

## Editor's Note

I am pleased that ACRL has selected Scott Walter, University Librarian at DePaul University, to be the next editor of *College and Research Libraries*. Scott will work closely with me over the next year and assume editorship of the journal in July 2013. Scott is already quite familiar with *C&RL*, having served on the journal's editorial board for the last five years, been a most effective referee for manuscript submissions, and provided leadership for the University of Illinois's project to

digitize the print back file of *C&RL*.

Scott has written the guest editorial for this issue—his second guest editorial for the journal—and I think you will see from it his commitment and enthusiasm for sharing, in both traditional and innovative ways, high quality research and writing in academic librarianship.

*Joseph Branin, Editor*



## Guest Editorial

# Ranganathan Redux: The “Five Laws” and the Future of *College & Research Libraries*

“If there is nothing new under the sun, at least the sun itself is always new, always re-creating itself out of its own inexhaustible fire.”

~ Michael Sims, *Apollo's Fire: A Day on Earth in Nature and Imagination* (2007)<sup>1</sup>

I do not know if the scholarship of academic and research librarianship is as inexhaustible as the sun's fire, but I do know that *College & Research Libraries* has always helped me to shed light on the most challenging of professional problems. I also know that *C&RL*, like the sun, must periodically be renewed and recreated. Of late, we have seen *C&RL* renew its commitment to the timely dissemination of the highest-quality research in our field and we have seen it re-created as an open access title. Both changes have been widely applauded, and, for many

journals, that might be enough. Not for us.

In announcing the upcoming change in editorship of *College & Research Libraries*, ACRL President Joyce L. Ogburn noted that this will not be the only transition the journal must navigate in the coming years. As she wrote, *C&RL* will “continue to be a leading publication in our field and will likely experiment with new models of engaging its readers. Now that we are an open access journal, there are many possibilities for experimentation, and I am looking forward to seeing what develops.”<sup>2</sup> Over the next year, the Editorial Board will seek to engage you in a discussion of the future of *College & Research Libraries*, of how it may remain at the heart of the ACRL research enterprise in a rapidly-changing environment for scholarly publishing, and of how the research it reports can serve as a resource for evidence-informed decision-making in your library. *C&RL* must maintain

the place it has held for the better part of a century as the premier journal in our field, but we must also explore new directions and take advantage advances in technology and scholarly communication processes to enhance its impact on scholarship and practice in our field. It's a tall order in challenging times, but we must fill it if we are to continue providing the value that ACRL members (and others) have always found in our journal. To start on that order, let me suggest that we return to the basics and consider what we might learn from Ranganathan and his "Five Laws of Library Science."<sup>3</sup>

Many of us learned the "Five Laws" in our first class in library school: Books are for use; every reader his book; every book its reader; save the time of the reader; and the library is a growing organism. We have also seen the "Five Laws" revised by colleagues over the years to account for greater diversity among our users, new options in the technology our work employs, and a richer variety of content with which our users may interact in pursuing literacies of all types.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes, let me suggest that we consider three major concerns drawn from those five laws.

First, we should remember that journals are for use, and that a journal that does not serve both to advance scholarship and to inform the day-to-day practice of academic and research librarians is not a good bet for the long term. What can we do to promote ongoing use not only of the journal's content, but of its Web site? What, in addition to our traditional essay reviews, research articles, and book reviews, might we provide as part of *College & Research Libraries* that would encourage you to continue to use the resources we provide? Our current site provides access to pre-prints of articles accepted for publication, as well as automated notification when new content is added. What could we do toward making our Web presence not only a repository for accepted work, but into the *leading Web resource for the academic and research library community?*

Should we consider developing podcasts, for example, that would expand upon the research reported in our articles, or that might allow readers to more directly engage authors? Should we enhance your capacity to comment on articles? Should we develop an enhanced mobile presence, or a *C&RL* "app" (iPhone, Android, or device-agnostic)?

