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# Defining a core journal collection

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## Defining a Core Journal Collection

by James Van Fleet, Librarian/Information Specialist in Engineering and Science Resources

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**I**n 1998, the faculty's Committee on Instruction (COI) charged the University Library Committee (ULC) with "insuring adequate and practical access by the University community to journals and periodicals that this community feels are essential for teaching, research and scholarship." This might appear to be a straightforward, common sense chore. In reality, attempting to meet this charge involved wide-ranging discussion within departments, between the faculty and the ULC, and between the ULC and the library. Careful consideration was given to fundamental issues such as the rapid changes taking place in the way scholarly information is presented and accessed.

In response to the charge from COI, the ULC undertook a project to identify "core" serial or journal titles, deemed to be the essential subscriptions for a library collection at Bucknell. In many disciplines, journals are at the heart of research, teaching and information exchange. Identification of a core list of titles by departments and programs was important in order to establish the basic level of support faculty require for their dual missions of teaching and scholarship. Besides

meeting current needs, there was also concern that subscriptions should meet the needs of new faculty, support new courses and programs of study, and reflect new trends in the world at large.

Following a five-step procedure approved by the faculty and COI, each academic department and program within the University evaluated all current journal subscriptions as well as those published within their discipline. Faculty approached the journal selection process by carefully considering their real needs, rather than by focusing on financial limitations or previously established precedents. They also identified and explored electronic alternatives to print subscriptions, if these could insure "adequate and practical access to information." Subject librarians, acting as liaisons, provided background information on costs, defining a core journal collection, electronic subscription services, and licensing issues. As a result of this process, departments and programs ranked the journal subscriptions they considered essential, and made recommendations to the ULC suggesting titles which should be added or dropped.

This process of identifying our

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Student Contest

Faculty Voices

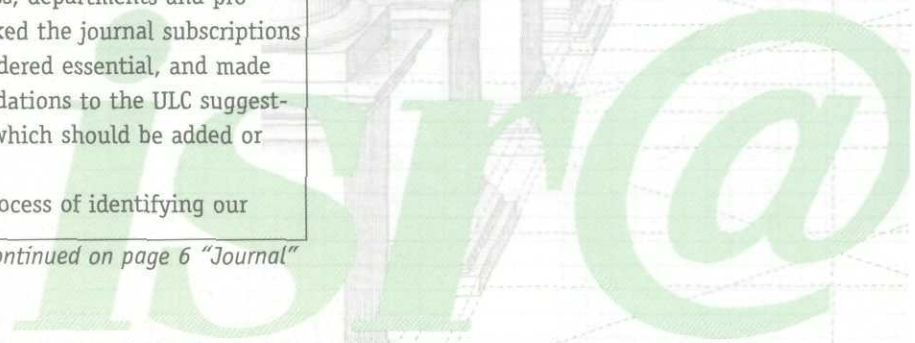
Weeding is Fundamental

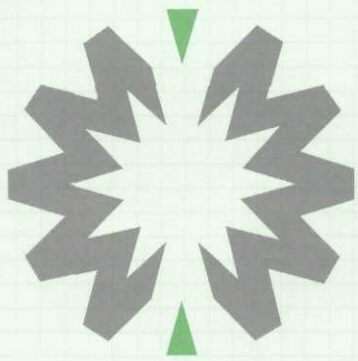
Presentation Classrooms

Wireless Technology

The Death of Reading

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# SPARC

The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition

## It only takes a SPARC...

by Kathleen McQuiston, Librarian/Program Manager for Information Resources Selection

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The Bertrand Library has joined ranks with over 140 other university and college libraries by becoming a member of SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition.

The scholarly publication system is under stress. We are all aware of the perpetual problem of double digit price increases for journals. Many commercial publishers are pricing their products at levels which no academic institution can afford. Yet scholars must have access to the information. Something needs to give.

SPARC is an alliance of libraries trying to change the system by fostering expanded competition in the scholarly communication market. Working with society and other not-for-profit publishers, SPARC is developing high-quality, economical alternatives to existing high-price publications.

By partnering with publishers, SPARC aims to:

- create a more competitive marketplace where the cost of journal acquisition is reduced;

- ensure 'fair use' of electronic resources, while strengthening the proprietary rights and privileges of authorship;
- apply technology to improve the process of scholarly communication and to reduce the costs of production and distribution.

For more information about SPARC, contact Kathleen McQuiston, at [mcquisto@bucknell.edu](mailto:mcquisto@bucknell.edu), or x73309 or visit their web site at [www.arl.org/sparc](http://www.arl.org/sparc).

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"core" collection of journals represented a unique opportunity to build on the strengths of the existing collection, to add new journals of lasting value, and to help establish the level of support the library will require in the future. After additional consultation and negotiations, the ULC submitted a list of over 50 new subscription requests to the Bertrand Library New and Core Serials Committee. Some departments had collaborated to recommend titles of interest to both disciplines. Departments also offered suggestions for cancellations to balance out new acquisitions. Some of these journals were no longer of interest to faculty and students and helped make way for new titles. In other

cases, the decision was made to retain subscriptions for titles with interdisciplinary appeal.

Final fine-tuning of the journal collection included reinstatement of a title or two that had been previously canceled, as well as acquisition of some titles just beginning publication. Electronic subscriptions were also considered. An interesting example combining the latter two categories is the journal *Organic Letters*. Instead of paper copies in the library, campus-wide access to this new journal will be offered via the network. This title also represents one of the results of the SPARC initiative to provide more cost-effective access to and dissemination of scholarly information; you can

read more about SPARC in this issue of *ISR@*.

The results of the ULC "core" journals project should become immediately apparent during the calendar year 2000, and will likely continue to affect the collection in years to come. By determining a list of titles essential to Bucknell, the faculty, ULC and library have made the best use of available resources. Based on this strong core, we can continue to build a library collection that best meets our needs. For more information on the ULC's journal review project, including background documents and a list of the library's current periodical subscriptions, see the web page at <http://www.isr.bucknell.edu/ulc.html>.