



## Library Consortia: Sink or Swim?

Stephanie Weldon and Jean Sayre  
GMR

Since their birth in the 70s, library consortia have adapted to new ideas and constraints. Library consortia initially were developed as a means to enhance resource sharing. But other consortia activities, such as group purchasing and professional development, have become important over the years. In today's competitive environment, a consortium must continue to provide valuable services to its members in order to remain viable. This spring, the GMR Regional Advisory Council's Consortia/Local Groups (RAC C/LG) Working Committee made a request via GMRLIST for opinions about the state of consortia today and where they are going in the future. This article reports on recent literature about consortia and incorporates the responses and suggestions submitted by consortia members within the GMR.

### Issues

Resource sharing is still the main focus of articles written about consortia and one of the primary concerns voiced by members. Many consortia have lost members or disbanded because of a perceived inequity in resource sharing. Hospitals with large collections may leave be-

cause they are heavy net lenders or they are directed by their administration to charge for interlibrary loan. Some academic medical libraries also have left because budget constraints preclude the continued subsidization of consortia interlibrary loans. GMR members reported that some consortia wouldn't allow small libraries to become members because they are perceived to be only borrowers, not lenders. Hospital mergers are another factor adversely affecting the strength of consortia: The Twin City Biomedical Consortium, one of the oldest in the country, recently lost several of its largest members because of such mergers.

### Solutions

Small libraries could form their own consortium, which then could explore creating alliances with another consortium to increase leveraging power. Intra-consortium cooperation is not a new concept, but one that is again becoming prevalent. Consortia are getting bigger, notes Eric Lease Morgan in his article "Resource Sharing and Consortia, or, Becoming a 600-Pound Gorilla." He uses the example of how smaller consortia are becoming parts of larger groups to gain more power, as with OCLC, CARL, VIVA and Tex Share. Morgan aptly phrases the goal of consortia as "pooling their collective finan-

cial resources to leverage greater economic control over their marketplace."

Technology and the new NLM DOCLINE system are enabling the large consortia concept to be rede-

*CONSORTIA, continued on 4*

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## Tech Notes



### How Can DOCLINE Help You Find Information on Library Groups?

Go to Docuser, then “search/view,” and under the “Search In” box, choose “Library Group Level.” The Library Group Code and the Library Group Name are displayed alphabetically. You will retrieve a listing of all libraries that are members of that particular group. You can then click on any library for more information.

Make sure your institution is included in the appropriate Library Group List by going to “Docuser” and then to “Update.” From there, choose the “Codes” function, and from the drop down arrow next to Li-

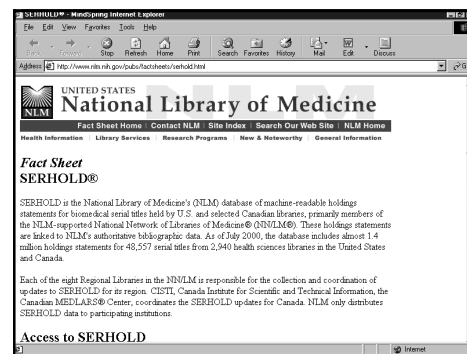
brary Groups, you will be able to see the groups to which you belong.

Library Groups must consist of **11 or more** related libraries that cannot be identified and grouped in any other way (for instance, All DOCLINE libraries in Maryland would not be considered a Library Group because a search can be limited by state). Library Groups are established by NLM. Any additions or changes to Library Groups must be submitted to your Regional SERHOLD coordinator, who will review the request before submitting it to NLM.

### SERHOLD Union Lists Will Be Available

Before the end of 2000, DOCLINE participants will also be able to produce union lists of holdings for libraries in their **own library group** and in their own state or province. These union list products will be available more frequently than once a year. For more information, see : <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/serhold.html>.

Union lists and individual library lists produced from SERHOLD data are publicly available at the NN/LM



web site: <http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/nnlm/docdel/ftp.select.html>.

### FreeShare is a New DOCLINE Library Group

FreeShare is a new cross-regional library group for DOCLINE libraries that would like to participate in free, reciprocal lending. Additional details

on FreeShare and contact information for regional DOCLINE coordinators are located on the NN/LM web site at: <http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/lib-info/docline/freesshare.html>.

