

This month marks the end of *College & Research Libraries'* first year as a digital-only, open access journal, which makes this a good time to consider some of the progress we have made in that time.

### Increasing access, growing impact

Last month, a study conducted by scholars at Google described how “dramatic changes in scholarly communication” over the past 20 years—the shift to digital publishing, the digitization of journal backfiles, the provision of access to pre-prints, and the development of increasingly powerful search tools facilitating discovery of a wider range of resources—have resulted in increasing use of older articles in current scholarship.<sup>1</sup> Looking across a range of scholarly and scientific disciplines, the authors found that the use of older scholarship was not only significantly greater in 2013 than it was in 1990, but that the use of older scholarship has been growing at an increasingly rapid rate since 2002. In the social sciences, the broad disciplinary area in which Library and Information Science resides in the Google Scholar Metrics providing the raw data for this study, the fraction of older citations included in work published between 1990 and 2013 increased by 31%. We do not have specific data on the use of older articles in the citations included in recent volumes of *College & Research Libraries*, but the article-level metrics added to each article this year at least allow us to review use of individual articles from the digital backfile. Also promoting greater discovery and use of historical and current content from the journal is the addition of digital object identifiers (DOIs) to all articles, including, as of this month, articles from the backfile. If you have ever hesitated to quote Louis Shores on the concept of the library’s “service load” found in his “Evaluating Library

Service to Higher Education” (1941) because you could not include a DOI in your citation, you need no longer worry.<sup>2</sup> Among the goals for the first year of the transition to digital-only publication was to establish an infrastructure allowing our readers to make effective use of the journal’s content, and the provision of DOI and article-level metrics have been important steps along the way. The Google study also notes how increased use of older articles allows important ideas from previous studies to inform current research and practice, and leading thinkers in our field are currently taking advantage of the *C&RL* digital backfile to prepare essays that will provide us with an opportunity to consider the enduring value of selected works from the journal as part of the celebration of the 75th anniversary of ACRL during Spring 2015.

### Trees without fruit?

In 1985, George Keller wrote that “hardly anyone in higher education pays attention to the research and scholarship about higher education.”<sup>3</sup> The reasons for this alleged lack of interest in higher education scholarship beyond the circle of those who were writing it were several, including a perceived gap between the subject of studies published in the literature and the needs of practitioners, policy-makers, and administrators who might look to the literature to inform their daily work. Fifteen years later, Adrianna J. Kezar conducted focus groups with researchers and practitioners to determine if that gap was still there, and if the published literature of higher education bore “fruit” in terms of impact in higher education policy and practice.<sup>4</sup> Not to spoil the ending for you, but findings such as the perception that there were “few memorable works” in the field and of a failure to effectively disseminate valuable ideas from the literature to the intended audiences may give you an idea of where Kezar’s inquiry led. As noted in the Google study, increased ease in the discovery and use of older articles may allow today’s scholars to more effectively build

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upon the work that has been done in our field in the past, but the benefits of increased access are limited if those whose work we wish to inform through the published literature do not see the value of the research to their practice.

Among the issues that have arisen as we have pursued the digital shift in publishing *C&RL* is the question of the range of type of studies published in the journal and the degree to which they benefit our readers in their daily work. We have taken the first steps in addressing this issue through the development of our social media program, and especially the *C&RL* Online Forum, which has allowed our readers to ask practical questions of the authors of new work, but there is more to do. The editorial published in the most recent issue of the journal asked what might be needed to turn *C&RL* into the type of “platform publication” that might be read and engaged by a wide variety of higher education constituencies, and the continued development of our digital publication program may allow us to explore those questions further in 2015.

### **Open access, open peer review, open data**

*College & Research Libraries* is just one part of the broader ACRL publication program, and our shift to digital publication has also allowed us to consider how innovations in other areas of ACRL publishing may be relevant to our work and to consider how innovations pioneered in other journals may also help us to inform future decisions for the journal. While *C&RL* is preparing a special issue to be released in March 2015 that looks at seven “landmark” essays drawn from the journal’s past, ACRL has also sponsored a collection of essays that look toward our future, *New Roles for the Road Ahead* (<http://acrl.ala.org/newroles/>). A notable aspect of this publication is ACRL’s use of CommentPress to allow for “open review” of the essays prior to final publication. *C&RL* has likewise discussed the potential use of different models of open peer review in the future, and experiments in other ACRL publishing venues may help to inform that discussion. *C&RL* has also discussed

what the move to digital publication may mean for our promotion of open data and data sharing as a complement to publication. Our colleagues at the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* have recently posted a draft policy on data sharing, and this, too, is an important topic for continuing discussions of the future of the journal.<sup>5</sup> For an example of a recently accepted article that is now available as a *C&RL* pre-print in which issues of data sharing and data curation were significant, Therese F. Triumph and Penny M. Beile’s “The Trending Academic Library Job Market: An Analysis of Library Position Announcements from 2011 with Comparisons to 1996 and 1988” (<http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2014/10/20/crl14-675.full.pdf+html>).

Thank you for participating in the first year of the *C&RL* transition to digital-only publication, and for helping us to demonstrate that the conclusion of our print run would not limit the degree to which we were able to engage with our authors and our readers in continuing to produce one of the leading journals in academic librarianship. We look forward to continuing to work with you on issues such as the ones noted above as we begin our second year in our new format.

### **Notes**

1. Alex Verstak, and Associates, “On the Shoulders of Giants: The Growing Impact of Older Articles,” *arXiv* (November 4, 2014), doi: arXiv:1411.0275.
2. Louis Shores, “Evaluating Library Service to Higher Education,” *College & Research Libraries*, 2 (1941): 211-215, doi: 10.5860/crl\_02\_03\_211.
3. George Keller, “Trees Without Fruit: The Problem with Research About Higher Education,” *Change*, 17, no. 1: 7-10.
4. Adrianna J. Kezar, “Higher Education Research at the Millennium: Still Trees Without Fruit?,” *Review of Higher Education*, 23, no. 4 (2000): 443-468.
5. JLSC Editorial Board, “The Article is Not Enough: Introducing the JLSC Data Sharing Policy,” *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 2, no. 3 (2014), doi: 10.7710/2162-3309.1186. *zc*