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Introduction

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Introduction

In 2014, the Library Association of the City University of New York (LACUNY) celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding. In honor of this anniversary year, the editors of the *Urban Library Journal*, the LACUNY publication of peer-reviewed research, offers a retrospective volume of selected articles published in the journal over the past half century.

The serial, originally published in 1972 as the *LACUNY Journal*, focused in the beginning on publishing the proceedings of the annual LACUNY Institute. The title was changed in 1981 to the *Urban Academic Librarian* (UAL) with an emerging interest in broadening the scope and reach of what it could offer. The third title change in 1998 to the *Urban Library Journal* (ULJ) allowed the journal to take on an even broader scope. As the editor Rolando Perez writes at the time, "the journal will from this point on report on the issues that affect urban libraries, whether they be academic, school, public or special libraries."

Along with electing to change the title, shortly after the name change the LACUNY publications committee began to recruit editorial board members outside of CUNY. In 2003, an advisory board of nationally recognized librarians, including E. J. Josey, University of Pittsburgh, James C. Welbourne, Enoch Pratt Free Library, and Neerejana Ghosh, New York School Library System, was established.

The next big change for the journal came in 2007 when the title began online-only, open access publication. The editors would now deliver the journal through the Public Knowledge Project, Open Journal System (OJS). The issue of the ULJ published that year paid tribute, in a sense, to the original focus of the *LACUNY Journal*: it was devoted to the proceedings of the LACUNY Institute for that year. The topic focus of both the Institute and the journal issue, though, reflected the new direction the publication was taking. Volume 14 bore the special topic title, "Scholarly Publishing and Open Access: Payers and Players."

Most recently, the editors of the ULJ have made efforts to make full use of the open access journal system, in order to allow the publication process, from submission, through peer review, to the final release of each issue, to be as systematic as possible.

As noted, this issue of the ULJ includes the republication of articles from past issues. The current editors will soon be turning the helm of the journal over to a newly elected editorial team, Junior Tidal and Bronwen Densmore, both of the New York City College of Technology. Sally Bowdoin and Beth Evans pass on to their heirs the expectation that there may be a retrospective online conversion of all back issues of the journal, so that scholars and students alike may benefit from an open

access delivery that enables historical research with the greatest of ease for the reader.

The current volume of ULJ, as a compilation of historical articles in library science, is also a reminder of the role history plays in any given library. Scholarly works are collected for current research needs, but they are also considered for the needs of scholars who may be doing research in the future. No part of any library better demonstrates the devotion to historical preservation inherent in the institution than the archives and special collections divisions of a library. Nearly every CUNY campus has an archives and special collections where books, papers and unique or rare objects reflecting the college or the greater community are kept for the sake of posterity and research. The campus archives may point its focus on one powerfully moving historical subject as does Queensborough Community College's Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center & Archives, it may seek to be the repository of the papers of a single group of distinguished individuals, as does the LaGuardia and Wagner Archives with its collection of mayoral papers at LaGuardia Community College, or it may cover a diverse range of subjects such as the Brooklyn College Library Archives with the papers of Alan Dershowitz, the Hank Kaplan Boxing Collection and the papers from the Society for the Preservation of Weeksville, among others.

The Leonard Lief Library Archives at Lehman College in the Bronx includes the Bronx Institute Archives (BIA). Janet Munch describes this collection in her 1990 article in the UAL. The collection is made up primarily of oral histories that reflect change and development in the Bronx. Staff and students working for the Lehman College Bronx Regional and Community History Institute began collecting these stories in 1982 with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Munch details the individual collections in the BIA and describes their care and use.

Connecting us with our past is one important function of CUNY libraries and librarians. Nonetheless, current day librarians in CUNY and throughout academic libraries everywhere are often looking for ways to connect with the teaching faculty on their campuses. Peyton Hurt was the library director at Williams College during the early years of World War II. Writing in 1934, Hurt suggested the idea of appointing a liaison officer on the library staff of an academic library whose job it would be to work directly with classroom faculty. In his *Library Journal* article "Bridging the Gulf between the College Classroom and the Library," Hurt makes the case for the benefits of integrating library service with classroom instruction. Bringing the argument up-to-date for 1985, Elizabeth Kleinhans notes the tensions that are engendered between librarians and classroom faculty as libraries expand their bibliographic instruction programs. Despite faculty reluctance to cede territory, Kleinhans argues that librarians "establish their right to equality by demonstrating that they are an integral part of the educational process." Such a

statement has well positioned librarians today to move faculty relations beyond liaison contacts and into the place of even greater class integration that embedded librarianship allows.