## Members of the GMR Respond

In addition to the comments incorporated in the article titled "Sink or Swim?" on page one, we have selected some responses from members of the GMR to publish.

◆ Given NLM's current interest in consumer health information, this may be the perfect time for public, academic and health sciences libraries to explore new, collaborative projects.

In Ames, Iowa, one such project is already under way. Through a cooperative agreement, the local hospital's library and the public library are offering a consumer health database as well as lists of resources on specific health topics distributed through the public library. I believe this is a positive step and that many communities would benefit from such an agreement.

Another positive step in Iowa has to do with a statewide consumer health project just funded by NLM. This project brings public health, consumers and all types of libraries together in order to pool our resources and make sure the public has access

to health related materials, particularly those that are specific to Iowa interests.

◆ All of Kentucky's medical library groups stress resource sharing but are inclusive and exclusive in a variety of ways – by money, affiliation, geography and size. All of these groups do a good job with their strengths and within their weaknesses. What I ask of the C/LG Committee is to come up with strategies of unity. Develop strategies and techniques to persuade these groups and institutions to federate in the common purpose of resource sharing.

◆ Collaboration with public libraries: This may be a project for the future. I have heard public librarians say they are not always comfortable providing access to health care information. I do not always have access to the types of materials that the public libraries collect. A relationship between us may be beneficial for all. I wonder what the other consortia in the GMR might be doing?

◆ I think consortia should active-

ly be helping their members with electronic resources. Specifically, the consortium could offer training sessions to introduce new products and technologies.

◆ I believe consortia should become more multi-type as budgets decrease and requests for non-traditional health sciences materials increase. Consumer health has a bigger impact on the hospital library vs. other libraries in the group.

◆ I think many of the local groups need to recognize that a strong state group would be beneficial. It might be nice if GMR could mentor the executive state committee to become stronger and more supportive to the local groups. What can we do to help ourselves?

◆ Our membership has dropped over the last few years. Why? We are concerned that our membership is not finding our consortium helpful in areas of professional development, topics of interests and networking. What can we do to improve our value to the membership?

## E-rate Offers Discounts

Have you heard about the new E-rate <http://www.edlinc.org/>? The E-rate is a federal initiative that provides discounts on telecommunications and Internet.

Thousands of libraries and schools, from every state in the nation, have participated in this program. In addition, libraries that are independent of institutions of higher education are also eligible.

Information about applying for the program, including forms, deadlines and eligibility, is available from the Schools and Libraries Division web site at <http://www.sl.universalservice.org/>.

The E-rate is also available to consortia: The E-rate Library Consortia Fact Sheet can be found at <http://www.sl.universalservice.org/reference/library.asp>

This fact sheet answers the following questions:

1. What is a library consortium?
2. Can a library consortium be an eligible entity for purposes of obtaining E-rate funding?
3. What if my library consortium has members, which are both E-rate eligible and non-E-rate eligible?
4. What eligibility requirements

must a library consortium meet in order to qualify for E-rate funding?

5. My library consortium is not eligible for assistance from a state library administrative agency under the Library Services and Technology Act. Is there any other analysis that I should consider to determine whether my library consortium might be eligible for E-rate?

6. How should a library consortium compute its discount level?

Questions? Call the Client Service Bureau at (888) 203-8100.

## *CONSORTIA, continued from page 1*

financed and restructured. Free Share, a recently announced NN/LM program, allows any library willing to lend articles for free to join a separate Free Share SERHOLD group, in effect creating a new national resource-sharing consortium. This new program is freeing libraries of the old-style consortia need for geographic proximity. Anyone interested in joining Free Share should contact the GMR office at gmr@uic.edu.

### **New Technologies**

In their article "Hanging Together to Avoid Hanging Separately: Opportunities for Academic Libraries and Consortia," Barbara McFadden Allen and Arnold Hirshon state that the "purchase of electronic information and the operation of enhancements to share on-line systems are the two most critical issues facing consortia in the next few years." Members of consortia in the GMR are combining their buying power to request a single contract from vendors in order to obtain group discounts. Even if discounts are not announced, consortia can negotiate contracts on behalf of their members.

