your SLA Award.

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