



Editorial

Barriers to Research

In the July issue, I wrote about the well-established and compelling reasons for engaging in research. Yet, librarians of all types report substantial barriers to scholarly production. Three frequently mentioned barriers are lack of time, fear of failure, and lack of institutional support. Here are some suggestions about how to overcome them.

First, practitioners often cite lack of time as the most difficult barrier to overcome. Certainly, everyday responsibilities are time consuming. Professional activities, community and college service, and continuing education requirements can even push into and limit leisure time.

Coauthoring publications may help meet time constraints. Three working together can undertake more ambitious projects than one working alone, or several can divide a project to share the work. Two or three points of view may even improve the objectivity and validity of the work. Coauthors also offer a sense of humor and support for those frustrating moments when the single author might abandon the project. And, when the paper finally appears months after its completion, the coauthor has someone to celebrate with. Coauthorship is not a panacea. Styles and perspectives need to be coordinated, and sometimes working relationships are not convivial.

Most researchers report that gathering data, writing up the results, and preparing manuscripts for journal submission require a significant commitment of personal time. The institution's response must be regular released time to allow professionals to make contributions to the literature. This combination of released and personal time should make it possible for motivated individuals to pursue research topics.

Second, fear of failure is another frequently cited barrier to scholarly productivity. Articles **do** get rejected. Since most scholars in the field report that one or more of their offerings has been rejected, this company is both large and distinguished. Some letters of rejection offer positive feedback on how the article may be made acceptable and suggest journals with a better fit for the article. Having an article rejected is a little like falling down in your own bedroom; it is painful and embarrassing but less painful and embarrassing than falling down in front of the reference desk or in the quadrangle in front of the library.

Those who are new to the process of writing their thoughts on librarianship may wish to engage in local peer review. One mechanism for such review is to have a manuscript reading group. A large library might have an internal group or librarians might join with their colleagues in other departments in a campus group. (One librarian at a community college library reports that for his campus-wide group a little wine eases tensions about criticism.) The purpose of these reading groups is to provide constructive feedback on articles being submitted for publication. Groups meet regularly to read each other's works. It is important to agree that criticisms will be directed to the work and not the individual. This method helps others improve their thinking, organizing, and writing without destroying their self-confidence. In fact, the process of seeing work improve builds a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

The ALA Poster Sessions offer an excellent starting point for an idea. Presenting the idea

in a limited-space visual and verbal format tests cohesiveness. The poster session maximizes opportunities for feedback. Colleagues from around the country will stop by to comment on ideas, to share their experiences, and to make suggestions about the project outlined. In their quest for quality materials, editors and members of editorial boards peruse both the abstracts and the poster sessions themselves. Contacts made in these settings often provide avenues for the submission and acceptance of an article based on the poster session topic.

Third, lack of institutional support is a barrier to research. An atmosphere of encouragement and recognition for research and publication should validate the efforts of the individual who is investing personal effort and time. In their newsletters, libraries should mention research opportunities, provide reminders about grants, note poster sessions submission deadlines, and applaud librarian successes. The librarian whose article has just been published in *C&RL* deserves a round of the fight song from the college marching band. At least, supervisors should make favorable comments both informally and in scheduled reviews and should circulate copies to classified staff to improve understanding of the commitment to research and publication. Librarians should announce their publications in the campus academic newsletters as well.

Another critical form of institutional support is small grant money to pay for student hours, software programs, online searches, travel, and manuscript preparation costs. Offering such funding annually on a competitive basis provides a structure in which the new practitioner can develop the skills necessary to become a first-class researcher. The library that offers funding, released time, and praise for librarians does its part in moving the profession forward.

Together, local libraries and librarians can overcome barriers to research and publication. Individual librarians should make research a priority in their professional lives, should be willing to contribute some discretionary time, and should take the risk of being rejected. Librarianship is a "social" science, a participative enterprise requiring the cooperative talents of its members.

