

Greta Wood

Building, presentation, and roving reference

A look back at the inaugural issue of *C&RL*

As part of the yearlong commemoration planned by the ACRL 75th Anniversary Celebration Task Force, the Research Working Group will revisit each decade from the 1940s to the mid-2010s to highlight common themes and major events, the latest technologies of the day, and historically essential skills culled from articles and ads published in *College & Research Libraries* and *College & Research Libraries News*.

While the official anniversary dates are 1940-2015, we couldn't do a complete retrospective without including Volume 1, Issue 1 of *College & Research Libraries* published in December 1939. This inaugural issue is fascinating reading and a fitting springboard from which to launch our series. It includes such ruefully humorous tidbits as Frank K. Walter's observation about library buildings that:

[a] very wide margin of possible over actual current consumption should be provided and conduits installed with enough spare room to permit additional wiring if necessary. Nevertheless, more light and power outlets more

generally distributed are often quite as important.¹

We also find more serious harbingers of the future as well as a concern for special collections and preservation. Writing in a time

when "the present European War"² had yet to become WWII, Lawrence Clark Powell describes how:

[a]s long ago as 1929, upon learning of the narrow escapes of the Public Records Office from destruction by Zeppelin bombs in

the last war, the Albany and Troy alumni of the University of Michigan provided a fund, the interest of which was to be used for the purchase of photostats of documents relating to the early history of the American colonies preserved in the Public Records Office in London.³

Humor and gravity can be found in this first issue, as well as the roots of our



Association of College & Research Libraries
 A DIVISION OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
 1940-2015 75 Years of Advancing Learning & Transforming Scholarship

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professional practice today. The growing educational role of libraries and librarians is evident in the words of Louis R. Wilson who observes the university library “has in many instances become responsible for training students in bibliographical method and the use of libraries,”⁴ and in those of Llewellyn M. Raney who notes “[t]here would be certain advantages in having a librarian who was more of an instructor than a librarian She could see to it that each beginning student learned how to use bibliographic tools and she could work with each one individually.”⁵

Raney also envisioned the advent of roving reference as a byproduct of changes in the physical layout of the university library building. According to the plan he proposes in “Essentials of a University Library Building—II,” if the reference librarian’s work at the main charging desk is diminished by all specialized materials being housed in and charged from divisional reading rooms, “then why not combine that work with the reference librarian’s duties and develop her as a kind of roving bibliographic librarian?”⁶

Today’s job postings for first-year experience librarians, as well as library systems with separate undergraduate or subject-specific libraries, can trace their rationale to Harold L. Leupp’s article “Probable Trends in University Libraries” where he posits that:

[t]o try to care for the differing and often conflicting needs of hordes of

undergraduate students on the one hand, and of graduate students, faculty, and research men on the other, in the same building or buildings, with the same collection of books, and very largely with the same staff, is to attempt the impossible. The answer seems to be separate housing, separate book collections, and separate staffs.⁷

Robert M. Lester gives us an estimate of these “hordes of undergraduate students” in his article “Carnegie Corporation aid to College Libraries,” where we learn that college and reference librarians “annually aid 145,000 students to receive the Bachelor’s degree; 18,000 to receive the Master’s degree; and 2800 others, the doctorate.”⁸ By comparison, postsecondary institutions in 2011–12 conferred 1,791,046 Bachelor’s degrees, 754,229 Master’s degrees, and 170,062 doctorate’s degrees.⁹

More importantly, we see in Lester’s article the seed of what has become one of our profession’s all-encompassing philosophies. Lester highlights “the shift of interest from the subject to the student as the center of educational attention”¹⁰ as a growing movement, which 75 years later has matured into our focus on student learning, user experience, and patron-centered thinking.

I hope you find this precursor to our year-long foray into our past as educational and enjoyable as I have. It has been my pleasure to co-chair this enthusiastic and dedicated

A year-long celebration

- View the list of crowdsourced selections of landmark articles for the *College & Research Libraries* special March 2015 issue on the 75th anniversary website. The issue will include newly commissioned commentary on these seminal articles.

Comment on a specially commissioned paper to be released in February 2015.

- Attend specially marked programs at ACRL 2015 in Portland.

- Celebrate the 75th anniversary with a cake-cutting ceremony at ACRL 2015.

- Close the celebration at the ACRL President’s Program at the 2015 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco.

Details on these and other 75th anniversary events are available on the anniversary website at acrl.ala.org/acrl75.

working group with Jill Sodt, Mott Community College. Our members also include Lisa Cruces, University of Houston; Courtney Cunningham, Franklin & Marshall College; Sara Metz, Lone Star College-Atascocita; Sarah Northam, Texas A&M University-Commerce; and Lian Ruan, Illinois Fire Service Institute.

Notes

1. Frank K. Walter, "Essentials of a University Library Building—I," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 40-46, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/40.full.pdf+html>.

2. Robert B. Downs, "Conference of Eastern College Librarians" *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 11-12, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/11.full.pdf+html>.

3. Lawrence Clark Powell, "The Functions of Rare Books" *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 97-103, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/97.full.pdf+html>.

4. Louis R. Wilson, "Essentials in the Training of University Librarians—I," *College & Research*

Libraries 1, no. 1 (1939): 13-21, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/13.full.pdf+html>.

5. Ralph E. Ellsworth, "Discussion," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 50-56, 96, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/47.full.pdf+html>.

6. Ralph E. Ellsworth, "Discussion," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 50-56, 96, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/47.full.pdf+html>.

7. Harold L. Leupp, "Probably Trends in University Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 57-63, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/57.full.pdf+html>.

8. Robert M. Lester, "Carnegie Corporation Aid to College Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 72-77, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/72.full.pdf+html>.

9. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_318.20.asp

10. Robert M. Lester, "Carnegie Corporation Aid to College Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 1, no. 1 (1939): 72-77, <http://crl.acrl.org/content/1/1/72.full.pdf+html>. *z*

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