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## ATG Interviews Joyce Ogburn, Dean of Libraries and Carol G. Belk Distinguished Professor of Library and Information Studies

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# ATG Interviews Joyce Ogburn

Dean of Libraries and Carol G. Belk Distinguished Professor of Library and Information Studies

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**ATG:** *Joyce, you took over the leadership of the Appalachian State University library in August of 2013 after serving as University Librarian at the University of Utah. What new challenges attracted you to Appalachian State?*

**JO:** **Appalachian State** is well known for its emphasis on sustainability, social justice, global citizenship, and student satisfaction. It has a strong international presence; in fact, following China's Open Door Policy of the late 1970s, **Appalachian** was the first university in the United States to develop a bilateral relationship with a Chinese university that was not initiated at a government level. The library has agreements with several universities in China. This unique portfolio of strengths was appealing to me. The university is starting to place more emphasis on research, offering opportunities to engage with new initiatives such as research computing, data management, and technology transfer. Teaching with technology is getting renewed emphasis as well, which requires a partnership and joint investment of IT, the library, and others such as distance learning and the office of general education. Being part of the UNC system lets me work with other great librarians across the state to address problems important to all of us.

**ATG:** *While at the University of Utah, you also served as special assistant to the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. What did you learn from that experience about how other university administrators view the library? Have those perceptions aided you in navigating the administrative landscape at Appalachian State? If so, how have they guided your actions?*

**JO:** The intent of one project was to determine the needs of faculty who sought to engage in digital humanities. Library services were not the focus, though the library had already built a digital scholarship lab and services. The library role came up naturally in the conversation. The faculty and administrators understood the archiving function rather well; they were less aware of the other parts of scholarship that libraries delve into. For example, the act of providing tools to make new scholarship was still pretty new territory for them to consider, as was how new forms of scholarship fit within evolving definitions of scholarship and scholarly communications. Librarians see these new forms as relevant to our mission to collect and preserve knowledge. More, administrators don't always realize the extent of deployment of IT in the library, as well as the capabilities that these technologies offer. The library also was becoming more of a "concierge" service that could match up faculty with similar or complementary interests. Most often that took the form of knowing what someone was doing with digital technologies on campus (such



as text and data mining, visualization, data analytics, etc.) and pairing these experts with humanists who needed their "know how" to reconceive the conduct and presentation of their research. An effective pairing is not very easy to accomplish, though, because interests have to be mutual and often require grant funding.

Through this work I gained time with administrators talking about something separate from the library, and in a context that highlighted the priorities and challenges facing faculty in their research. On my other project, [retroReveal.org](http://retroReveal.org), I spent considerable time with my partners in Cardiothoracic Surgery and the office for technology transfer. I gained more experience with the different funding models and approaches in the health sciences, and how they parlayed into inventions, patents, and more. I now have a keen knowledge of tech transfer, adding to my existing knowledge of intellectual property. This experience has allowed me to work with **Appalachian's** new office of research to develop a framework for a proposed tech transfer program.

**ATG:** *Where do library collections fit into these perceptions? Is the print collection still seen as a useful resource? How do other college officials view the importance of library collections in general? Are other library services seen as equally, or even more valuable? If so, which ones?*

**JO:** The collections remain very important, whether analog or digital. Some library users will browse the electronic version of a book and then check out the print version for

reading. The convoluted ways users are confronted with access to eBooks can discourage widespread acceptance and use. Sometimes the conversion of print to a digital form is important to someone's work, and at **Utah** we joined **HathiTrust** as soon as it was open beyond founding members. Like others, we reformatted and digitized our collections and encouraged multiple uses. Library primary source materials are being used in interesting ways for creativity and research. For example, at **Appalachian** we began collaborating with a faculty member in art to encourage her print making class to design and produce our holiday cards. Their inspirations drew upon special collections we pulled — wallpaper books, book covers, design books, and illustrated texts. The reasons for this project included: the library need for a card; the desire to introduce students to primary sources; the interest in partnering with faculty with hands on, active learning for students; and alerting donors to the uses of special collections by talented students. So, in answer to your question about other services, I would say that opportunities to advance the work of others abound and that many faculty are receptive to ideas of this kind; our collections were essential to this project.

