

# Crises in scholarly communications: insights from forty years of the Journal of library history, 1966-2005.

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## "Crises" in scholarly communications : insights from forty years of the Journal of library history, 1966-2005

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**Abstract**

The study examines the first forty years of a humanities journal, *Libraries & Culture* (hereafter *Journal*). Founded in 1966 as *The Journal of Library History*, its contributors shaped and reshaped the *Journal* according to the values, habits, and competencies that they brought to changing circumstances. Over a period of forty years marked by administrative, managerial, financial, editorial, and technical challenges, the editors transformed the *Journal* into an interdisciplinary and erudite publication distant from its earliest beginnings as a compendium of entertaining vignettes and didactic notes on the writing and uses of library history. This study considers salient points of transformation during the life of the *Journal*, highlighting issues associated with various crises in scholarly communications. Key issues confronted by the *Journal* include the now familiar dilemmas over journal pricing structures, subscription cancellations, bibliographic control, prestige surveys and citation rankings, pressures on authors to publish, peer-review, and modes of dissemination. Historical and sociological contexts frame the resolutions of these dilemmas that are treated chronologically as they erupted in the trajectory of the *Journal*. The historical investigation draws on archival sources, secondary sources, interviews, participant observation, and close reading of the publication to construct a narrative about the *Journal* in the context of 1) changing priorities in higher education; 2) challenges faced by university presses and scholarly publication in general; and 3) professional and disciplinary developments in librarianship. The characters, actions, and settings of the history are interpreted through a sociological lens, crafted from a beginner's understanding of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's concepts of social field, multiple forms of capital, capital conversion, and habitus form the interpretive frame for the narrative. The choice of Bourdieu's heuristic approach implies a broader interest in framing scholarly communications as value negotiations among sets of players in interdependent social fields. The players struggle not just to preserve their positions in the production and dissemination of scholarship, but also contend with others in powerful social fields--state governments, university hierarchies, and markets--about the creation of cultural capital and the power to define what is legitimate knowledge.

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