

Choice at 30

By Patricia E. Sabosik

Evaluating materials that advance knowledge and challenge norms

Anniversaries are a time for reflection, and as the staff at *Choice* celebrates our 30th anniversary with the publication of the March 1994 issue, I thought it a perfect opportunity to review with *C&RL News* readers what we have accomplished and to bring perspective to our reviewing program. Comments here are taken from editorials published in the September 1993 and March 1994 issues of *Choice*, as well as comments from the *Choice* Editorial Board, a standing committee of ACRL, that appear in the March 1994 issue.

The American Library Association, with a grant from the Council of Library Resources, began *Choice* as a service for academic librarians faced with selection decisions as they built up college and university libraries in the 1960s and 1970s. ACRL assumed management of *Choice* at its inception and continues oversight through ACRL committees and the Board of Directors.

In the past 30 years, *Choice* has reviewed more than 194,000 books, 2,300 periodicals, 4,000 nonprint items, 100 databases, and published 300 bibliographic essays listing more than 25,000 additional works. Our record of book selection and reviewing remains ambitious and noteworthy.

Choice reviewers number 2,700 college and university faculty who are actively teaching in the subject areas that they review. Another 300 are academic reference librarians who contribute the reference reviews. Our reviewers represent approximately 860 academic institutions in the U.S. and Canada; 42% of them have been

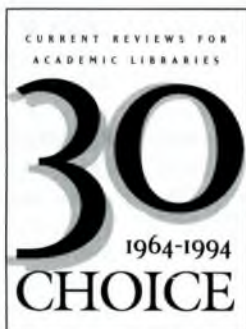
reviewing for 10 years or more. The audience that *Choice* serves, students enrolled in colleges and universities, was 4.2 million in 1963; this population more than tripled to 14.4 million students by 1993 according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. The publishing industry and higher education grew to meet the educational needs of the post-World War II birth cohort.

Though the number of reviews published has remained steady for more than 20 years, our editors are continually modifying review coverage to include changing technology and fields of study. Much of this change is precipitated by the sociological, political, and scientific events that shape our world.

In response to these world events, new disciplines emerged or matured during our past 30 years, e.g., the history of science,

computer and information sciences, office technology, consumer marketing and advertising, comparative politics, film studies, black studies, women's studies, environmental studies, and the growth of interdisciplinary studies across all areas. They reflect a growing application of technology and changes in our social fabric. Books in all of these fields have been reviewed in the pages of *Choice*, and their inclusion reflects the selection skill as well as the biases of the subject editors on our masthead.

The books reviewed, and the reviews themselves, reflect the thinking of the time. Taken together, each issue of *Choice* is a collection of contemporary perspectives. Scholarship, however, is dynamic: new events and discoveries challenge and supersede established ideas. The challenge for *Choice* and its editorial board is to be as dynamic and contemporary as scholarship, continuing to evaluate material that advances knowledge and challenges traditional norms and schools of thought. ■



Patricia E. Sabosik is editor and publisher of *Choice* magazine; e-mail: sabosik@choice.jvnc.net