**ATG:** *In some quarters, the overall relevance of the library to the academic enterprise is being questioned. Are there strategies that libraries can employ to reinforce their relevance? What are you doing at Appalachian State to ensure the library's viability as a campus resource?*

**JO:** Libraries have changed so much that others can't keep up — refer to what I said earlier. Both **ARL** and **ACRL** have grappled with the value question and finding indicators that demonstrate impact. I think of the academic library as an organization that can generate scale, efficiencies, savings, and opportunities through its networks and connections, as well as its close proximity to users. These can be documented and shared as part of the value proposition. Librarians also initiate and guide programs that are attuned to user needs, often in partnership with others on campus. One of the important things to do is get to the table and influence directions and decisions — whatever table that might be. When opportunities emerge, we need to speak to the good of the institution and students, not just what the library can do or its role. Our librarians are faculty and are on committees, task forces, commissions, and the like all over campus. I have found that when people in the library speak up and present their unique knowledge and perspective on an issue, people pay attention and are appreciative of the contributions. It helps to be attentive to the multiple dimensions of being a student

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and to remember that students spend most of their academic lives outside of the classroom. Being present, influential, and leading speaks to the value of library professionals and the profession. Library faculty at **Appalachian** invited others to collaborate on a research project about transfer student success. We know that support for student success goes well beyond library services — we are just one piece of that success, but the librarians are the instigators and leaders.

**ATG:** *Taken from a broader perspective, what do you see as the key issues for academic libraries going forward? Are there new services that could/should be part of the library's future? Should libraries be exploring collaborations with new campus partners?*

**JO:** Such a big question! A terribly pressing issue is living and learning in the digital world. This issue is one that applies equally to academic settings and personal lives. The library is not the only player, and the classroom isn't the only place to address this issue. Essential partners will be central IT, general education, e-portfolio managers, the graduate school, and countless others. There are personal and professional implications from our digital presence, both positive and negative, and it is becoming urgently important to be educated about the opportunities and threats. The initiative on the intersections of information literacy and scholarly communication is a piece of the puzzle. Maker spaces present opportunities for active student learning about their roles and challenges in the digital world. Librarians also should become more involved in the development of informatics in disciplines, which can easily occur without much thought to the library. What is our role in regard to disciplinary informatics and information needs? This is a place where liaisons can step up to understand the disciplines better, both in teaching and research. It also ties into the new **ACRL** information literacy framework that is based in disciplinary knowledge.

**ATG:** *One of your recent projects deals with ACRL's Task force on the Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy. Can you tell us more about that? Do library collections play into this discussion? If so, how?*

**JO:** As I said above, the digital environment and its effect on creativity needs to be understood, appreciated, and leveraged appropriately. The **ACRL** initiative grew out of conversations about how scholarly communication programs should dovetail with information literacy to empower students and faculty to be good creators as well as good users of knowledge. The creative revolution was well underway and librarians were starting to apply their expertise to initiatives such as student publishing and intellectual property. Projects of this kind easily led to adapting information literacy concepts and approaches to promulgate a more holistic view of the creation and use of knowledge. Also, the development of liaison

## against the grain people profile

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Joyce L. Ogburn

**BORN AND LIVED:** A Virginia gal who has lived all over the country.

**EARLY LIFE:** Astronomy, baseball, reading, music.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** Acquisitions, collection development, technical services, digital initiatives, international studies, scholarly communication, administration, leadership.

**FAMILY:** Husband and cats.

**IN MY SPARE TIME:** Just started making jewelry. It's addictive.

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *Watership Down*.