Second, we should remember that each reader has his or her journal, and each journal has its readers. Or, at least we hope it does! *College & Research Libraries* has long held "pride of place" among the journals of our field, but the contemporary environment is much more diverse and much more of a challenge, both to readers and to content providers. Not only are there journals seeking to serve the same audience that we do, but there is an increasing variety of ways in which scholarship in our field may be disseminated wholly outside the traditional journal ecosystem, including blogs, institutional repositories, and OA journals not bound to the models established by print predecessors. We know that *C&RL* continues to serve the critical role of providing the "quality signals" that readers find increasingly important in today's overly-crowded information environment, but what else must we do to ensure that our content finds its readers, and our would-be readers find our content?<sup>4</sup> How do we "save the time of the reader" who is deluged daily by notices of new publications, research studies, blog postings, and Webinars, and wishes to more easily find the work that is both of high quality and of significance to the work that he or she must do every day? Should there be thematic organization of content available online keyed to research agendas or areas of practical concern? Should *C&RL* provide a venue for greater integration with publications supported by our state and regional chapters? Should *C&RL* become the heart of a broader portal to research in academic and research librarianship for which new types of content could be provided, or relevant content from elsewhere highlighted?

Finally, we should remember that the journal is a growing organism. Our transition to an OA publication model opens a variety of opportunities to grow now that we are not limited by the pay-wall. Should we continue to produce our current 6 issues each year? Should *C&RL* sponsor new types of publications like the oft-cited "7 Things You Should Know About..." series produced by EDUCAUSE, or sponsor conference programming around research themes in the journal similar to that we have seen sponsored of late by *Library Journal*? Should we continue to offer core content for free, but enhanced content for subscribers? We know that we must grow now that we have removed the barriers to access to our traditional content, but what are the growth opportunities most likely to promote continued commitment among you, our readers, to *College & Research Libraries* as the leading resource for scholarship in our field and the first place you do to answer the question of how can research inform your work?

There are, as Ogburn said, "many possibilities for experimentation," and those suggested above are just a start (and not in any order). We look forward to your ideas about which to pursue, whether one or more of these, or others we have not yet put on the table. As importantly, we look forward to your leadership in volunteering to help us to explore those possibilities. The current Editorial Board will continue its commitment to the identification and evaluation of the research that remains at the core of the *C&RL* enterprise, but we may need to enhance that editorial structure if we are to branch out into any of the areas suggested above (or others that you might suggest). Bring us your ideas, but we hope that at least some of you bringing ideas will also bring along a commitment to bringing those ideas to life. It is through that shared commitment that we will, as Ogburn wrote, continue to engage our readers, and will continue to grow as the leading resource for research in our field even during a period of continuous change in the scholarly enterprise.

Scott Walter  
DePaul University

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## Notes

1. Michael Sims, *Apollo's Fire: A Day on Earth in Nature and Imagination* (New York: Viking, 2007), 68.
2. Kathryn Deiss, "Scott Walter Appointed College & Research Libraries Editor," *ACRL Insider*, March 6, 2012, <http://www.acrl.ala.org/acrlinsider/archives/4966>.
3. S. R. Ranganathan, *The Five Laws of Library Science* (Madras: The Madras Library Association, 1931), accessed March 13, 2012, <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b99721>.
4. See, for example, Alireza Noruzi, "Application of Ranganathan's Laws to the Web," *Webology* 1, no. 2 (2004), accessed March 14, 2012, <http://www.webology.org/2004/v1n2/a8.html>; Emily Rimland, "Ranganathan's Relevant Rules," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2007): 24-26; Carol Simpson, "Five Laws," *Library Media Connection* 26, no. 7 (2008): 6; and, Friday Valentine, "Ranganathan Reformatted," *OLA Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2010): 28-30.
5. Phil Davis, "Have Journal Editors Become Anachronisms?," *The Scholarly Kitchen*, September 19, 2011, <http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2011/09/19/have-journal-editors-become-anachronisms/>.