Morgan mentions that, when negotiating electronic resources contracts, the number of simultaneous users, the number of participants in the consortium, security methods, the selection of resources and pricing formulas are all issues that have to be resolved. Not all vendors will cooperate with consortia or give preferential pricing, but it is worth exploring.

The GMR hopes to answer librarians' questions about offering electronic resources as a library service through an interactive videoconference to be held **March 30, 2001**, 1-5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time; 12-4 Central Standard Time. Approximately 10 sites throughout the Region

will participate in the videoconference. The program will center on practical issues and options for acquisition and use of electronic resources and will touch on the issue of consortium negotiations with vendors.

### **Consortia at Work**

Consumer health information is a growing focus for health librarians. Hospitals are establishing consumer libraries at a rapid pace in order to serve constituents and also for marketing reasons. Many public libraries also provide consumer health information. A consortium can reach out to local public libraries that may not yet be a member of their consortium (establishing referral patterns between public and health science members) and offer membership in the group. Consortia members also can help each other with consumer health by offering consultations, writing articles for newsletters, and providing consumer health training for its members. The GMR office staff will be offering this class in the near future, "Consumer Health Information: A Workshop for Librarians Providing Health Information to the Public," that consortia may request free of charge.

Consortia within the GMR use a variety of communication methods to facilitate active and productive membership. Several groups meet regularly, some as often as once a month to share ideas and conduct business. The meetings are a wonderful way for isolated librarians, working in small departments, to strengthen personal and professional relationships with colleagues in similar situations. Many groups now use email to keep in touch, and some consortia also have developed web pages. The GMR offers a no-cost service to consortia to host both email lists and web sites;

contact the GMR office if your consortium wants to establish these services.

Professional development plays a central role in the mission of many GMR consortia. Some recent programs presented by consortia include: Management Skills for One Person Librarians, Copyright Law and Internet Searching in the Health Sciences. Consortium members monitor regional and national meetings to identify current trends. A consortium will often offer topical programs locally because many members cannot attend regional or national meetings. Opportunities for professional development and formal mentoring are also available at state and regional meetings. Groups have contacted the GMR for demos and training about new technology. Some consortia support continuing education by offering an annual scholarship to attend an educational event. The Northwest Indiana Health Science Library Consortium, for example, generates funds for this program through the annual sale of its Consortium's Serials List.

Many individuals within the GMR fill the role of a medical librarian but do not have a degree in library science. Consortia should invite these individuals to training classes to increase their skills and encourage them to seek further study. Connecting library students with mentors in the health sciences library field is also a good idea. Students, in an internship capacity, can provide valuable help to solo librarians and also gain hands-on experience.

### **Funding**

How can you apply for funding for your consortium? On page six is a listing of state and national organizations that offer funding to libraries and consortia. Most states have information about the Library Services and Technology Act. States also

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## CONSORTIA, continued from page 4

offer individual grants – Iowa's state library page, for example, has a very good listing of grants available to libraries. NLM also provides considerable funding. The NLM Information Access Grant and Information System Grant, [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/resource\\_grants.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/factsheets/resource_grants.html), is an example of a grant that works with consortia. Designate a member of your consortium to bring a list of possible grants to your next meeting.

### Why Consortia are Valuable

"Consortia allow us to speak with a voice of authority rather than with a murmur," says Morgan. Libraries must form consortia to ensure viability in the face of so many information businesses, which pose a real threat to the sanctity of the library. Because money is often the bottom line, libraries can continue to thrive if they work together to share resources at minimal cost, get noticeable reductions in vendor pricing, participate in professional development and acquire funding. McFadden and Hirshon sum it up nicely, noting that members of consortia must have a high degree of respect for the value of increased collaboration. Consortia and their leaders must also not be afraid to lead, take risks and commit resources.

### Would You Like to Develop a Consortium?

Contact the GMR for more information about existing consortia and for referrals to people who can help.