**PET PEEVES:** "Different than."

**MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** 80 million dollar renovation.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Strengthening the **ACRL** initiative on the intersections of scholarly communications and information literacy.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** If by industry you mean libraries, I can see us deeply engaged in the creative side of research and learning. We have to be more attentive to living and learning in the digital world, in part, because we may no longer be able to separate our physical lives and our digital lives. Librarians can work with students and faculty to understand better how we create and use our knowledge and also be mindful of how to control a glut of information and technology. We need a whole lot of people working on this. 🐾

programs led to the need for all librarians to be better informed and facile with points related to scholarly communication. When president of **ACRL**, I encouraged the development of a white paper to explore the ideas and develop possible directions for **ACRL** and the profession.

As it happened, in 2013, **ACRL** published both the white paper (<http://acrl.ala.org/intersections/>) that articulated salient issues and potential connections between these two areas, and an open access book *Common Ground at the Nexus of Information Literacy and Scholarly Communication* ([http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/publications/booksanddigitalresources/digital/commonground\\_oa.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/publications/booksanddigitalresources/digital/commonground_oa.pdf)) that explored many different crossovers and intersections. I was very pleased to be asked to write the forward for the book.

In 2014, the **ACRL** Board appointed a task force to extend the efforts. Specifically, the task force was charged with "monitoring and responding to reactions to the white paper and use of the white paper, as well as proposing and delivering sustainable professional development opportunities building on the ideas presented in the white paper." I agreed to chair the task force and we will be wrapping up our work over the next few months. A public final report of our work will be forthcoming in the October 2015 issue of *C&RL News*.

Our focus has been on the elements that influence creativity, reuse of the work of others

(much of which, of course, is found in library collections), students' rights as authors, and the like. We have delved into some interesting issues regarding partnerships on campus for requirements of students: examples include e-portfolios, ETDs, digital media production, and student-managed journals.

**ATG:** *You have also written about the vital importance of data curation in academe. What role do you see for libraries in creating and maintaining the necessary infrastructure to ensure the proper stewardship of these resources?*

**JO:** Partnering is essential because data curation requires a robust infrastructure and equally robust partnerships. One could also say, though, that all of the digital work being produced has a complex set of assumptions, technologies, methodologies, and context associated with them that need to be captured. We have to be deliberate about tackling software in addition to the content itself. Replication, validation, verification, and new applications depend on access to data. We have a ways to go to develop all of the means needed to curate and steward the many forms of research and data being produced at an unrelenting rate and volume.

**ATG:** *Joyce, in addition to library related topics you have published on anthropological subjects. Are you still doing research in that area? What are your current research interests?*

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**JO:** I do not currently research anthropology, but I keep up in my own way, following the history of anthropology to a degree and how anthropology/ethnography is being used in library settings and other academic environments. I maintain a lengthy bibliography of sources of relevance to librarians and information specialists that includes sections such as anthropological methods. At the moment I am completing a piece on the development and application of principles in scholarly communication.

**ATG:** *You were an early associate editor of ATG. What advice would you give to us editors about maintaining and growing our readership?*

**JO:** *ATG* has always had a nice mix of scholarly and breezy approaches to draw in readers of several types. I remember years ago we discussed whether to keep “**If Rumors Were Horses**” on the front page because it was not scholarly; however, in the process of surveying readers, they said that was their favorite starting point. We kept it on the front page. Maybe the readership has changed. I don’t really know. The articles are still relevant and timely.

**ATG:** *Two years ago, you were honored by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as Distinguished Alumna. How did that come about? What did it feel like to be chosen for such an honor?*

**JO:** I was so overcome I had to immediately sit down, and my jaw was hanging open. As you know, the UNC SILS program has always been one of the most revered in the country, so I felt especially honored and moved, particularly when I looked at the list of previous honorees. I gave the commencement address to the December graduating class about “An Unexpected Journey,” in which I talked about what my education had done for me and how the SILS program still influences my life from time to time. For example, when giving a presentation in Denmark a few years back, my research partner’s computer died. One of the UNC professors was in attendance, and all I had to say was, “You don’t know me, but I am a SILS alum and I need your help.” And help I got in the form of a loan of her laptop. I am now a member of the Board of Visitors for SILS. I like giving back to an institution that gave me a firm foundation to sustain me over many years.

