

PREFACE TO VOLUME 66:  
THE CIVIL WAR STILL MATTERS

BY ROBERT G. SEWELL, EDITOR

From 2011–2015, the nation is recognizing the 150th anniversary of the Civil War with a great variety of programs, publications, reenactments, and other events. Many of the issues surrounding the Civil War and its aftermath still reverberate in our current social, moral, and political debates as renowned Civil War historian James McPherson reminds us in his essay in this volume on why the Civil War still matters. The Rutgers University Libraries has contributed to these commemorations with a superb exhibition, “Struggle without End: New Jersey and the Civil War” which was on display from September 19, 2012 to July 31, 2013; a series of related lectures; and now this special issue on the Civil War and New Jersey.

The 2012 exhibition is now available online at [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/exhibits/struggle\\_without\\_end/](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/exhibits/struggle_without_end/). It was curated by Fernanda Perrone, archivist and head of exhibitions, who also organized the related lectures, three of which are presented here. Perrone is the guest editor of this special issue and the author of two articles. Her “Reflections on Civil War New Jersey: Men, Women, and Archives” provides an introduction to this special issue as well as highlights the main themes of the exhibition and details subjects that can be profitably pursued in the Civil War-related collections in Special Collections and University Archives. She also authored the article “‘I Prayed and Sung in Every Tent.....’: Israel Silvers, U.S. Christian Commission Delegate from New Jersey,” mining the content of diaries and the Civil War papers of Silvers, Perrone’s great-great grandfather. The collection was recently donated to Special Collections.

*The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries (JRUL)* published a special issue on the Civil War for the one-hundredth anniversary in 1961. (See <http://jrul.libraries.rutgers.edu/index.php/jrul/issue/view/172>) Earl Schenck Miers wrote about contemporary

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newspaper coverage that led up to New Jersey joining the war effort. In "Rutgers and the Civil War," Richard P. McCormick depicted the impact of the war on the college. His article is one of the starting points for Steven D. Glazer's article in this issue, "Rutgers in the Civil War," which explores how people affiliated with Rutgers participated in the Civil War on both the Union and Confederate sides. In the 1961 issue Phillip D. Sang presented a touching piece primarily drawn from letters in his private collection in his "Mary Todd Lincoln: A Tragic Portrait." That issue concluded with two bibliographic works. Donald A. Sinclair, the founder and first head of Special Collections at Rutgers, wrote an essay, "New Jersey and the Civil War: Notes Toward a Bibliography," that prefigured his 2003, massive (696 pages) *Guide to New Jersey and Other Civil War Manuscripts* in the Special Collections and University Archives. Herbert F. Smith also wrote about then recent gifts and acquisitions related to the Civil War.

In addition to the articles by McPherson, Glazer, and Perrone, two pieces based on talks given in the Civil War lecture series shed light on African Americans in the Civil War and the psychological trauma of those who participated in the most deadly and divisive war in U. S. history. Larry A. Greene's article extensively documents how New Jersey was conflicted about the Civil War and its aftermath, mirroring the great issues that motivated the war between the Confederates and Unionists. Greene also reminds us just how radically Lincoln's views on abolition and the role of African Americans in society changed during the course of the war. He compares this body of evidence with film treatments of the Civil War, especially Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* (2012). Katherine Fleming carefully presents recent scholarly debates about the psychological impact of war in general and the U.S. Civil War in particular. She tracks down some specifically New Jersey, contemporaneous documentation related to this topic.

The *JRUL* has published many other articles related to New Jersey and the Civil War since it began publishing in 1937, such as Professor Larry Greene's "A History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey" in the June 1994 issue. (See <http://jrul.libraries.rutgers.edu/index.php/jrul/article/view/1729/3169>) This and other Civil War-related articles are available online. Volumes previously available only in print from 1937 to 1994 were digitized and made available through the online journal platform from February through June 2012. By mid-June 2014, a quarter-of-a-million articles have been

downloaded from the full run of the *Journal*. But what is especially remarkable is that 64% of the articles downloaded have been from 1937–1994 volumes. Only two articles among these have been downloaded less than 100 times, with the average download per the 1937–1994 articles being 380 . This effort has proved to be successful, far beyond what I had anticipated.

The *Journal* represents a genre of scholarly publication that seemed to be going the way of the dinosaurs: journals published by research libraries about their collections and related topics such as the history of printing, manuscripts, and local history. The genre began around the turn of the last century, but especially flourished after World War II, then began to fall away in the in the 1980s and 1990s. These journals were distributed via paid subscription but mostly by elaborate, national and international exchange programs among libraries and research institutions. These exchange programs have largely died. Perhaps other reasons for the decline in the publication of such journals are a seeming waning in the interest in so-called bibliographic studies and a belief that the format of the traditional academic journal may no longer be viable in the digital age.

The *JRUL* decided to buck the trend and continue to publish, making its recent volumes available as an open access journal in 2005 along with digitizing its previous issues in 2012. The recent issues have also done well. For instance, the 75th anniversary issue published in 2012—Forms of Writing in Milton’s England—already had more than 4,000 article downloads by June 2014. The *JRUL* serves both as a source for scholarly information on a variety of humanities topics and as a complementary resource guide to materials held in Special Collections and University Archives. Reference librarians have noted sparks of interest in resources that have been written about in older issues of the *JRUL* now that they are available online. So it seems that this genre still has relevance and vitality.

### **Editorial Note:**

For the first seventy-five years of *JRUL*, volume numbers have been designated in Roman numerals in the printed editions. The journal platform (OJS), used to publish the journal online since 2005, does not accommodate Roman numerals, but only Arabic numerals. Since we print such a small number of each issues and the overwhelmingly primary access to the journal contents

is through the online edition, we have decided to terminate the Roman numeral designation in the printed edition with this volume (66). This can be seen as another “casualty” of technology; but really, it seems quite sensible now we are in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

On a related note, the current issue will inaugurate the use of CrossRef Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) in the *JRUL*. A DOI is a string of characters used as a unique identifier for a digital object, such as an electronic journal article. Since its inception in 2000, the DOI standard has gained increasing acceptance among publishers. As of April 2013, more than 85 million DOIs had been assigned by more than 9,500 organizations. Launched in early 2000, CrossRef is an official DOI Registration Agency favored by online academic journals. We believe that the use of DOIs by the *JRUL* will provide a robust, standard system of persistent identification for the articles in this journal as it navigates boldly toward the digital future.

### Notes

1. For a selected listed of these journals see the appendix to my “Seventy-five Years of *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*” in the previous issue of the journal (2012) at <http://jrul.libraries.rutgers.edu/index.php/jrul/article/view/1777/3207>