

Editorial

Re-Introducing *College & Research Libraries*: Do We Still Need “Another Library Journal”?



In his editorial for the inaugural issue of this journal in 1939, A. F. Kuhlman explained the reasons behind the decision to launch *College & Research Libraries* and provided a pre-emptive response to anyone who might ask whether or not the profession really needed “another library journal.” Existing “general library journals,” he argued, could not meet the needs of “college, university, and reference librarians” because the challenges facing those librarians were “too numerous, too complex, and too specialized to be dealt with effectively ... in a journal which seeks to address itself to the varied interests of all types of libraries.” Moreover, he noted (quoting Robert Maynard Hutchins), there was a general lack of research available on higher education and a need, given the central role of the library on campus, for a journal that would promote research into its unique challenges, its operations, and its contributions to teaching, learning, and scholarship.¹ Seventy-five years later, there are still concerns about the state of research in higher education, but there are now many venues for the dissemination of such research, including research into the academic and research library.² Indeed, the study of core journals in Library and Information Science available in this issue demonstrates how far we have come since Kuhlman surveyed a field providing few opportunities for the promotion and dissemination of research in academic librarianship. In light of our decision to cease the print publication of *C&RL*, and given the continued availability of more recently founded journals that also focus on the “numerous, complex, and specialized” concerns facing information

professionals in the higher education and research enterprises, do we still need “another library journal”?

The scholarly communications environment of 2014 is certainly very different from that of 1939. Today, there are far more opportunities for academic and research librarians to present and publish the results of their research, and an increasingly broad array of media allowing them to do so outside the confines of the traditional journal. Also, the library literature is now far more effectively connected to the broader literature of higher education than was the case when Kuhlman observed (paraphrasing the results of a study by Harvie Branscomb) that academic librarians had largely “divorced” themselves from the concerns of their campuses “by being too concerned with technical rather than educational and research requirements.”³ *C&RL*, for example, continues to publish studies directly related to the practice of librarianship and the use of library collections and services (e.g., the studies in this issue of humanities collections and of interlibrary loan), but these are now considered within the context of the impact those collections and services have on teaching, learning, and scholarship. It is also increasingly common for our colleagues to conduct research aligned not only with the agendas of the information professions, but with the broader agendas of our institutions, as in a forthcoming study of the contributions that the library makes to undergraduate research initiatives.⁴ As different as the environment may be 75 years after we started this journey, there is no question that the original niche that Kuhlman saw

for our journal is still there as a place for promoting research that improves library practice, but does so within the context of the specific needs of higher education and scholarly and scientific research.

Another original goal for the journal that Kuhlman identified that remains important today is to integrate a disparate literature. In 1939, Kuhlman concluded that the lack of a single journal dedicated to academic and research librarianship had led to a situation where available research was scattered across multiple journals in various fields, but the situation today is even more complicated. The scholarship of academic and research librarianship is scattered not only across a number of journals in our field (as well as journals in allied fields, only a few of which Kuhlman mentioned), but increasingly across media of myriad types, including journals, books, discussion lists, blogs, and more. In addition to continuing to provide a leading site for the promotion and dissemination of research in academic librarianship, what opportunities might this newly-digital journal embrace to address the need for integrating the results of research disseminated in other venues? Even within the Association of College & Research Libraries, what could be done to bring together the results of research presented across our various journals, monographic publications, White Papers and research reports, blogs and discussion lists, and/or efforts being pursued by our chapters or by allied groups? The literature of our

field is far broader and deeper than it was in 1939, but the challenge laid before the journal's readers on its first day remains critical: how can *College & Research Libraries* leverage the possibilities of its publishing platform "to integrate this literature and make it more accessible"?⁵

A. F. Kuhlman envisioned a journal that would serve as a "clearinghouse" for research relevant to academic and research librarians, as a "bridge" between academic librarians and faculty, higher education administrators, and others, and as a motive force promoting "research and experimentation for the improvement of ... [library] service."⁶ Several journals seeking to serve similar needs have taken the opportunity presented by the digital publishing environment to meet their goals in new ways. This "re-introduction" of *College & Research Libraries* as a born-digital, open-access publication provides us with the opportunity to address enduring issues in scholarly communication in our field with the tools that have become available only recently. We look forward to working with our readers, as well as our colleagues in the broader scholarly communications ecosystem, to bring you a venue for research in our field that builds on the vision articulated by our founding editor (and that I hope one of my successors will celebrate at our 100th anniversary in 2039). To the degree that we continue to meet these founding goals for this "library journal," there is no doubt that it will still be needed.

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Notes

1. A. F. Kuhlman, "Introducing 'College and Research Libraries,'" *College & Research Libraries* 1 (1939): 7, accessed December 11, 2013, <http://cr.l.acrl.org/content/1/1/7.full.pdf+html>
2. Adrianna J. Kezar, "Higher Education Research at the Millennium: Still Trees without Fruit?," *Review of Higher Education* 23 (2000): 443-468, accessed December 11, 2013, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/review_of_higher_education/v023/23.4kezar.html
3. Kuhlman, "Introducing 'College and Research Libraries,'" 9.
4. Merinda K. Hensley, Sarah L. Shreeves, and Stephanie Davis-Kahl, "A Survey of Library Support for Formal Undergraduate Research Programs," *College & Research Libraries* 75 (2014), accessed December 12, 2013, <http://cr.l.acrl.org/content/early/2013/02/06/crl13-458.full.pdf+html>
5. Kuhlman, "Introducing 'College and Research Libraries,'" 8.
6. *Ibid.*, 9.