#### **Bibliography and Notes:**

Allen, Barbara McFadden and Arnold Hirshon. *Hanging Together to Avoid Hanging Separately*. Information Technology and Libraries. 1998 March 36-44. Key issues include: Pricing Models; Technology and Infrastructure Enhancements; and Coordination and Leadership Funding and Governance.

Golrick, Michael. *Strategic Success: Myth or Reality*. Interface. 2000. ALA. <<http://www.ala.org/ascla/golrick.html>>. This is a very interesting article culminating in a list of success stories from multi-type consortia. These success stories provide possible ideas for your own consortia.

Morgan, Eric Lease. *Resource Sharing and Consortia or, Becoming a 600 Pound Gorilla, Computers in Libraries*. 1998 Apr;18(4) 40-2. Discusses the impact of interpersonal organization and communication in successful resource sharing.

Stevens, Hannah. *The Era of Consortia: A Primer*. PCG Vantage. 1998 June;3(1). <[www.pcgplus.com/era\\_of\\_consortia.htm](http://www.pcgplus.com/era_of_consortia.htm)>. The impact of consortia as buyers. Expounds on how to do business within a consortia.

## General Consortia Web Resources

**International Coalition of Library Consortia:** The Coalition serves primarily higher education institutions by facilitating discussion among consortia on issues of common interest. A list of consortia that participate on the ICOLC consortia listserv is available. <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia>

**Libraries on the Web – USA Consortia:** A listing of library consortia. <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Libweb/usa-consortia.html>

**Library Consortia Documents Online:** A collection of about 100 Web-accessible primary source documents on governance and administration of library consortia and cooperatives. This site will be useful for practitioners who need to study consortial governance documents while reviewing or creating their own consortium's governance structure. <http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu/~b-sloan/consort.htm>

**The Consortia Forum:** Provides a focused platform for discussion and information relating to library consortia. <http://www.consortia.co.uk/>

**Library Consortium Management Journal:** An online, international information resource about the management of library consortia. <http://www.mcb.co.uk/lcm.htm>

**Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) – Library Initiatives:** The CIC, located in Champaign, Ill., is the academic consortium of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. [http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/second\\_level/library.html](http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/second_level/library.html)

**Research Libraries Group:** A not-for-profit membership corporation devoted to the mission of "improving access to information that supports research and learning." <http://www.rlg.org/toc.html>

**Center for Research Libraries (CRL):** An international not-for-profit consortium of colleges, universities and libraries providing scholarly research resources to users everywhere. <http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/>

**Association of Research Libraries (ARL):** A not-for-profit membership organization comprising the leading research libraries in North America. <http://arl.cni.org>

**Sirsi Consortia Library Management System:** An example of a vendor seeking to meet the needs of consortia. <http://www.sirsi.com/Prodserv/uconsortia.html>

**EBSCOadmin 3:** Brings more customization power to consortia members. <http://www-us.ebsco.com/home/whatsnew/pubadmin.stm>

## State Libraries Offer Grants

**Illinois State Library – Grants for Libraries:** <http://www.library.sos.state.il.us/isl/grants/grants.html>

**Indiana State Library:** <http://www.statelib.lib.in.us/www/ldo/lstamenu.html>

**Iowa State Library:** <http://www.silo.lib.ia.us/Grants/fundindex.htm>

**Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives:** <http://www.kdla.state.ky.us/>

**Michigan State Library:** <http://www.libofmich.lib.mi.us/>

**Minnesota Libraries:** <http://cfl.state.mn.us/library/grants.html>

**North Dakota State Library:** <http://ndsl.lib.state.nd.us/V2004.html>

**Ohio State Library:** <http://winslo.state.oh.us/publib/lsta98.html>

**South Dakota State Library:** [http://www.state.sd.us/deca/st\\_lib/lsta.htm](http://www.state.sd.us/deca/st_lib/lsta.htm)

**Wisconsin State Library:** <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/pld/lsta.html>

*Don't forget to take a look at the NN/LM funding page for a listing of grant information resources as well as help with proposal writing: <http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/projects/funding>.*

## Sample Reciprocal Borrowing Agreement

It is mutually agreed that the member libraries of XYZ Consortium and ABC Consortium will provide interlibrary loans to one another upon request without charge. Each consortium will regularly provide the other with a copy of its most current union list and membership directory.

