

## Editorial

# Looking Back, and Looking Forward: 75 Years of *College & Research Libraries*



When the editorial board first raised the idea of preparing a special issue of *College & Research Libraries* to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Association of College & Research Libraries and its role in promoting research in the field of academic librarianship, the idea of selecting representative articles from its long history was daunting. How could we cover the scope of the literature and identify the articles most worth “another look” given their enduring value to our scholarship and profession? As with any complex problem, we found that bringing our colleagues into the process was the key to the solution.

The articles re-published in this issue were selected following a multi-stage review process. Current members of the editorial board were assigned to review all of the articles published in the journal during a given decade and to make recommendations regarding which deserved further review by the entire board. Former *C&RL* editors were asked to make similar recommendations from among the articles published during their editorial terms [and we extend our thanks to Richard Dougherty (1969-74), Richard Johnson (1974-80), Charles Martell (1984-90), Gloriana St. Clair (1990-96), and William Potter (2002-08)]. Next, all members of the editorial board reviewed the selected works, and agreed on a list of 30 essays representing the best of the journal’s contributions to our field. These “semi-finalists” ranged from Herman Henkle’s “Principles and Practice of Administrative Organization in the University Library” (1943) to Frederick Kilgour’s “The Economic Goal of Library Automation” (1969) to Shirley Behrens’s “A Conceptual Analysis and Historical Overview of Information Literacy” (1994). Many of the articles we considered were recent, but others had been considered as part of the journal’s celebration of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1989, e.g., Wilf Lancaster’s “Whither Libraries? Or, Wither Libraries” (1978). Finally, we turned to our readers and asked them to vote for seven “landmark essays” that would be included in this collection. More than 300 *C&RL* readers helped us to select six essays from our list of “semi-finalists,” and also identified the “people’s choice” of a final essay to include here. That essay, Robert Taylor’s “Question-Negotiation and Information Seeking in Libraries” (1968), may be “the single most cited library science journal article of all time” (according to the companion essay prepared for this collection by David A. Tyckoson), and its selection by our readers points again to the wisdom of the crowd.

Even with this inclusive process, there were many important studies that we could not include in this collection. Some of these are noted above and others have been noted before for their impact on the field. Patricia Knapp’s “The Monteith Library Project: An Experiment in Library-College Relationship” (1961) is in that category, as is Arthur McNally and Robert Downs’s “The Changing Role of Directors in University Libraries” (1973). Former editor Richard Dougherty made the case for the long-term significance of an early study of gender in the profession, Wendy De Fichy’s “Affirmative Action: Equal Opportunity for Women in Library Management” (1973), and I voted to include Mark Winston’s “The Role of Recruitment in Achieving Goals Related to Diversity” (1998). Representing central concerns for the field such as information literacy, faculty engagement, library leadership, gender in the profession, and diversity, each of these

studies is worth review for its impact on our understanding of enduring concerns in our field, as well as emergent ones. Which brings us to a question that the experience of compiling this collection raises for the future—is there a place in the journal for regular “reflections” on past work?

Karen Nicholson’s contribution to this collection, “The McDonaldization of Academic Libraries and the Values of Transformational Change,” goes well beyond a reflection on her personal experience with the ideas first presented by Brian Quinn in 2000. Nicholson takes her review of Quinn’s essay as a starting point for a substantive and critical reflection on neo-liberalism and “academic capitalism” that could have easily stood on its own as an original contribution to any issue of this journal. Might there be other *C&RL* readers who would like to take as substantive and critical a look at other “landmark” studies we have published? Might we solicit future “reflection” essays of this type that invite us to look carefully at the immediate impact and enduring significance of works which were not included in this collection?

Finally, I encourage you to consider the vision for the future of this journal and of scholarly publishing in Library and Information Science presented in the closing essay by Roger C. Schonfeld. He observes the increasing diversity of the professional and scholarly societies (among others) now contributing to research in our field and challenges ACRL to take a strategic look at the future of its multi-faceted (and sometimes fragmented) research and publishing programs. Meeting that challenge will be as important to the Association of College & Research Libraries’ ability to remain a leading voice in research and practice in academic librarianship for the next 75 years as the decision to establish this journal was 75 years ago.

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