**ATG:** *You have had a distinguished career path along with a wealth of experience. What advice do you have for young library administrators eager to have an impact on the profession?*

**JO:** You can really boil most of it down to this: never miss an opportunity to say thank you and do everything with class. That said, new administrators need to discover their talents and strengths. Identify what they are, develop the best, learn to respond differently in differing situations, keep your cool, and listen a lot. We all fail at these from time to time, so

## against the grain library profile

### Appalachian State University

University Libraries  
Belk Library and Information Commons  
218 College Street, Boone, NC 28608

**ANNUAL EXPENDITURES:** \$9M

**TOTAL PERMANENT STAFF:** 90 positions, including 38 faculty members. We also employ 140 students and are the largest employer of work study students.

We are in a small town in the mountains, have 18,000 students, and still experience greater than 1.24M visits each year.

**TYPES OF MATERIALS YOU BUY:** We have a very healthy mix of print and eBooks and e-journals, plus numerous databases. We acquire everything on Appalachia that we can find. We have a small, focused rare books collection.

**USE OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY:** Students are using lots of mobile technology. We circulate technology for anyone on campus to use, and last year we checked out approximately 100,000 technology items (iPads, laptops, cameras, etc.)

**WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR LIBRARY WILL BE LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?:** We have a new master space plan that calls for more student study and group work space, a larger maker lab, a larger writing center, more technology enhanced spaces, an experimental classroom, visualization lab, and digital scholarship lab. We will likely come up with even more changes as these spaces are developed.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOB:** I am the dean and have a distinguished professor position. I provide leadership for the university libraries that consist of the Belk Library and Information Commons, the Ernestine Music Library, the W. L. Eury Special Collections, and the University Archives and Records (including electronic records).

**HOW MANY DIVISIONS ARE THERE IN YOUR DEPARTMENT?:** The library has two associate dean positions and nine teams.

**HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK IN YOUR DEPARTMENT?:** Technically, everyone!

**WHAT IS YOUR MATERIALS BUDGET?:** Our expenditures vary every year, but roughly \$3,000,000. 🌲

its okay to screw up — admit it, learn from it, and move on. As the saying goes, “Win some, lose some.” I have met so many talented and enthusiastic young librarians busting their butts to improve the world who have the capability to become effective, passionate, and compassionate administrators with encouragement. And administrators should never forget to champion the staff — they really run the library and have such influence on the execution and perception of our services. Take good care of them.

**ATG:** *On a more personal level, if we were headed up to the North Carolina mountains for a visit, what favorite recreational activities would you recommend for the first time vacationer? Are there any particular places that should be on our itinerary?*

**JO:** My small town, Blowing Rock, is the highest incorporated town east of the Rockies. It has a very deep history in tourism and is an escape from heat and rush of cities. A lot of homes in the community are second homes. There is a lot to explore nearby. We have Tweetsie Railroad park (I can hear the whistle as I write) that has its roots in the railroad industry that at one time thrived

up here because of the need for lumber for furniture making. The mountains offer lots of hiking, biking, and skiing opportunities. Also, just driving on the Blue Ridge Parkway and passing towns, fields, valleys, forests, and rivers is good for the soul. I particularly like the sudden shifts from fields of crops, horses or cows to spectacular overlooks. The Rocky Mountains are big and imposing, whereas the Appalachian Mountains are inviting, comforting, and seem to roll on forever. The rhododendrons are incredible when blooming, and the leaves are gorgeous in the fall. We are just a five-hour drive from Charleston, so y’all come on your way to or from the conference in November!

**ATG:** *Joyce, thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us and with our readers.*

**JO:** Thanks for asking. It’s a pleasure to answer your questions. 🌲