Member libraries of both consortiums may request materials via DOCLINE, OCLC, fax or telephone and will provide the lending library with the most complete information possible. To ensure that no library is overburdened, each member will seek to distribute requests as broadly as possible. The lending policies of each member library will be respected.

If, at some point, a participating library is no longer willing to honor this agreement, it will provide the other members with at least 30 days advance notice. All members reserve the right to refuse continued participation. Following are the lists of participating members.

XYZ Consortium

ABC Consortium

Names of participating libraries

Names of participating libraries

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Typed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Typed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: Coordinator XYZ Consortium

Title: Coordinator ABC Consortium

*\*Courtesy of the Northwest and the Northeast Indiana Health Science Consortiums\**

## MD Consult Summary

Linda De Muro

Manager, Library Services

Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio

### PLUSES

+ Excellent search feature. Allows users to search one section of the site or the entire site all at once.

+ Very nice interface to Medline: clear, basic, gets the job done and provides convenient access to full-text of more than 50 major medical journals.

+ Brings together a lot of information in one place.

+ Provides links to related information. Allows users to skim and get basic information and updates, or to delve into the topic as deeply as they would like.

+ Provides convenient access to full-text book and journal literature.

+ Provides excellent "current awareness" features.

+ Excellent, comprehensive patient education and drug information.

### MINUSES

- Response time is occasionally slow due to a large quantity of graphics and frames.

- Navigating the site can be a little confusing initially, although with continued use, it makes more sense.

- Links to full-text articles in the "In This Week's Journals" section would be useful.

- A broader range of books in the "Booklist" section is needed. Also, a few of the books listed were not the most current editions.

- References to individual authors not available on the patient education site. A user must scan through the "Clinical Content" section, available from the home page, to search for the information source.

## Need a Contact Name for a Consortium in Your Area?

■ **The GMR features an alphabetical listing:** <http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/gmr/clg>

■ **The Midwest Chapter shows consortia divided by state:** <http://midwestmla.org/ce>

Some state associations also have links to consortia:

■ **Health Science Librarians of Illinois:** <http://hsl.org>

■ **Indiana Health Sciences Librarians Association:** <http://birch.palni.edu/~ihsla/regional.html>

■ **Wisconsin Health Science Library Association:** <http://www.whsla.mcw.edu/consortia.html>

## Experiences With *MD Consult; The Reference Desk Edition*

Royden Jones

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St. Francis Medical Center, Peoria, Ill.

Many of us regard new technologies as something to investigate when we have time. That was my view until recent funding concerns made this less of an intellectual exercise and more work-place imperative.

My library currently utilizes *MD Consult; the Reference Desk Edition*. Most of you are aware of the product: web-based, 35 reference books, 50 journals and clinics, etc. What may not have hit home is the pricing available for this version of *MD Consult. The Reference Desk Edition* is priced at an affordable \$2,500. While most small operations are unable to participate in the dream of universal access due to hefty site licensing fees, this product, while limited to a single workstation, allows a foot in the door.

Some of the barriers involved with *MD Consult* are as follows: First, this is a web-based product. As such, the vendor determines user eligibility by recognizing an IP (Internet Protocol) address rather than IDs and passwords. Those of us on networks have found it difficult to work with that concept for two reasons. First, we

haven't won the "hearts and minds" of our information technology people. And second, the infrastructure and its governing software is often not amenable to permanent and easily accessible IP addresses.

After considerable internal negotiation, I have a PC "off network" that is connected directly to our Internet router. This arrangement has worked well, though it flies in the face of our quest for "seamlessness."

Another significant drawback is the format. Currently, the product is offered in framed mode without the ability to print or read material in PDF format. An additional drawback to this format is the presentation of figures. Occasionally, *MD Consult* will not have copyright permission to display a particular table or graph within an article. In that case, a note appears indicating the original published location of the figure.

Therefore, documents are not always complete.

