

President's Report to the Council of Voting Members



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Bernard F. Reilly, Jr.

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This year **Wayne State University** became the Center for Research Libraries' 250th member library. In the University's application for CRL membership library dean Sandra Yee stated, "We believe that joining the Center, even in these very difficult economic times, is the right thing to do for our faculty and students."

At a time when libraries face enormous economic hardship and uncertainty, it is important to remember that CRL was originally conceived as the response of ten Midwestern universities to the challenges of **the Great Depression**, and was eventually created during the severe economic downturn that followed World War II. In 1949, without support from government agencies or funders, the community mobilized and pooled its resources to create a shared capability for building and maintaining collections that has grown exponentially ever since.

CRL, **now in its seventh decade**, is an umbrella under which many communities of interest come together to pursue common ends. With CRL support six Area Microform Projects identify and preserve at-risk archives, newspapers, and collections that chronicle events and developments in particular world regions. Similarly, the CRL Global Resources projects promote access to digital and tangible materials that support international language and area studies.

WHERE WE ARE

In 2009 CRL will build upon some formidable recent accomplishments. In the past year CRL:

- Completed production of catalog records for 800,000 foreign dissertations and theses, which are now available in WorldCat and CRL's online catalog, the result of a four-year effort supported by the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and made possible by a reconfiguration of CRL's technical services operations.
- Posted 1,864,000 pages of digitized CRL documents, journals, dissertations, newspapers, and monographs, which can now be accessed by researchers through WorldCat and CRL's online catalog.
- Made available online over 300,000 pages of Latin American and Caribbean newspapers in the **World Newspaper Archive** collection, the product of collaboration between CRL and NewsBank Inc.

In 2009 CRL is also taking steps to increase members' return on their CRL investment in a number of ways:

- 1) Helping libraries contain travel costs by providing CRL services and forums online, including today's annual Council meeting and quarterly collection webinars. Collection development workshops are also scheduled at

the ALA Conference in Chicago in July and the Charleston Conference in October, for all CRL members who attend.

- 2) Keeping the rate we use to calculate member cost shares fixed, affording some relief to libraries whose acquisitions spending has been reduced.
- 3) Increasing CRL digitization of materials requested on loan, thereby facilitating access while reducing the cost of member handling and return of CRL materials.
- 4) Holding CRL expenditures flat, freezing new hires except to replace direct service positions or to fill grant-funded positions; and freezing salaries until Board review in January 2010.
- 5) Drawing modestly upon CRL's reserve and its equity in the collections facility, to maintain the current level of collection spending and increase collection digitization.

The CRL community faces challenges that are more fundamental and far-reaching than the scarcity of resources brought about by the present economic downturn. University libraries today are expected to provide scholars an expanding universe of source materials at a time when the resources available for building and managing collections are dwindling. The costs of digital resources are forcing many libraries to make difficult choices and forego access to materials previously considered indispensable. Moreover, in serving scholarly needs librarians face a bewildering array of electronic content and collections, and digital archiving services, with few metrics to guide their investment in those goods and services.

At the same time, most libraries continue to bear the considerable costs of acquiring, managing, and providing access to print resources. Storage of serial literature in particular burdens libraries and universities with significant capital, operating, energy, and opportunity costs. The continued growth of such collections has become unsustainable for a growing number of institutions.

These challenges call for fundamental changes in the way libraries build and manage collections. The present crisis may even create the conditions under which those changes are possible. Through shared, strategic effort and investment Canadian and U.S universities should be able to reduce the costs of managing extraneous, redundant physical collections, and invest more in electronic scholarly resources and digital services.

CRL is taking steps to promote cooperation on this front. This year, with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation we began to make fundamental changes in CRL operations. We are concentrating our preservation and collecting efforts on primary source materials for research, and expanding services that help the CRL community secure persistent electronic access to those types of materials. Since 1949 a shared repository of primary source materials in paper and microform, CRL in its seventh decade will more actively support libraries in investing wisely and strategically in physical and digital collections.

THE YEAR AHEAD

To enable its community to accelerate the transition from print to digital CRL is taking action on three fronts:

- 1) Archiving critical print materials
- 2) Expanding digital access to primary sources
- 3) Promoting confidence in, and support for, digital preservation

1. Archiving critical print materials

CRL will support cooperative print archiving initiatives in the U.S. and Canada by working with consortia and other appropriate organizations to share information, best practices, and resources. The goal is to inform decision-making and action by CRL libraries on the management of legacy print holdings. In this effort CRL will give priority to consortia and systems to which its members belong. CRL's archiving Web pages will be a locus for this information.

2. Expanding electronic access to focused, primary source collections

In tandem with print archiving, CRL will actively promote reliable, persistent and affordable digital access to serial publications for its members. CRL now scans materials from its own collections for scholarly use on request, and has formed partnerships with Readex and ProQuest to systematically digitize and archive print materials on a collection-wide basis. The *World Newspaper Archive* (Readex) and *American Periodicals from the Center for Research Libraries* (ProQuest) are vehicles for electronic delivery of serial materials from CRL and member collections.

3. Promoting digital preservation and access

At the same time CRL is increasing its critical analysis and assessment of digital repositories and digital collections of published serial content of interest to the community. CRL assessments will measure the trustworthiness of repositories and the costs, content and performance of digital collections, so that CRL libraries can make prudent and informed decisions on investing in digital collections and adequately providing for corresponding local collections (such as the books scanned by Google and print copies of e-journals). In 2009 CRL will undertake in-depth assessments of three major digital repositories: **Portico**, **HathiTrust**, and **Scholars Portal**.

CRL will report on assessments of digital collections of interest to its community in its collection webinars and in venues like *The Charleston Advisor* and workshops held in conjunction with the Charleston Conference and annual meetings of the American Library Association. We will broaden and expand these venues in the coming year.

GIVING CREDIT

CRL's achievements this year would not have been possible without the support and participation of CRL libraries. Not only do CRL libraries contribute funding to subsidize this work. The expertise, energy and talents of their collection development, subject, technical, and reference specialists actually shape CRL's collections and resources. This support was augmented this year by major funding from the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, the **John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation**, and the **National Science Foundation**.

The last two years have been particularly important for the Center. From the work of the Board and CRL management an ambitious blueprint for CRL's future has emerged. During these pivotal two years the Center's efforts were ably and steadily guided by **Alice Prochaska**, the Chair of the Center's Board. The CRL community owes Alice a debt of gratitude for her generous and inspired leadership of this important enterprise.

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CRL Global Resources