Relations with faculty on campus would never be as effective as they are today were it not for the fact that CUNY librarians have faculty status themselves. John A. Drobnicki has written our sole never before published piece which, appropriately enough in this 75th anniversary issue, details the history of faculty status, rank, pay, and calendar year benefits for librarians at CUNY. Faculty status was first afforded librarians in 1946 but status alone was not what they really wanted. In 1954, 1958, and 1962 various groups including the City University Library Association, the Council of Chief Librarians and the Legislative Congress made formal proposals demanding faculty rank for librarians. But it wasn't until the recommendation of the 1965 "Downs Report" to the Board of Higher Education that it eliminate all librarian job titles and move them into corresponding faculty ranks that librarians achieved their legitimate place in the pantheon of faculty rank, pay, and status. Unfortunately, as Drobnicki points out, many do not view these benefits as "rights" but as "privileges" and so the fight to retain these rights is ongoing.

This anniversary issue also includes E. J. Josey's speech given at the 1980 Conference on Collective Bargaining and Academic Librarians: Progress and Perspectives, sponsored by SUNY and CUNY librarians and their two respective unions, United University Professions and the Professional Staff Congress. Josey's national perspective on the history of faculty status is an interesting sidebar to CUNY's local battles. As he points out, faculty status is not new to the profession. Indeed, early academic librarians were distinguished professors long before they were appointed to administer libraries. It is not until the mid to late 20th century that professionally trained academic librarians collectively recognized that the power base on college campuses rests with the faculty. They, in turn, wished to be identified with those power players. Although the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), of which Josey was a prominent member, was active in promoting the idea of faculty status for academic librarians, it wasn't until 1971 that standards on faculty status were actually published by the organization. By 1976, ACRL estimated that 75% of all academic librarians had reached faculty status. However, by the early 1980s there were already signs that in small and large ways academic librarians across the U.S. were slowly having their faculty status whittled away. Josey concludes that the future of faculty status will rest with the support of the unions and the power of collective bargaining. It is a call to arms!

The first of our two articles of personal reflections by CUNY librarians continues with the theme of faculty status. Edwin Terry served as the chief librarian at Bronx Community College (BCC) and as an academic librarian for over 40 years. Terry began his CUNY career at Queens College in 1948, immediately after completing his master's program in library science at Columbia University. His

recollections of the growth of a fledgling library and pre-faculty status CUNY employment are priceless. After moving to Nassau Community College in 1960, Terry became more politically aware and personally felt the brunt of economic changes in New York when Nassau decided to strip librarians of their faculty status. He resigned in protest. Luckily for CUNY, Terry was hired by BCC where he stayed, in various positions, through years of political and economic turmoil until his retirement.

Our second reflective piece comes from Stanton F. Biddle, who served as the administrative services librarian at Baruch's William and Anita Newman Library and as a past national president of the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. Stanton F. Biddle's reminiscence was first delivered as a speech at the 1993 LACUNY Institute, "Visions and Values: Crosscurrents in Academic Librarianship." It is a straightforward condemnation of the "violence" committed against minority students when an entire educational system over-emphasizes the euro-centric nature of contemporary society. Biddle argues that this "monoculturalism" undermines the self-esteem of minority students and undeservedly empowers the dominant culture.

CUNY libraries have never lost sight of the need to serve the most poorly served incoming students. The key to success, at the time of Stanton Biddle's speech, before his speech, and even still today, is through carefully designed and skillfully executed instruction. The 1980's were a time of strong interest by CUNY libraries in addressing the weaknesses in library research skills of students not fully prepared for college work. Jean S. Kolliner's 1985 "Library Instruction and the Underprepared College Student" relates the history of this concern. The article traces the university-wide efforts to address the issue and the influence of the 1981 recommendations by the LACUNY Instruction Committee.

