



# Guest Editorial

## Rare Books and Manuscripts

When he was president of ACRL, David Weber proposed an expansion of the association's publication program. Among his specific suggestions was a journal directed at rare book and manuscript librarians. This idea attracted immediate attention, in part because it caught in motion, so to speak, an already active movement within the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL to produce just such a journal.

Special collections librarians form a relatively large subgroup of ACRL, and their section has an active history. Its annual pre- and postconference institutes are about to enter their twenty-sixth year. Papers read at them have frequently appeared in print, sometimes over an ALA imprint, occasionally over the imprint of an independent publisher. RBMS committees engage in projects concerning cataloging standards, security of library materials, professional ethics, and additional topics of immediate concern to special collections and other librarians. They have produced many draft statements and standards that have appeared in the pages of *C&RL News* in recent years.

Despite their numbers and energetic activity, special collections librarians have not felt that their communication needs have been adequately served by ACRL's publication program, or by other independent journals and publishers. There is, of course, an extensive and international *bibliographical* press. Codicology, paleography, the study of incunabula, the seventeenth-century American book trade, German romantic book illustration, and setting by formes in late sixteenth-century English printing offices all have their appropriate journals, from *Scriptorium* and the *Gutenberg Jahrbuch* to *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* and *Publishing History*.

But librarians whose responsibilities include the care and feeding of books and manuscripts within the special collections operations of libraries, public and research, private and special, find no journal concerned with the *librarianship* of special collections librarianship. They need a journal through which to communicate their professional concerns with one another.

Weber's expression of this need was cheered by many within RBMS. But the hard work of translating expressed need into forthcoming reality was a task undertaken by ACRL's Publications Committee, chaired by Joanne R. Euster. Some particularly arduous preliminary studies were the work of an ad hoc subcommittee chaired by Nicholas Burckel. Two successive editors of *C&RL*, C. James Schmidt and Charles Martell, provided crucial assistance and hospitality for the venture through the good offices—here gratefully utilized—of *C&RL*. Throughout this entire process, then Executive Director Julie C. Virgo cheerfully extended valuable advice and assistance.

And now we are ready to see if there really is a need for such a journal.

If its proponents are right, then a substantial amount of material of concern to special collections librarians awaits an outlet for its publication. Moreover, the existence of such an

outlet should encourage people in the field to study questions with an eye toward publication of their results rather than toward internal implementation only.

What kinds of studies will this journal entertain? Simply put, its planners envisage a *C&RL* for special collections librarians. From the recruitment and training of special collections personnel, their career patterns, and demographic characteristics, to the planning and mounting of exhibitions, creation of exhibition catalogs, and reports on procedures that advance or retard the physical care of exhibited materials, to basic questions about the provision of reference and supervisory assistance in special collections reading rooms, patterns in the use of special collections materials, the architecture, security, and physical environment of special collections facilities, the management of professional and nonprofessional special collections staff, and the articulation of collection development policies—without forgetting matters related to donor relations and money—*anything* that concerns the *librarianship* of special collections librarianship will be welcomed.

But other matters remain to be worked out. What sort of columns should the journal contain apart from its articles: book reviews (and, if so, of what sorts of books)? personnel announcements? correspondence? institutional acquisitions? What sort of advertising should it accept: antiquarian booksellers? want lists? position announcements? These are open questions. While we hope that the papers by Clifton H. Jones, William Joyce, and Richard C. Berner included in this issue of *C&RL* will suggest something of what the editor and editorial board will be looking for, any and all suggestions—and any and all potential contributions—will be gratefully received and seriously considered as preparations go forward for the appearance of our first issue late in 1985. Please direct communications to Joan M. Friedman, Chair, RBMS Publications Committee, Yale Center for British Art, Box 2120, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

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