GLORIANA ST. CLAIR

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF
COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Automation in College Libraries

by Richard Werking

Ranking of Journals in Library and Information Science

by Mary Kim

Contributors to the Library Periodical Literature

by Lois Buttlar

Elements of the Bibliographic Record Used by Reference Staff Members

by Jon R. Hubbard

Subject Enhancement

by Gunnar Knutson

Now Blackwell new titles information is as close as your personal computer.

If your library spends hours handling new titles announcement forms and reading fiche, these two new Blackwell services will be good news, indeed. You can put your PC to work managing new titles information, giving you greater control and faster ordering.

On diskette.

PC-New Titles Announcement Service

PC-NTAS provides your library's New Titles Announcement Forms on diskette each week. View your Blackwell New Titles profile matches on screen.

Search, display, print forms and create orders as needed with the program's link to Blackwell's PC-Order. Best of all, the PC-NTAS program and weekly diskettes are available free to Blackwell approval and forms customers.

On line.

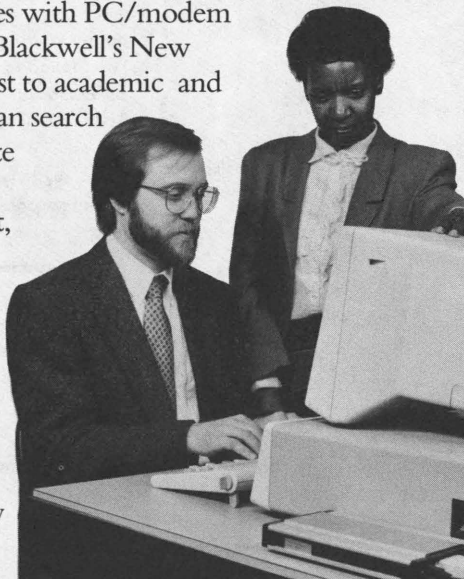
New Titles Online

NTO gives immediate answers about new title status to libraries with PC/modem

hardware. You gain dial-up access to Blackwell's New Titles database featuring titles of interest to academic and research libraries. Once on line, you can search by a variety of parameters, and generate approval orders ("Be sure to send on approval") and firm orders. It's current, comprehensive and very affordable.

BLACKWELL
NORTH AMERICA, INC.

Part of a proud
bookselling tradition dating from 1879.
Lake Oswego, Oregon • Blackwood, New Jersey
Toll free 1-800-547-6426



Two Important Collections
Provide

AN INDEPTH LOOK

at the

VIETNAM WAR



NEW
PERSPECTIVES
FOR
RESEARCHERS

Understanding U.S. involvement in Vietnam requires coming to grips with a multitude of perspectives. Television brought battlefield action into our living rooms. The printed word flooded the world with an equally important conflict — a war of words in which truth and perception were published in ever-escalating numbers to reinforce national or political views and capture world opinion. This war of words is documented in UMI's two comprehensive microfiche collections on the Vietnam War.

In *The History of the Vietnam War* collection, UMI offers a wide variety of documents, newspapers, periodicals, photographs, monographs, maps, and graphs spanning 21 years of history. This collection has been compiled by Douglas Pike, Director of the Indochina Archives at the University of California, Berkeley and contains rare materials from the U.S., Saigon, Hanoi, Peking, Moscow, Tokyo, Australia, and Western Europe.

A second resource, *The Echols Collection: Selections on the Vietnam War*, is also available now. Based on the *Vietnam War Bibliography* by Christopher L. Sugnet and John T. Hickey, *Selections on the Vietnam War* will include over 7,000 volumes of English-language material, 2,000 volumes of French material that focus primarily on the colonial period, and nearly 20,000 volumes of Vietnamese-language material — propaganda, pamphlets, government documents, and literary works.

For more information, call UMI Research Information Services.

Toll free: 1-800-521-0600

In Michigan or Alaska, call collect 313-761-4700

In Canada, call 1-800-343-5299

U·M·I

A Bell & Howell Company

300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA