■ INDUSTRY NEWS

Lana Porter Named President of Ameritech Library Services

Twenty-year veteran succeeds Tom Quarton as top administrator; vows to enhance customer service

Lana Porter's name might not be immediately familiar, but on October 31 she became the most powerful woman in library automation. Halloween marked her inauguration as the new president of Ameritech Library Services (ALS), succeeding Tom Quarton, who abandoned the position July 30 after less than 18 months at the helm. CFO Roger Sloan, who has been acting as interim president, has returned to his own duties.

"I'm excited to be back in the library world," Porter told *LJ*. "My prior background before coming to Ameritech [20 years ago] was in education in both the teaching and the educational research aspect so this is my heart…this is coming back to something that I strongly believe in."

Lana Porter

Year of transition

Porter takes the president's office following a particularly tumultuous year for ALS. In addition to Quarton's departure, Cathleen Asch, who then took charge of the operation, also resigned (Late Bulletins, *LJ*, November 1, p. 11). Along with the various comings and goings among the top echelon, the Provo, UT–based company overhauled its divisions late in 1995, resulting in a merger of its academic and public segments as well as a changing of the guard among

many of the company's officers (InfoTech, *LJ*, December 1995, p. 27). In early fall of this year, the company announced a second realignment, which included the dismissal of 150 employees (InfoTech, *LJ*, September 15, p. 21). In addition, ALS grappled with rumors that the parent Ameritech Baby Bell was looking to cash out of the library market by selling it.

"We've gone through some rocky times over the past few months," Porter admitted. To get the company back on track, Porter has a back-to-basics plan "to get focused on the customers and make sure we're delivering the products and services that we made a commitment to in the past." With staff morale no doubt low after a tough year, Porter is also dedicated to "making sure the employees feel good about the company they work for."

Porter claims she is not completely aware of what was at the root of ALS's recent tribulations but offered that Quarton perhaps strayed from the path that made the company successful. "I think he started looking at other elements of possible parts of business instead of focusing on our core competency. I'm not trying to cast aspersions on my predecessor; I just think there was an initiative that wasn't as well focused."

Woman's work

Porter is one of only three women heading automation firms, along with Endeavor's Jane Burke and IME's Kate Noerr. "I'm excited about that," Porter said, adding, however, that she's "a businessperson first of all. I've got a strong background in business processes and operations management. I've literally driven huge departments…from marketing and sales and operations to

customer support and service areas."

During her first year in control, Porter said the library community is going to see a firm commitment to deliver on the promises that ALS made in the past. "We're very focused on seeing that our current customer base feels very good about the progress that they see coming out of this organization. I think you're going to see us looking at every possible way we can to improve services to those customers and find new customers to win."

Internet Shaping Libraries' Future

IAC survey shows librarians tackling high-technology to stay current

The advent of CD-ROMs in libraries was the introduction to the world of high-tech ware for many librarians. CDs are very low-tech nowadays, and their ultimate demise is still a common prediction among techies. The web is increasingly becoming the medium of choice for the delivery of information, and as a survey conducted by Information Access Company (IAC) reveals, librarians are rising to the challenge by providing web access and training to patrons.

According to IAC, the results of the survey, which polled more than 1000 libraries nationwide, show that they are adapting rapidly to the new technology. Survey data show that in 1994, just 12 percent of American libraries offered patron access to online databases. In just two years that number has tripled to 36 percent. Academic institutions also have fared well, with 29 percent offering access in 1994 compared to 56 percent in 1996.

Libraries offering dial-in access has skyrocketed, with a whopping 90 percent of large academic and 81 percent of large public libraries featuring the service. Homepages on the web are also proliferating, with 96 percent of academic and 62 percent of public facilities now sporting their own corner of digital terra firma.

Public access to the Internet is also high. IAC's Bob Olton told *LJ* that according to the company's statistics, 51 percent of all libraries now provide public Internet access. Academics are much more advanced at 69 percent vs.