

Jill Sodt

The 1940s

A time of trial and triumph

This article is part of the retrospective series by the ACRL 75th Anniversary Task Force Research Working Group that explores major changes, themes, technologies, and issues in academic and research libraries throughout the history of ACRL.

The 1940s were a time of great change for the world and academic libraries. On May 31, 1940, ALA Council formally recognized the Association for College and Reference Libraries (*Reference* would later change to *Research*) as its first division. The path to becoming a division was not an easy one. At one point, many members favored breaking away from ALA entirely. They felt ALA was not adequately addressing the interests of academic librarians, despite the formation of the College Library Advisory Board. It was evident ALA needed to be restructured if it was going to meet the diverse interests of academic and research librarians. Thanks to the work of the Third Activities Committee, a reorganization plan was devised that would allow for the creation of divisions with semi-autonomous status.

Charles Harvey Brown used his considerable political skills to ensure the recommendations of the Third Activities Committee

would be implemented, passing up the opportunity to become ACRL's first president.¹

In the early years, ACRL had six subsections to meet the needs of the members: Agricultural Libraries Section, College Libraries Section, Junior College Libraries Section, Librarians of Teacher Training Institutions Section, Reference Libraries Section, and University Libraries Section.

By 1941, ACRL boasted a membership of 2,215 librarians. A scan of titles in *College and Research Libraries* reveals academic librarians grappling

with the perennial challenges of staff development, faculty status, subject cataloging and classification, and reference services. ACRL members were actively engaged in examining these topics and making recommendations for future improvements.

For example, in 1940, Louis Round Wilson outlined some goals for academic libraries as they looked ahead to the coming decade, including:



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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1) the development of regional bibliographical centers; 2) the description on a national basis of resources for research; 3) the provision of regional libraries for infrequently used books; 4) the organization of a federal council on libraries; 5) the cooperation of libraries, foundations, and agencies of the federal government in the acquisition through exchange and purchase of documents, books, periodicals, manuscripts, films, and other foreign materials essential to the promotion of American scholarship; and 6) the development of a program of research and publication in the field of college, university, and research libraries, which will enable these institutions more effectively to play their important role in higher education in America.²

Wilson emphasized the importance of cooperation between libraries to provide resources for increased scholarship. He believed libraries could exert a positive impact on scholarly output by taking a leadership role in this particular area.

By 1942, academic librarians and ACRL turned their attention to the impact of World War II. Libraries were facing shortages of catalog cards. Libraries also faced staff shortages as librarians joined the military. Academic libraries continued their role of educating their communities, albeit in a somewhat different way with classes like the Engineering Defense Training Programs being taught in some libraries and other adult education offerings beyond the typical academic fare.

At a meeting of the University Libraries Section on June 24, 1942, Ethel Christoffers stated "the faculty can do much to formulate right ideals by arranging and conducting forums and discussion clubs on defense work, postwar planning, and other pertinent subjects. The library will stand by to provide reading lists, books, pamphlets, and bibliographies as a means of further study."³

At the June 23, 1942, ACRL Board of Directors meeting in Milwaukee, two notable

actions were taken. First, Samuel McAllister proposed an amendment to the bylaws that would allow states to establish chapters of ACRL. This would pave the way for academic librarians to be involved on a more local level. The state chapters were allowed to determine and collect local dues. The amendment did include a provision requiring chapters to report to the national organization on its activities prior to the ALA Annual Conference. The second decision involved ACRL assuming the full cost of publishing *College & Research Libraries* as of January 1, 1943. Up to this point, ALA and ACRL shared the costs of the publication.⁴

By the mid 1940s, ACRL was undergoing some internal turmoil that finally came to a head in 1946. After heated discussion concerning secession of ACRL from ALA due to a lack of funding for an executive secretary, led by ACRL President Blanche Prichard McCrum and Ralph Ellsworth (ACRL President: 1951–52, 1961–62), ALA finally agreed to provide \$10,000 a year for the office of executive secretary.^{5, 6}

In 1947, N. Orwin Rush, the librarian of Clark University, was selected to fill the new role.⁷ Rush only stayed two years. In 1949, Arthur Hamlin, "fresh from the University of Pennsylvania," became the second executive secretary. Hamlin is credited with starting the ACRL monograph publishing program.⁸

During this decade, academic libraries were evolving from centers of print. Libraries were starting to include audiovisual aids, music listening labs, remedial reading education, and instruction for students on how to use the library. More publications were being converted to microfilm in order to preserve print copies and provide better access for researchers.

Public services were expanding to provide more assistance to students, faculty, and researchers beyond checking out books, including finding ways to assist academic faculty by developing collections related to


(continues on page 468)

Smarthistory began in 2005 as a blog of audio guides for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art created by Beth Harris and Steven Zucker. Harris was the first director of digital learning at The Museum of Modern Art and Zucker was chair of History of Art and Design at the Pratt Institute before becoming the executive directors of Smarthistory. They are joined by 11 contributing editors and numerous art historians who contribute videos and essays, but Zucker and Harris retain editorial control over all submissions. New videos are added at least once a week. In 2011, their site merged with the Khan Academy, and several major universities, such as Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Michigan use Smarthistory.

The homepage of this clearly designed website can be searched by time period, style, artist, or theme. It features links to recent videos, Smarthistory images on Flickr, and a list of links to essays on non-Western Art. The "Teaching with Smarthistory" section offers syllabi and tips for creating your own content and includes, for example, "Case Study: the Portland Art Museum," which illustrates the process.

Each subject web page includes an introductory essay with clear links to related essays under that category; some of the essays have videos embedded in them. A small map of the area being discussed is included on each page to situate the viewer, and links to relevant museum or scholarly sites are listed on the right side of the screen.

