

\*\*\* *The 90s: George Bush president . . . Gulf War; Panama invasion . . . Michael Milliken, junk bond king . . . Rodney King riots . . . Chorus Line . . . downsizing... 1st superconducting transistor . . . Driving Miss Daisy, My Left Foot . . . Savings and loan crisis . . . Internet revolution – email, WWW, http://, HTML, Yahoo! . . . library card catalogues closing . . . German unification . . . Emporium closes . . . Bill Clinton president . . . Yugoslavia collapses . . . Arafat/Rabin accord . . . Apartheid falls . . . Northridge earthquake . . . mergers – uncertainty...*

The first years of the last decade of the 20th century saw reversals in government as the GOP captured Congress and the Democrats, the presidency. Gingrich and the Contract with America aimed at a downsized government. HMOs became the by-(buy?)word in health care, as hospitals merged left and right. Workshops on revamping and marketing our skills and services became commonplace.

Simultaneously the pace of technology accelerated; change became the routine. Across the country, libraries large and small closed card catalogues, replacing them with online catalogues, to the consternation of many staff and users. As one new database (commercial or non-profit) succeeded another, jobs required more advanced education and extensive experience – not necessarily tied to higher compensation. California's economy crashed, and recovery was slow and painful for many.

Early in 1990 the Long Range Planning Committee released the results of a survey of members. The profile of the 155 respondents showed that half were in the immediate bay area. About the same number had the title librarian, others were identified as information manager or information specialist. Twenty-four had an MS or Ph.D. in addition to MLS; 62 belonged to consortia, but 26 attended only NCNMLG meetings. Unsurprisingly, more attended joint meetings in the north than in the south. Among the reasons members gave for joining, the most important was meeting other professionals and keeping up to date with technology and other developments. The *Directory and Newsletter* were also important. The most desired types of continuing education courses and workshops were those on the advanced or intermediate level. Online skills, information trends, management skills and database management were favorite topics. Seventy-one percent earned CE credits from various sources, but 27 percent relied solely on NCNMLG. When asked the reason they didn't attend meetings or workshops, most cited location and lack of time. Many voted for spending money on paid speakers and to support scholarships, research and student subsidies.

1991 brought the annual meeting of MLA to San Francisco, the first since 1964, with all the attendant planning and scheduling; Jacqueline Wilson chaired the committee. NCNMLG re-addressed its goals at a Strategic Planning and Transitional Meeting in May 1991, examining the success of some of the changes made after the first report issued seven years earlier. The newsletter and calendars were judged to be a success, as was the Advisory Council, created to give broader voice to members, particularly librarians

laboring in remote areas. As a result of this meeting several new task forces got underway. The Paraprofessional Task Force offered support for, and sought broader participation and input from non-librarian staff. The Mentoring Task Force offered assistance for new members in the field, with a particular emphasis on developing relationships with the local library schools. The Awards Committee sought to identify and celebrate members' special contributions to the group and to the profession.

The Union List of Serials had appeared in four editions during the 80s. Beginning with the 2nd edition, users were organized into "tiers" according to size of periodical collection, with the goal of achieving a more equitable system for all participants. In 1992, after holding several forums to discuss the topic, the ILL Policy Committee recommended instituting a coupon system, and permitting individual arrangements between libraries. This system was already in place in Southern California so that coupons could be interchanged between the members of NCNMLG and those of the southern group. The policy was implemented, but the logistics for paying for and redeeming coupons occupied the committee for some time.

The 90s witnessed an increasing focus on electronic technology, reflected in programs, workshops and continuing education courses. Because not all health institutions provided electronic mail support for their employees, email access for all members was a goal addressed by the Email/Internet Task Force (which would become the Electronic Resources Committee by 1996). As a means of educating NCNMLG members, beginning in 1993, the task force members contributed brief articles to the *Newsletter* under the heading *Internet Flash*, describing email, Gophers, and the nature of the Internet, and listing service providers and their charges. They also developed Guidelines for Email Support for the Executive Board and Committee Chairs, to facilitate the work of NCNMLG. That same year a class titled "Advanced Internet: Tools of the Trade" was offered to provide hands-on experience with such Internet services as WAIS and WWW. An NCNMLG reflector, based at Lane Medical Library, Stanford University, was set up in November that allowed members to post and receive notices from each other; a second reflector provided access to the Executive Board.

MLA attempted to help its members meet these new technological challenges with a new educational policy, "Platform for Change." Based on these goals, NCNMLG's Long-Range Planning Group offered its members a Group Self Assessment Tool in the April 1994 *Newsletter*. Individuals could identify those areas where they needed education/advice/development. Categories included "seven main areas of health sciences information and skills: health sciences environment and information policies, management of information services, health sciences information services, health sciences resource management, information systems and technology, instructional support systems, and research, analysis and interpretation." Planning for the year's programs would be based on the information gathered from the 1994/95-membership renewal form.

The Paraprofessional Task Force (later Committee) continued its exploration of avenues for identifying these individuals and increasing their participation in NCNMLG.

Notices of courses and workshops available for paraprofessionals appeared routinely in the *Newsletter*. In 1995 the Task Force carried out a salary survey, which revealed that wages ranged from \$4.50 to \$23 per-hour with the average being \$14.50, that most paraprofessionals were working full-time, and that the majority (96 out of 135 respondents) worked on circulation positions.

Membership reached a high of 350 in February 1996, only to fall to 300 by the following year. A survey showed that 73% had access to email. NCNWeb, the NCNMLG Web page, was up and running early in 1996. Largely the work of Mary Buttner and Heidi Heilemann (Lane Medical Library), and Patrick Newell (UCSF), it won the 1997 MLA Chapter of the Year Award for NCNMLG. (The award included \$500 donated by Majors Scientific Books, Inc.) No more fitting designation could be asked for the year of NCNMLG's 50th anniversary:

Most members have served the Group in one way or another – on committees, task forces, by volunteering or responding positively when asked, regardless of the assignment. The institutions represented by the members have also provided support over the years. In addition to providing released time to carry out projects and attend meetings, these organizations have supported mailings, contributed computer time and memory and space for meetings. Without this institutional sustenance NCNMLG could not have grown in size, in educational offerings, and in technological accessibility.

In five decades the Medical Librarians of the Bay Area had grown from a small, socially-oriented group of librarians concentrated around the San Francisco, Menlo Park, Oakland, Berkeley axis, to the Northern California and Nevada Medical Library Group, geographically encompassing the state from Fresno to Eureka to Reno. The membership grew in numbers, in sophistication, in educational preparation and experience and connectivity. Some issues changed format or direction, but the basic goals – offering educational tools and leadership, avenues for communication, opportunities for personal and professional growth, – were never abandoned.