

Association of Research Libraries

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Celebrating Seventy Years of the Association of Research Libraries, 1932-2002

The Association of Research Libraries was established in 1932 to serve its members and represent their interests. The goal was to develop, through cooperative effort, the resources and usefulness of research collections in North American libraries. During the past 70 years, ARL has grown from its original 42 members to include 124 major research institutions throughout the United States and Canada. Its programs and activities address all facets of scholarly communication and research library assessment and management.

A compilation was prepared for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Association. It begins with a bird's-eye overview of ARL's history prepared by Lee Anne George and Julia Blixrud. This is followed by a reprint of the remarks given by David H. Stam, Syracuse University, 10 years ago. Drawing on the ARL archives, he provides an entertaining glimpse into the early history of ARL and the flavor of some of the early exchanges among member leaders. This is followed by a Selected Chronology of the last 70 years of ARL. The compilation concludes with lists of ARL member libraries in the order of their joining the Association, and of the individuals who provided leadership for the research library community.

Many of the issues facing the Association and its members remain the same--promoting and facilitating equitable access to, and effective use of, recorded knowledge in support of teaching, research, scholarship, and community service--but the technological, economic, and social environments have been transformed. The information needs of the scholarly and research communities, of government and industry, have become more far-reaching and sophisticated, using technologies barely dreamed of in 1932 and extending into areas of knowledge that were unknown only a short time ago. That is the excitement of our world and a constant source of new opportunities and challenges. But the basic tenet of the Association's founding--cooperative action--remains a solid and effective basis for addressing the many issues facing research libraries.

As ARL and its members look forward to the next 70 years, we are confident in our ability to serve, and serve well, the world of knowledge and scholarly communication.

The above passage is excerpted from Celebrating Seventy Years of the Association of Research Libraries, 1932-2002, compiled by Lee Anne George and Julia Blixrud (Washington, DC: ARL, 2002). To obtain the full publication, contact:

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PO Box 531
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