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# Foreword

Richard Wells, Guest Editor

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*The monologue is most people's favorite form of conversation.*

Wilson Library Bulletin (1959:420)

I will try not to fulfill the above prophecy by keeping this foreword brief.

The only real, consistent criticism I have heard of community college librarians is that they do not write enough about their field. When I see former colleagues, classmates, and professors at conferences and meetings, we exchange the normal inquiries concerning our specialities in relation to budgeting and staffing. However, it never seems to fail that when librarians ponder the fact that I am in community college librarianship, they ask me directly: "Why is it that so little is published by community college librarians?"

In the past, I would go on and on about the many demands upon our time and energy until the questioner's eyes glassed over and he became remorseful for ever asking. It was somewhat difficult not to receive these inquiries personally; I was very aware of the wealth of subjects that I should be researching, writing and publishing on a weekly basis.

Indeed, community college librarianship has not been tapped as a source for those who do have the time and talent to write. The variety of subjects is immense. The two-year college library, or the Learning Resources Center is so new in relation to its colleagues in librarianship that even its brief history does not limit the possibilities. Changes, or better, innovations are occurring so quickly that we should be reporting to our colleagues just to inform them of pitfalls and easier methods of obtaining ends.

As you can see, I am avoiding the original question of why are we so print-silent. Possibly, I am a good example of my colleagues in this field: Upon entrance into the community college library almost ten years ago, I was amazed at the many interesting programs, ideas, and services that were present and positive that I would write numerous articles that would inform, enlighten, and delight. I managed to write and publish one.

It was just too easy to become embroiled in the battle that all of us fight: budgeting, staffing, management, bibliographic instruction, committees, goal-setting, etc: Writing fell to the lower part of the long list. (If there is a struggling new associate professor reading this at a university concerned over the unwritten "publish-or-perish" rule and viable subjects for research, I invite you to consider the community college. You could base the remainder of your publishing career on this ... )

Without beginning to remind the reader of "An Apology for Poetry," in defense of my colleagues, part of our print-silence could be due to the diversity of North Carolina Learning Resources Centers. Each maintains a multi-faceted operation; sometimes including an audiovisual component, instructional branch, GED or Adult Basic Education, HRD, Human Resources Development; some even have print shops and graphic design departments.

Many librarians who publish hold a position that allows them the time to do so without leaving the reference desk vacant. And, in many cases, the upper management of a library is expected to publish periodically. In the case of the community college, those who became deans of learning resources, directors, or even assistant vice-presidents were once librarians who now must manage a very diverse and large gaggle of professionals. Due to this need for management skills, most have taken advanced training and degrees in management and administration instead of librarianship. The library has become another department in a division.

So end my lame excuses for not informing the world (or at least North Carolina) of our exploits. It is likely you are beginning to nod fitfully at this point.

There is no need for an explanation of LRCs, a brief history of community colleges or the like in this foreword: These areas are covered well in the following articles. The intention of this issue is to display some of the wide diversity and nontraditional programs that are ongoing at community

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colleges, for diversity and nontraditional are our favorite modifiers. We are constantly diversifying in order to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Nontraditional methods are employed in order to satisfy the diversity of our demands.

Why is community college librarianship different? Without sounding flippant, it is due to our wide range of clientele. Although in a college setting, our students do not live on campus or see college as their number one priority. (The latter is hard for some to understand at first.) Our students or patrons are older than traditional college students; most have families; most have either a full or part-time job; most are making a sacrifice in order to train or re-train for an occupation or vocation. And, as pragmatic and out of character as it appears for institutions of higher learning, the majority expect to learn something that can immediately improve their employment and hence economic standing. Even the faculty mirror the nontraditional philosophy: many in the vocational areas do not hold college degrees. (How many four-year colleges offer a degree in welding or automotive body repair?)

How does the community college librarian cope with this wide range of backgrounds? It basically comes down to attitude. One must be able to build upon tradition, not throw it away, and use instincts and common sense that can only be learned, not taught.

There have been several well-researched and carefully written articles in the past few years concerning specialized instruction for those want-

ing to go into the community college library (this issue included), with most concluding that there is little in the manner of special offerings or tracts of courses for these people. I do not think that we have been forgotten or slighted. Indeed, possibly not preparing one specifically for a type of library setting is preferable. I have always felt the librarian should have as broad a background as possible. Keep in mind this is a matter of opinion. I do not want to flood the next issue's "Letters to editor" section with well-versed rebuttals.

In working daily with faculty who have spent their careers in one speciality, I have found them to look askance at someone who specializes in the general: i.e., at first meeting. Later, they tend to appreciate the generalist more, albeit, sometimes grudgingly; but most do come around. I must digress here and mention that I took this to the extreme when young and foolish, (fresh from graduate school), and considered myself a "Renaissance Man." If you are contemplating the community/technical college, I would suggest you not use that misnomer.

Librarians in the two-year college setting must be versatile. The articles in this issue reflect that wide range of flexibility. From the basic need of bibliographic instruction for incoming students to COMCAT projects to ZOCs that involve many different types of libraries, North Carolina's community college librarians are involved in the traditional and the innovative. It is intended that the very diversity of the articles in this issue will help to expose the multiformity of the libraries they represent.

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