



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR INFORMATION:

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NCSU Librarian Drives Diversity Efforts, On- and Off-Campus

Karen Letarte, the NCSU Libraries assistant head of Cataloging, recently was appointed chair of the Diversity Council, a subcommittee of the American Library Association (ALA) governing body's Committee on Diversity (COD). Letarte also plays an active role in evaluating and recommending NCSU Libraries' policies and programs as current chair of the its Diversity Committee, and, in mid-September, Vice Provost and Director of Libraries Susan Nutter designated Letarte as the Libraries' representative on the university's Diversity Advisory Committee.

The ALA Diversity Council is comprised of representatives from each of the underrepresented groups in the ALA, including the American Indian Library Association, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association, the Black Caucus, the Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgendered Round Table, the Chinese-American Librarians



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Association, and the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish-Speaking (REFORMA). Letarte, an active participant in the American Indian Library Association, is an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

“It is an honor to be asked to serve as the chair of the Diversity Council,” said Letarte, who is an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. “One of the reasons why I feel very honored is that the American Indian Library Association, which I represent, has the smallest membership of the ethnic caucuses. The ALA Diversity Council serves as the voice of the ethnic caucuses, and gives us a chance to make a difference. Diversity in libraries is everyone’s business,” emphasized Letarte. “It allows us to

become more effective in our organizations and in reaching our users, because it ties in with all the key areas of concern in the library profession, such as intellectual freedom, literacy, and equity of access.”

The COD serves in an advisory capacity to the ALA Council, providing a forum in which to analyze and address the impact of national diversity issues and trends on the library profession, and the relevance and effectiveness of library leadership, organizations, and services to an increasingly diverse society.

Letarte also serves on the steering committee for the third ALA Congress on Professional Education (“COPE3”) planned for 2003, which will focus on issues of concern to library support staff, such as career pathways, compensation, continuing education, and partnerships with MLS staff.



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“It is interesting to see how many parallels exist between the concerns of support staff and those of librarians from underrepresented groups,” observed Letarte. “These are issues we really need to address in a serious way, particularly in academic libraries. The shortage of professionally educated librarians means that libraries are becoming increasingly dependent on support staff and need to pay much more attention to their roles and development.” Letarte supervises six full-time paraprofessionals in the Database Management unit of the Cataloging Department.

Before coming to North Carolina, Letarte served as an assistant professor and electronic resources cataloger at the libraries of Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri. She taught principles of cataloging and classification in the university’s Department of Library Science.

She has published articles and given presentations at professional meetings on cataloging education for academic librarians, cataloging Internet resources, and a variety of other topics, and is a graduate of Dartmouth College and the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s School of Library and Information Studies.

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