Having examined and dealt with some of the problems, what are the concrete benefits to a small library? The benefits are as follows; no check in, no missed issues, no shelving, no binding, and no space problems. In my specific case, I have canceled 14 journals and clinics as a result of *MD Consult*. These cancellations, made possible by a \$2,500 expenditure, have already returned \$2,783 to my budget. Further, I have access to additional titles that I did not have before. More cancellations will be forthcoming as the technology proves itself to our patrons. Small hospital libraries cannot afford to ignore savings of this magnitude because of the minor imperfections present.

\* The writer describes his experiences with *MD Consult* while in a previous position.

### Scholarship for Minority Students

The Medical Library Association is offering a \$5,000 scholarship for minority students studying health sciences librarianship in an ALA accredited program. Deadline for applications is Dec. 1. For detailed information, visit <http://www.mlanet.org/awards/grants/minstud.html>.

## Technical Bulletin

The list below summarizes the articles published by the National Library of Medicine in the *Technical Bulletin* ([www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/tb.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/tb.html)). To request print copies of individual articles, please contact the GMR office.

### July/August 2000

Hands On - Using Limits in a PubMed Search - e1

Learn a quick way to apply commonly used limits to your search.

Technical Notes - e2:

New Sort Capability Added to PubMed

New LinkOut Display Format in PubMed

Toxicology: New Subset for PubMed Searching

NLM Online Training Program: January-April 2001 - e3

January-April 2001 schedule of NLM Online Services Training classes.

MEDLINEplus Site Redesigned - e4

Introduces the new design and modified organizational structure of MEDLINEplus.

OLDMEDLINE Database Moves Back in Time - e5

Update on the OLDMEDLINE Database

## Important Dates

### National Online Training Center Class Dates

For additional NOTC classes, class descriptions, and online registration, check: [www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/mar/online](http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/mar/online).

### Greater Midwest Region Keeping Up with NLM's PubMed (1-day)

September 25, 2000 ..... Minneapolis  
September 26, 2000 ..... Minneapolis

### North Dakota Library Association HSIS Annual Conference

September 20-22, 2000  
Travelodge  
Dickinson, N.D.  
Contact: Sally Dockter  
Phone: 701-777-4640  
Email: [sdockter@plains.nodak.edu](mailto:sdockter@plains.nodak.edu)

### Midwest Chapter/MLA Annual Meeting

September 23-26, 2000  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Contact: Barbarie Hill  
Phone: 513-636-4300  
Email: [hillb1@chmcc.org](mailto:hillb1@chmcc.org)

### Minnesota Library Association 2000 Annual Conference

"Honoring the Past,  
Creating the Future"  
September 27-29, 2000  
Touchstone Energy Place  
at Rivercentre  
St. Paul, MN

### South Dakota Library Association Annual Conference

October 2-5, 2000  
Ramkota Convention Center  
Rapid City, S.D.  
Contact: Shari West Twitero, Chair  
Phone: 605-394-4171 ext. 501  
Email: [sdla2000@sdln.net](mailto:sdla2000@sdln.net)

### Michigan Health Sciences Library Association

October 18-20, 2000  
At the Park Place  
Traverse City, Mich.  
Contact: Doris Blauet  
Phone: 810-606-5261

### Iowa Library Association

October 18-20, 2000  
Scheman Building  
Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa  
Phone: 515-243-2172

### KLA/KSMA Joint Annual Conference

October 18-21, 2000  
Galt House East  
Louisville, Ky.  
Contact: Judith Burdine  
Phone: 606-679-8401  
Email: [jburdine@hyperaction.net](mailto:jburdine@hyperaction.net)

### Wisconsin Library Association Annual Conference 2000

October 31- November 3, 2000  
KI Convention Center  
Green Bay, Wisc.

### Health Science Librarians of Illinois

November 9-10, 2000  
Clock Tower Resort  
Rockford, Ill.  
Contact: Jan Perone  
Phone: 217-782-969  
Email: [janperone@yahoo.com](mailto:janperone@yahoo.com)

### American Library Association Mid-Winter Meeting

January 12-17, 2001  
Washington, DC

## 3 SOURCES

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