The heart and strength of Smarthistory are the 600-plus videos of informed conversations between two art historians. The scholars put the artwork in a larger context within a certain time period and culture, illustrating their discussions with similar works of the artist and photographs of the site where the artwork was found. Sometimes the audio of contributing art historians, such as in Ed and Nancy Kienholz' Useful Art #5 video, is not as clear as those created by Harris and Zucker, but the subject expertise is just as good.

Smarthistory brings art history to life in an engaging and dynamic manner. Art history students and travelers alike will find this resource useful and informative.—*Doreen Simonsen, Willamette University, dsimonse@willamette.edu* 

(*"The 1940s," cont. from page 440*)

particular subject areas and providing library services in nontraditional settings, like the college dormitory.⁹

There was interest in new library buildings and expansions during the postwar period as enrollments grew, due to an increased emphasis on higher education and expanded funding for new facilities. *College & Research Libraries* featured a variety of articles on these topics, such as "Plans for Planning—Some Hints on Buildings" (Louis E. Jallade), "Management of a Dormitory Library" (Laura Neiswanger), and "Radio Programs for Land-Grant College and University Libraries" (Robert W. Orr).

By 1948, ACRL membership had grown to 3,600 through the efforts of the Committee on Membership. ACRL Presidents Robert B. Downs (1940–41) and Donald Coney (1941–42) began the long-running debate

over faculty status for academic librarians. Cooperative arrangements like the Midwest Inter-Library Center were being created as colleges and universities collaborated. The groundwork for Wilson's vision in 1940 had been laid. With an executive secretary to support the association, and seven sections with their own committees to address member needs and interests, ACRL was poised to meet the challenges of the 1950s.

Notes

1. E. G. Holley, "ACRL's Fiftieth Anniversary: For reflection, for celebration, and for anticipation," *College & Research Libraries* 50(1), 11–24, retrieved from <http://crl.acrl.org/content/50/1/11.full.pdf+html?sid=a4f78303-a2b1-4d10-bacf-ebc2c268a8e3>.

2. L. R. Wilson, "The Challenge of the 1930's to the 1940's," *College & Research Libraries*, 1(2), 121–31.

(*continues on page 470*)

produced books by creating graceful, elegant cover designs. Her stylings reflect the graceful and simple aspects of the Arts and Crafts movement, and her work helped to transform book covers from drab casings to eye-catching works of art. During her two-decade career, she established herself as a pre-eminent and influential figure in the male-dominated business of trade book-binding design, with more than 380 books to her credit.

The papers of author, literary reporter, critic, and professor Lis Harris, whose works of narrative nonfiction have delved into a diverse range of veiled subcultures and unfamiliar landscapes, have been acquired by Columbia University Libraries/Information Services' Rare Book & Manuscript Library. A staff writer at *The New Yorker* for 25 years (1970–95), Harris authored three major books on postwar American society, religion, and politics: *Holy Days: The World of the Hasidic Family* (Touchstone, 1985), *Rules of Engagement—Four Couples and American Marriage* (Touchstone, 1996), and *Tilting at Mills: Green Dreams, Dirty Dealings, and the Corporate Squeeze* (Houghton Mifflin, 2003). The collection is comprised of roughly 36 linear feet of materials collected during Harris' career as a reporter and author. It includes correspondence, research notes, writing drafts, interview notes, and audio recordings. In

these materials, scholars will find valuable sources related to questions of religious fundamentalism, urban politics, and environmental justice, among other topics. Harris is an associate professor in the Writing Program at the Columbia University School of the Arts. In addition to her books, she has authored innumerable articles, reviews, and commentaries, and has received numerous prizes and awards.

The University of Puget Sound's Collins

Memorial Library has become the official archive for the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas (LMDA)—an international service organization representing these theater arts professionals. Thousands of audiovisual, photographic, and paper records, which have been in temporary storage since the late 1990s, will be moved, arranged, described, and made available for public viewing in the library. The LMDA archives, once processed, will provide the public with a treasure trove of information about the history of theater and the work of the dramaturg. The materials include issues of the *LMDA Review* from its beginning in 1985; brochures, programs, t-shirts, and audio and video tapes from dramaturgy conferences beginning in the mid-1980s; plays and scripts translated from other languages; award submissions; interviews with early leaders in the field; board materials; and budgets and correspondence. *~*

(“The 1940s,” cont. from page 468)

3. E. Christoffers, “The University Library and the War,” *College & Research Libraries* 4(1), 18–24, retrieved from <http://cr.l.acrl.org/content/4/1/18.full.pdf+html?sid=d8d1c3a1-91bd-49c9-bfdd-8b7dcd267d13>.

4. “Minutes of the Meeting of the A.C.R.L. Board of Directors at Milwaukee,” *College & Research Libraries* 4(1), 89–91, retrieved from <http://cr.l.acrl.org/content/4/1/84.full.pdf+html?sid=6c7b8f9d-4980-4742-ba3c-40030b835773>.

5. Holley, *College & Research Libraries*, 11–24.

6. Charles Harvey Brown, “What Do the Members of A.C.R.L. Want?” *College & Research Libraries* 8 (1), 3–10.

7. E. G. Holley, “Building a Firm Foundation: ACRL Leadership, 1939–1989,” *C&RL News*, 464–67.

8. Holley, *College & Research Libraries*, 11–24.

9. L. R. Wilson, “The Library’s Role in College Instruction,” *College & Research Libraries*, 5(2), 126–33, retrieved from <http://cr.l.acrl.org/content/5/2/126.full.pdf+html>. *~*