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Random Ramblings — Scholarly Publishing in Retirement

Column Editor: **Bob Holley** (Professor Emeritus, Wayne State University, 13303 Borgman Avenue, Huntington Woods, MI 48070-1005; Phone: 248-547-0306) <aa3805@wayne.edu>

How easy is it to continue publishing scholarly articles after retiring? I officially retired less than three weeks ago when I completed my last official duties for **Wayne State University** by submitting the final grades for my two courses. I intend to remain professionally active in retirement, including publishing. If anything, I hope to publish more than I've done in the past for the reasons that you'll see below. At the very minimum, I have the obligation to write this column on collection development for *Against the Grain* and one on education and management issues for *The Journal of Library Administration*.

I took two steps to gather information on this question. As a member of the recently formed **ALA Retired Members Round Table (RMRT)**, I posted a question on its discussion list to ask about professional activities since retiring. In all, I received eighteen responses, some of which talked about continuing to be professionally active but not necessarily writing for publication. My other strategy was to search the keyword "Retiring" and the subject heading "Retirement" in *Library Literature Online* back to about 2000. Many of the articles were retirement announcements, but a few included useful information about what librarians were doing professionally in retirement. As a library science faculty member, I also searched for items on faculty retirement but found nothing useful. I will add that this was an exploratory search not at the level required for a serious scholarly article.

The rest of the column will give my initial views on the advantages and disadvantages that retirement brings for those who wish to continue scholarly publishing after retiring from a librarian or library science faculty position.

The main advantage that I'm looking forward to is having more time to publish. I liked the conceptual part of teaching students. I liked interacting with my colleagues both in my school and in the library. I hated the clerical tasks associated with teaching online and especially the complicated and often contradictory rules required to manipulate **Blackboard** as my course management software. I tolerated the committee and other administrative tasks asked of faculty, but they were overall manageable.

Retiring will not only give me extra time for the actual writing but will also allow me to read more widely in the official and unofficial (blogs, discussion lists, columns, etc.) literature, make extra efforts to broaden and deepen my research on my topics, consult with colleagues instead of rushing to meet submission deadlines, and potentially accept more speaking engagements. I'm aware of potential disadvantage that too much time can sometimes lead to less productivity because tomorrow is always there and that the best way to get something done is to ask a busy person. One retired librarian also pointed out that poor

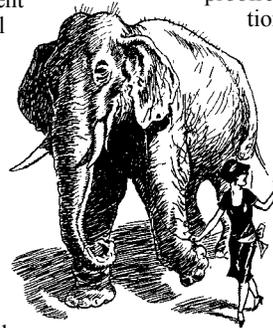
health or the need to act as a caregiver can eliminate this advantage.

Worrying about controversial content shouldn't have affected me in my late career since I was a full-professor with tenure and had no desire to move to another position, but it still did. I've been mulling over some writings that very much go against current library orthodoxy or deal with controversial aspects of first amendment rights. As a retired professor, my views will become less associated with the **Wayne State University School of Library & Information Science**, since only the title "emeritus" ties me to the institution. I don't have to worry that the "radical" **Dr. Holley** will scare students away or that my topics will draw the attention of administrators for espousing unpopular positions. Even if administrators don't like what I have to say, they won't have any direct or indirect effect upon my professional or personal life.

I'll be able to send out a standard library-related survey without asking permission. In my institution, as I believe is true in most, before retiring I would have needed to get any survey approved by the research office because it deals with human subjects even if I had not received any government funding. Federal compliance oversight occurs at the institution level. (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/compliance/index.html>) Since I've severed my formal ties by retiring, my institution's research office would not seem to have any way to require a review or to enforce standards.

Overall, I believe, however, that retirement brings more disadvantages for those who wish to continue publishing.

In our practical field, many library publications describe library projects or present case studies based upon work experiences. Most retired librarians will no longer be involved in these activities. One exception might be those who volunteer. One retired librarian recounted having published several papers on the projects that she continued to oversee as a volunteer in retirement. On the other hand, volunteers are usually given non-critical tasks, since many are unwilling to commit to a rigid schedule that eliminates one of the chief benefits of retirement — the flexibility to do what you want. In my own case, I'll no longer learn about current collection development activities from my students who work in libraries. Many times, these students would ask their librarian colleagues about the week's topics and report back on how their library did things. I found these reports to be an invaluable resource for keeping up with recent developments.



