

## Editorial

# College & Research Libraries Goes Fully Open Access



Last year, in the July issue of this journal, I wrote an editorial entitled “Walk the Talk: Open Access and Academic Libraries” in which I commented on some of the recent research we had published on the topic of open access practices in the literature of librarianship. Not all the findings were encouraging, and I urged our profession to better “walk the talk” of open access in our own scholarly practices. I described our journal, *College & Research Libraries*, as good but not perfect when it came to open access. Lo and behold, the editorial had an effect, for starting next issue, *College & Research Libraries* will lift its six-month embargo on recently published online articles and become a fully open access journal. This is a real step forward in practice and in setting an example of the value of open access in scholarly communications.

I would like to give all the credit to my editorial persuasiveness, but in reality the move to full open access took the time and effort of many advocates in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), which is also the publisher of this journal. It was interesting being caught in the middle of this discussion and debate about going open access, with concerns about the hard reality of economic viability weighing in against the growing acceptance of open access to scholarship as a high professional value. With paid subscribers and advertisers in slow but steady decline (a common situation for many scholarly journals), would open access exacerbate these negative financial trends for *College & Research Libraries*? Why pay for a journal when you can get it free online? These hard questions made me more sympathetic to the difficult decisions editors, publishers, scholarly societies, and professional asso-

ciations in many disciplines must face when considering open access for their publications. In spite of economic uncertainty, I am pleased that ACRL has endorsed full open access in practice for its primary research journal. The intellectual value of open access, I believe, justifies its cost. Now the content of our journal will be freely available online to all around the world.

Those of us involved in the production of *College & Research Libraries* applaud its move to open access, but we are well aware of the financial challenges we face with our scholarly journal. Even with volunteer efforts of editorial staff and referees, there are costs for production, distribution, and administration of the print and online versions of the journal that in our case amount to more than one hundred thousand dollars annually. Paid subscribers and advertising revenue once covered and exceeded these costs, but over the last decade, revenues have declined and are now below expenditure costs. Someone must pay the cost. If not subscribers, then others associated with the journal. In our case, it will likely mean added cost to and support from ACRL, which in turns depends on your membership support. In the coming year we will be looking carefully at our production costs and distribution models, particularly at the cost of continuing the print edition of the journal. We will do what we can to prudently reduce and control costs, while we continue to bring you the highest quality research journal in academic librarianship.

I thank ACRL for its support of the value and the costs involved in moving *College & Research Libraries* to full open

access. On January 10, 2011, the ACRL Board of Directors unanimously passed the following resolution:

Whereas ACRL supports open scholarship and access to scholarly work;

Whereas ACRL publishes *C&RL*, the premier journal for academic librarians;

Whereas ACRL has made successive changes to increase access to the research found in *C&RL*;

Whereas ACRL member groups support making *C&RL* an open access journal;

Be it resolved, that ACRL provide open access to the electronic version of *College & Research Libraries* journal as of April 2011; and,

Be it further resolved, that ACRL, through this action, continues to play a leading role in advocating for new models of scholarly communication in all of the disciplines.

Joseph Branin, Editor

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