

Special issue on the Value of Academic Libraries

One of the priorities of *C&RL* is that it model the values of the professional and of ACRL. It is in a position to be a strong voice for professional values and to help move the initiatives and priorities of ACRL forward.

The special issue in April is a prime example, modeling the values of the profession and the work of the association to engage with scholars and practitioners in the field on a vital topic—the value of academic libraries. It started from ACRL's Value of Academic Libraries (VAL) initiative and Megan Oakleaf's "Value of Academic Libraries" report. I find this issue particularly exciting because it provides a look at the results of Academic Library Impact grants from ACRL's VAL committee as some of the articles in the issue were supported by the grants.

The guest editors Sara Goek and Jill Becker brought up the possibility of a special issue in *C&RL* at the beginning of their process of reviewing VAL project submissions, and we discussed how to illuminate the work of this group and to highlight the funded projects as well as other best practices related to VAL.

Another exciting aspect of this issue was that the guest editors were interested in adopting a developmental peer review model, making it the second such effort for *C&RL* (and informing discussions about the next planned special issue). This model is an open peer review model, where reviewers read and provide feedback on submissions but they also engage more fully. For the paper proposals accepted, the reviewers work with the authors more directly, coaching them on their writing, methods, presentation, etc. Because the grants were proposal-based and the CFP was for practical projects, there was already a recognition that this issue would be more project- and case-based. As such, there would be an opportunity to do developmental review, offering an opportunity to mentor authors with less authorship experience through the review, revision,

editing, and publishing process and gather feedback from authors and reviewers of all experience about the process. The guest editors were very patient with the process and identified a number of reviewers, some existing peer reviewers and some selected to provide certain expertise or experience based on the submissions. All in all, there were more than 25 reviewers to contribute to the special issue, in addition to the untiring work of the guest editors.

While a regular issue of *C&RL* has about 7 articles, this special issue has 11 because there were so many useful and diverse submissions, many funded by the Impact grants or other funding agencies. I believe that this issue brings useful perspectives, questions, and practices to the profession. The efforts accurately reflect the expertise of the authors and the guest editors, as well as their commitment to academic libraries, the institutions they serve, and their missions. The issue is structured around three themes—Collaboration and Communication, Assessing Student Success, and Researcher Perspectives—although all articles speak to assessment and value and the role that data play.

The first theme is addressed in four articles that each take a unique approach. "Collaborative and Co-curricular: Programming and Academic Library Impact" is an examination by Kate Kelly of libraries at peer institutions, their efforts to develop cocurricular programs around institutional priorities, and the outcomes of those efforts. Theresa Westbrook and Angie Cox, in "Students Helping Students: Creating and Evaluating a Collaborative Service Model in the Library," look at a dual-desk service model at the University of Northern Iowa and the benefits and the challenges of service collaboration with nonlibrary units in a learning commons environment. Moving to an online environment, Nick Faulk and Emily Crist asked online students and faculty at Champlain College about communication preferences and their perceived barriers in "A Mixed-Methods

Study of Library Communication with Online Students and Faculty Members.” Lastly, “Undergraduate Student Success and Library Use: A Multimethod Approach” by Jennifer Mayer, Rachel Dineen, Angela Rockwell, and Jayne Blodgett reports the results of student interviews about ways in which their perceptions of the library contribute to their success, balanced by data analysis of use of library resources and student persistence.

Assessing Student Success is one of ACRL’s priorities and the second theme in the issue. It opens as Rebecca A. Croxton and Anne Cooper Moore, in “Quantifying Library Engagement: Aligning Library, Institutional, and Student Success Data,” discuss efforts at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte to gather engagement factors across multiple departments in an effort to examine correlations with student success and, strategically, to develop a repository for longitudinal data. “Aligning Library Assessment with Institutional Priorities: A Study of Student Academic Performance and Use of Five Library Services” by Penny Beile, Kanak Chodhury, Rachel Mulvihill, and Morgan Wang conducted an institutional study at the University of Central Florida, examining the relationship between library use and end of semester GPA. Beile et al. also report efforts to build a learning analytics dashboard.

Linda L. Anderson and Susan Vega Garcia’s “Library Usage, Instruction, and Student Success across Disciplines: A Multilevel Model Approach” examined student perceptions of the library’s role in their academic success, breaking out the results by discipline with varying results. M. Sara Lowe, Abby Currier, and Steven Graunke studied the information literacy competencies and classroom experiences of first-year students as compared to upper-division at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis in “Documenting the Value of Librarians in the Classroom: Results from a Mixed-Methods Research Collaboration with Campus Partners,” with some compelling results. The final paper in this section, “Collaborative Assessment of an Academic Library and Writing Center

Partnership: Embedded Writing and Research Tutors for First-Year Students” by Maglen Epstein and Bridget Draxler, describes a funded project at St. Olaf College to support underrepresented students for research and writing success, as well as meeting broader learning goals.

The last theme discusses Researcher Perspectives with both articles raising more pragmatic and political issues. “Librarians and Administrators on Academic Library Impact Research: Characteristics and Perspectives” by James Cheng and Starr Hoffman surveyed librarians and administrators about their perceptions of impact research in libraries, as well as the rigor of such studies and how well prepared librarians are to do them. The last article, “A Comprehensive Primer to Library Learning Analytics Practices, Initiatives, and Privacy Issues” by Kyle M. L. Jones, Kristin Briney, Abigail Goben, Dorothea Salo, Andrew Asher, and Michael Perry delivers a necessary counterpoint to the others in this issue. It provides a very valuable examination of an issue related to VAL and assessment but also larger questions around data privacy and the role that libraries play. It demonstrates in a very strategic and critical way, the value and role of academic libraries when it comes to patron data and privacy.

This special issue was more than two years in the making, and Sara and Jill were engaged as guest editors every step of the way, framing the CFP, identifying and selecting reviewers, reviewing submissions and feedback to authors, facilitating the developmental peer review (including facilitating communication between authors and reviewers), and providing overall leadership for the issue. Their efforts have resulted in a timely, thoughtful, and constructive examination of the value of academic libraries and how we can embed it in practice. I would like to acknowledge the guest editors, the reviewers, and the authors of this special issue as well as the participants on all the associated ACRL committees. They all have my deepest appreciation and admiration for their efforts. *JZ*