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2016 ACRL Excellence in Academic Libraries Award Presentation

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ACRL Award Presentation May 2nd, 2016, Macalester College

Terri Fishel, Library Director: Good afternoon everybody, and thank you so much for joining us for the reception of our award. I'd like to introduce the individuals that have traveled for the presentation, and I have asked Angi and Katy to be with me for the presentation. I'd like to introduce Mary Ellen Davis, who is the executive director of the Association for College and Research Libraries. She's going to open with some comments, and then, Ann Campion Riley is the current president of the Association for College and Research Libraries who will then say a few words, and then the Yankee Book Peddler Press representative, who has a monetary award, is Mara Eggherman, who is actually located in Des Moines but she originally grew up in Stillwater, so she has been an excellent transportation hostess for our guests. We couldn't have asked for a better day and I wish we were all outside, but thank you so much for joining us for this special celebration.

(Applause)

01:15 Mary Ellen Davis, Executive Director of ACRL: Thank you Terri for that warm introduction. I am Mary Ellen Davis, the Executive Director of the Association for College and Research Libraries, and it really gives me great pleasure to be with you this afternoon at Macalester for the presentation of ACRL's highest recognition for academic libraries, the Excellence in Academic Libraries Award. I thought I'd tell you a bit about our association and about the award to give you some context for what's happening this afternoon, so you can appreciate the recognition that Macalester is getting.

The largest division of the American Library Association, ACRL is the higher education association for librarians. We have more than eleven thousand members, representing individuals and other interested parties and organizations, forty four chapter affiliates, and what ACRL does is develop programs, products, and services that help academic libraries and librarians learn, innovate, and lead within the academic library community. Now, ACRL has a distinguished publishing program including peer reviewed research, reviews materials for undergraduate collections, and more than thirty standards, guidelines, and frameworks to help librarians benchmark their programs against the programs and services that they offer. ACRL also offers a number of professional development opportunities, from our biennial ACRL conference which will be held in Baltimore in 2017 to institutes and online webinars. Our advocacy work helps promote issues such as open access, [unclear], net neutrality, and access to informational for all. And through these and many other activities, ACRL is committed to advancing learning and transforming scholarship.

Now, ACRL could not do all of this work on its own, just with the staff that I have in Chicago and Connecticut. We really depend on our many volunteers to help us do this work. And, here at Macalester, I'm delighted to say, we have a number of ACRL members, including your director, Terri Fishel, who have contributed greatly to ACRL's success. They've served on our value of academic libraries committees and our annual statistics survey committee and editorial board.

They've helped plan our conferences. They've written for us and done reviews of our research before we publish it, and they've provided leadership to ACRL's sections and interest groups. Now, Terri has and is currently serving on a joint national taskforce to identify the kinds of data that the Department of Education should collect about academic libraries, a very important role, and we have appreciated her leadership in this. Your team has also helped us strategize about how ACRL can help other academic libraries offer the type of collaborative campus and community services that Macalester has helped pioneer. So, it's not surprising that these exemplary efforts of the Wallace Library staff on a national level is a reflection of the excellence that they bring to Macalester College, which brings us to today's awards presentation.

The Excellence Award has been given annually since 1999, to stellar academic libraries, to recognize the outstanding accomplishments that librarians and library staff, working as a team to support the mission of the institution. The award is presented to libraries in three categories: college, university, and community college. Excellence Award winning libraries have prominent status and are held in the highest regard by their peer institutions, and they serve as a role model for other academic libraries. In receiving this recognition, Macalester College is in distinguished company. Previous college award winners include your neighbor, Carleton College, Amherst College, and Trinity University. And of course, this award would not be possible without the generosity of YBP, and we thank you for being here with us and supporting this award. Now, it's my pleasure to introduce ACRL president, Ann Campion Riley, who's going to present the award. Ann is Dean of the libraries of the University of Missouri libraries and at their flagship institution in Columbia.

