

## INTRODUCTION

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Almost half a century has passed since Rutgers became a state university and began the expansion of its campuses and research activities that were its hallmark in the postwar period. During that time the university's libraries have felt the impact of a number of social developments which altered the libraries' physical image and their educational mission. The GI Bill brought greater numbers of students, and the postwar curricular trend away from textbooks to original sources required larger and more varied library collections. The Civil Rights movement changed the complexion of the student population as traditionally underrepresented groups gained entrance to higher education and demanded the opening of new areas of scholarly inquiry: libraries had quickly to develop supporting collections in ethnic history and women's studies. Soon physical alterations had to be made to buildings to provide access for the handicapped students encouraged by federal legislation in the 1970s.

In the 1990s Rutgers' libraries are changing again, with technology rather than social change the driving force. The present issue of the *Journal*, with its articles on the campus's various recent library construction projects, is intended to explain to the public the philosophical rationale behind these projects. In all of the cases the rationale depends on the role played by the different libraries in the life of the university; thus the issue's different authors describe their institutions' evolution at some length. Although the articles were written independently, and the libraries they describe vary from subject-specialized (like the Art Library) to general research (like Alexander), they have one thing in common: they all show how students and researchers are becoming involved through the new technology not just in new methods of

information searching, but in actually choosing the format in which the information is generated. This is a new form of empowerment, the results of which neither librarians, sociologists nor political scientists as yet know much about. It remains to be seen how this new dynamic will affect the scholarly community as it enters the twenty-first century.