



2021 VALE Users Conference – VALE Update/Chair’s Remarks

Happy New Year and welcome to the 22nd Annual VALE / ACRL-NJ / NJLA CUS User’s Conference. As was the case with 2020, this is a conference like no other we’ve presented. It is fitting, following a year also like none other we’ve experienced. Before I provide a brief update on VALE, some thanks are in order. First, to the VALE Conference Planning Committee, co-chaired by Amanda Piekart of Berkeley College and Alyssa Valenti of Raritan Valley Community College. Planning and executing any conference is a challenge. Doing one in the time of COVID-19 represents a colossal achievement. Amanda and Alyssa are the tip of the iceberg, leading a large committee. On behalf of VALE, thank you. You and your work exemplify this year’s conference theme: *open, adaptable and resilient*. Without these qualities and your relentless positivity, this conference could not have happened.

The pandemic of 2020 took the lives of approximately 19,000 New Jersey residents, affecting all that we did last year. As the crisis unfolded in the early spring, our OER workshop schedule was set and this was to be our signal effort: promoting the adoption of open textbooks and other resources to make education more affordable for New Jersey higher ed students. Though the in-person work of the OER ambassadors was thwarted in 2020, the need for more affordable course materials is increasingly urgent. In 2021 VALE’s OER initiative will continue with virtual meetings and events at our colleges and universities to encourage, support and organize open textbook programs. A special thanks goes to Marilyn Ochoa, at Middlesex County College and Rob Hillier, at Rowan University. Marilyn and Rob are the co-chairs of VALE’s OER Committee and are our in-house thought leaders on OER. In November 2020 they submitted a grant application to the United States Department of Education Open Textbooks Pilot Program project, supporting initiatives in this field. The proposal they submitted envisions a coordinated, state-wide effort to identify career pathways in four growth industries (energy, health services, innovation and technology, and global manufacturing and supply chain management) and then create and disseminate open textbooks for courses required for those career opportunities. Their goal, upon receiving a grant of nearly \$1 million, will be to incentivize and support the creation and dissemination of open textbooks to support these curricula. Through their efforts, Marilyn and Rob are creating an investment in the intellectual, academic, and career future of New Jersey. I will look forward to updating the VALE community on the progress of this program.

I would like to give special thanks to VALE’s Purchasing and Licensing Committee: Judy Cohn, Director of the Health Sciences Libraries at Rutgers University and member of the VALE Executive Committee; Ann Hoang, University Librarian at NJIT; Richard Kearney, Electronic Resources Librarian at William Paterson University; and Melissa Lena, VALE Program Manager. As some of VALE’s activity paused during the pandemic, our institutions’ need for electronic resources and questions about cost and contract terms continued without interruption. Their

work over the past months with our vendors has been to discuss, negotiate and implement pricing that, in some cases, will remain flat over several years. All of their hard work is to provide a diverse set of databases and other resources at a price point that is attractive to our members, providing the value of belonging to VALE. I encourage you to stay tuned to VALE for news of new resources yet to come.

VALE and the higher education community of New Jersey said farewell to dear colleagues this year. Pat Tumulty, Executive Director of NJLA; Mary Chute, New Jersey State Librarian, Judith Lyn Hunt, Library Dean at Montclair State University; and Scott Muir Library Dean at Rowan University all retired this year. We thank them for their unfailing support of VALE and their contributions to their institutions and NJ higher education.

We also welcome Susanne Sacchetti, appointed in 2020 as Executive Director of LibraryLink NJ. Also, we congratulate our friend and former interim Executive Director of LLNJ, Dr. Juliet Machie, who is the newly appointed Executive Director of the New Jersey Library Association. We congratulate Susanne and Juliet on their appointments and look forward to exploring new ways that VALE can find synergy with our fellow library organizations.

Thank you to my colleagues on the Executive Committee: Linda Beninghove, Stevens Institute of Technology; Ed Chapel, Edge; Judy Cohn, Rutgers University; Rob Hilliker, Rowan University; Ann Hoang, NJIT; Margaret Nizolek, NJ State Library; Marilyn Ochoa, Middlesex County College; Edward Owusu-Ansah, William Paterson University; Taras Pavlovsky, TCNJ; Jennie Pu, Hudson County Community College; Donna Rosinski-Kaus, Ocean County College; Susanne Sacchetti, LLNJ; and Joe Toth, Stockton University. Your leadership, experience, imagination, and collegiality were a bright place in an evil year. You are the best group of people to work with.

I did not include Melissa Lena in my thanks to the Executive Committee because I want to thank her individually. Melissa is VALE's Program Manager and serves as the multifunction coordinator of all things VALE. She is a member of all of our committees and makes sure they operate as a cohesive whole. Melissa's ideas, enthusiasm and organizational skill make everything we do, better. During this pandemic Melissa spearheaded efforts to document our libraries' special operations and services. She also presided at a monthly drop-in meeting where our members compared notes, discussed problems and brainstormed solutions to the challenges we all have faced this past year. To me, you are a model of *open, adaptable and resilient*. Thank you.

I hope that this virtual VALE Conference has been useful for you. As always, VALE's strength is its members, working together towards shared goals. Despite the challenges each of us has faced this year, I believe that we have emerged stronger and even more resilient.

I wish you a healthy, safe, and prosperous 2021!

Kurt W. Wagner
Chair, VALE Executive Committee
January 6, 2021