(Applause)

05:29 Ann Campion Riley: Well, it really is a pleasure to be here today to give out this award. I want to thank you for this beautiful weather, this is lovely, much better than what I left back home, no tornadoes or thunderstorms, it's great, thank you. And thank you all for being here to help us honor Macalester librarians, Terri and her staff, with this award today. As Mary Ellen described, these are very valued awards, very competitive awards, and they are true marks of excellence. I know that the DeWitt Wallace Library here at Macalester College has been active in so many ways, balancing the liberal arts with the technology, your LibTech conference is well known, your initiative for women in technology, also very well known. Your library is so very clearly a key part of enhancing the transformational experience that Macalester education is for your students. I know that part of the core identity of your library is collaboration. When the committee that gives these awards was faced with the very difficult task of looking at the applications, and I know that the college category was especially competitive this year, the collaboration was one of the things that jumped out. The focus here at your college on international work, multiculturalism, service to society and as I mentioned before, empowering women to pursue science technology careers through the Advance IT Minnesota project, all really shine. The way that those things work together, the way that you have put them together, contribute to this overall excellence, that is what this award is meant to reward.

Liberal arts education is under fire, I think you all know that. We read things all the time about how it's lost its relevance. Groups like- not to pick on U.S. News and World Reports, but that isn't really a news organization anymore, right, now they're just a rankings engine. And I think many of us in higher education get tired of this, we get tired of things being boiled down to just a few numbers. The people who have the benefit of a true liberal arts education, with the balance, of course, always with technology and the practical, focus more on critical inquiry, clear thinking. We help our students develop skills in expressing their views in civil ways, the art of discourse that critical thinking leads us into, is a place where I think we want all our students to be when they finish their education. Libraries used to be considered a public good, right, public libraries in particular. On any campus, we would always hear the administrators talking about, what we all believed to be true, that the libraries are the heart of the campus. That the growth of libraries in the 1960s and 70s was key to the growth of higher education and the proliferation of graduate degrees here in the United States. We forget those things, I think, sometimes, since the beginning of our reliance on online sources. I know many of you have seen the signs that say "Google can bring you one hundred thousand results, a library can bring you the right one" (laughter) or the one you need.

So, libraries like liberal arts education, we have gotten a lot of grief recently in the press. We read about public libraries closing down, limiting their hours, we hear about limitations in funding that libraries experience everywhere. It's a joy to see the excellence that all of our award winners have developed and exhibited. It's especially lovely today, on this beautiful day, to be here in a place where both the liberal arts and libraries are really flourishing. Wallace Library is really a wonderful example of the transition that libraries have done, of their relevance with technology and liberal arts coming together, preserving the best aspects of liberal arts education while embracing things, as I mentioned, like your very oversubscribed LibTech conference, which I hear registration closes in, like, a day (offscreen, hours), hours? Three hours, it's fabulous. Just one more thing I want to highlight here, are the efforts of your library director, Terri Fishel. Mary Ellen talked a little bit about her activities with the Association of College and Research Libraries, which I have the honor to lead this year. Her encouragement of others to participate in that organization in other professional development opportunities, her leadership that is so key to any organization that develops excellence. Good leadership really does make a difference, and we see this over and over again when we look at our award winners, when we look at leaders in our profession, you are honored to have one of the leaders of your profession here at your library, and we congratulate Terri and her staff on their wonderful work, and Mara is going to join me up here at the podium and we're going to present the award.

Mara (offscreen): I'll try to not get my fingerprints on this.

(Glass award given to Terri Fishel)

12:14 Mara Eggherman: I have a very short and sweet job, which is just to deliver the money. As Terri said, I did grow up in Minnesota, so it's really fun to come back. I've just been with YBP a few months. I've lived in Iowa now for over ten years, so no Iowa jokes, I know them all. So,

congratulations, I've been really excited to read everything that you have done here in the library, and I want to share that with all the libraries that I get to visit. Great job, congratulations, keep up the good work.

(Applause)

12:54 Terri Fishel: I just want to close by thanking Katy Gabrio and Angi Faiks, Assistant and Associate Library Directors, and most of all to all of the library staff that are here, because even though I represent the library and we're receiving the award, it's the work that every single one of the staff and the librarians and the students do in the library that makes the library work. So, everyone contributes to this, which is why we wanted everyone to enjoy and celebrate with us. So, for everyone that works in the library and supports us, thank you so much, and I don't know if you have anything (gestures offscreen), but ok, I guess it's time for the toast. To all of the DeWitt Library staff, our colleagues in ITS, to President Brian Rosenberg, to Provost Karine Moe, who support the library, and to all of my other colleagues that are here, I don't want to miss somebody, and our friends visiting, thank you for joining us. Cheers. And that concludes our program.