The essence of urban academic librarianship is, of course, the urban student. Barbara Dunlap's 1988 essay defines the urban academic student at the City University of New York as older, probably a minority or foreign born, and often has competing family and job responsibilities. Most are ill equipped to deal with humanities and social sciences curricula and teaching styles developed since the 1960s. Dunlap argues that for these students, "secondary sources" is a meaningless phrase, controlled vocabularies are a mystery, and periodical indexes are intimidating and unfathomable. Dunlap discusses the curse of the three article research assignment (which three?—any three…) which continues to burden our overburdened urban students. Does the undergraduate really need to find three articles on some "hot" topic simply to prove they can do it when they can barely communicate what they are actually researching in the first place? Twenty-five years later the question remains relevant.

The end of the twentieth century saw the end of remedial courses being offered at senior colleges. Nonetheless, more than a decade later, librarians from all CUNY libraries remain united in addressing the information literacy needs of all CUNY students, and often work in collaboration through efforts such as those of the Library Information Literacy Advisory Committee (LILAC) and the sharing of library research tutorials.

We now come to the final sections of our retrospective issue. The first of these looks at new technology, the second looks at reference, but with a decidedly technological bent. No area of research shows its age as quickly as the study of new technologies. But librarianship would not maintain the critical role it has had in human education if it had not habitually embraced emerging technologies and adapted them to the job at hand. Judi Pitch's 1984 "Does a Book Locator System Save Time? A Critical User Study" and John Bhagwandin's 1985 "A User Study of the Hunter College Library Online Catalog System" both speak to the centrality of finding books in the college library and the importance of making this process easy for the user. Pitch's book locator, a system that was used in the early 1980's at Queens College, is a mechanism designed at a transitional time when library users were still finding call numbers in card catalogs, but circulation departments were beginning to record transactions through the use of a computer. The book locator was a terminal deliberately placed in the stacks where students would go to look for the books they had found listed in the card catalog. The locator would show them the circulation status of any book they sought, eliminating the need to make their way down to the circulation desk to find out why the book they needed was not on the shelf. The conscious positioning of the book locator in the stacks seems prescient of library strategies that nowadays harness mobile technologies to enable students, once in the book stacks of a library, to learn more information about the books they seek.

Bhagwandin's discussion of the Hunter College online catalog, written a year after Pitch's article, brings us forward to the time when both the search function of a catalog and holdings function of a circulation system are now integrated and enable students to shorten the process from looking to see if a library owns a book to looking to see if they can find the book on the shelf. The CLSI system the author describes was the precursor to the NOTIS system that was eventually adopted CUNY-wide. NOTIS, in turn, was replaced by the web-based ALEPH system which CUNY continues to use, in updated and enhanced versions.

Finally, for those of you unfamiliar with the heady days of pre-Internet online searching, Toni Risoli's piece on the New York State Library's database searching Pilot Project from the mid-to late 1970s is illuminating. The federally funded Pilot Project provided online database searching services to neighboring NYS libraries thus becoming a pioneer in the dissemination of electronic information to long distance learners. The number of databases was quite limited and included

MEDLARS (the precursor to *MEDLINE*), *Psychological Abstracts*, *ERIC*, and the *New York Times Information Bank*. Search requests were received through the U.S. postal system or by teletype sent to the Interlibrary Loan department of the library. Risoli examines the problems the library had dealing with requests from patrons living miles away and with whom the librarians had no direct contact. The problems sound strangely familiar: the system "can go down"; the teletype equipment submits garbled messages; search requests are marred with typos; search tools are not flexible enough to tailor messages; the intent of the search request is misinterpreted; there is no comprehensive thesauri to consult for pertinent synonyms; and, last but not least, the librarians struggle with the requestor's unfamiliarity with the concepts of broadening or narrowing the database search request. As primitive as the means of communication may seem to us now, Risoli's essay makes it eminently clear that for libraries, at least, and for librarians assisting their patrons in reference, the more things change the more they stay the same.

We hope you will enjoy this LACUNY 75th anniversary issue, cover to cover, and appreciate the great span of time it illuminates in the history of CUNY libraries.

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