For many retired librarians, the lack of institutional support may be the biggest hindrance to continued professional writing. This factor would especially apply to administrators who were most likely able to be more prolific because of the help they received from professional and secretarial staff for research, proofreading, endnote creation, and publication submission. Even those lower in the hierarchy might have had a modicum of support in their efforts to publish. This factor won't have a great effect for me. When I became a professor, I no longer had a dedicated person whose goal was to make me more productive in all areas including publishing. Even with some student support, I most often found it easier to fax or copy documents myself rather than write out the task for a student worker, submit it, wait for its return, and then sometimes discover that it wasn't done correctly for various reasons including my lack of clear instructions.

Access to library resources and email are also important. I get both as a professor emeritus, but I doubt that this is true for all retired librarians. While multiple private options are available for email, keeping an institutional account is valuable since important emails about publishing opportunities may continue to be sent there. At a minimum, the institutional account should provide a redirect to the personal account.

The retiree will also lose any funding opportunities for travel provided by the employer and, along with them, the publishing options that often come with presenting a paper at a conference. This also can reduce the possibilities for networking. I once gave a paper in Paris from a chance encounter with a colleague at a library reception. While less likely except for IT focused library science faculty, the retiree will most likely no longer have access to special laboratory resources for testing hypotheses in areas such as human-computer interaction. This factor would appear to guarantee that faculty in the laboratory sciences end their research careers once they no longer have access to research teams.

While it isn't impossible for an independent scholar to get outside funding, most government and foundation agencies require the grantee to be part of an institution. Even when possible, applying for grants would be much more difficult without the institutional support discussed in the preceding sections.

Having reduced opportunities for collaboration is very important for me because I've worked with students to get their papers published in return for being the second author, a win-win situation for both of us and in keeping with my university's desire for faculty/graduate student collaborations. While collaborators are often other librarians in the same institution,

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this is not always the case so that authors with good networks may still be able to identify others who would like to work with them on scholarly publications. In fact, if one collaborator is still employed, the retired author may benefit from the support services available to this co-author.

I've often had to pay for my professional travel once I exhausted my employee travel allocation. At least I was able to take these expenses, which could be as high as \$5,000 annually if I attended an international conference, as a tax deduction. Doing so will be much more difficult now that I'm retired. When I asked this question on the RMRT discussion list, several librarians replied that their accountants told them that they had to provide justification for attending beyond professional development, which the IRS accepts as a way to keep your job and make more money to be paid back in increased taxes. If I can find publishing opportunities that include royalties, I might still be able to justify conference attendance as a business expense. Otherwise, I'll need to be creative since I've taken on committee responsibilities within ALA for the next four years and certainly don't want to miss the Charleston Conference.

My investigations as described above support my hypothesis that publication after

retiring does not happen all that frequently. In addition to the librarian who writes about the projects that she supervises as a volunteer, one person wrote a chapter in a book about retirement, and several continued to produce book reviews, one at the rate of 50 per year for children's books. I'm also pleased that the retirement model matches well my publication habits. Beyond my columns that are mostly opinion pieces, my more scholarly publications normally don't require expensive equipment and can be done from my home office. I also prefer writing as a single author. I already have several serious projects in mind that I should be able to complete quite handily on my own. The big issue may be finding a way to make my professional travel tax deductible.

My final observation is that I publish not for external but for intrinsic rewards so that retiring won't change my motivation. While I won't say that I enjoy every moment spent in preparing the manuscripts, I get great satisfaction when my works appear in print and even more when someone cites them or tells me that they found them useful. I know of other professors like me. One of Wayne State's most renowned English literature scholars continues to commute to campus each day to continue his research. While I hate driving too much to follow this model, I intend to spend at least a portion of each day writing or, at a minimum, gathering the information needed to write intelligently. Only time will tell if my initial expectations are accurate. 🍷

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Speaking of which, we are lucky that so many of you attend Charleston, Frankfurt, and other meetings in October! **Anthony Watkinson** who is in Frankfurt has promised a report for *ATG* soon!

Was thrilling to meet **Gregory McCaffery**, CEO and President of **Bloomberg BNA**. **Gregory** told me he has several librarians working for him and that he doesn't want that to change since librarians are so valuable and know so much. He did say that they were rethinking the name "librarian" and are leaning toward "taxonomist" instead. I remember way back when **Lucretia McClure** (who BTW just received the **2014 Robert F. Metzdorf Award** from the **University of Rochester Friends of the Library**) advocated keeping the name librarian and I agreed with her. Have professionals like doctors or lawyers or dentists changed their names? Why should we?

<http://www.library.rochester.edu/news/metzdorf-award-2014>

http://www.bna.com/?PROMOCODE=G-PSLEGAL&utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=bbna_home&gclid=CJ27of1u8gCFYcYHwodJkMI3Q

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