Richard W. Clement

Editor's Note

THE ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE were all originally delivered as papers at the 47th annual preconference of the Rare Books and Manuscripts section of the Association of College and Research Libraries held in Austin, Texas, June 20-23, 2006. Christian Dupont served as program planning chair for the preconference, arguably the most successful to date, and served as guest editor for this issue of *RBM*. He selected the papers to be included, worked with authors to turn their papers into articles, and collaborated with me through the whole editing process. As always, it was a pleasure to work with Christian.

The theme of the preconference and this issue, "Libraries, Archives, and Museums in the Twenty-First Century: Intersecting Missions, Converging Futures?" is one of interest to us all. For many of us, such convergence may well be in our futures. But for some of us, it is our present and even our past. Personally, as head of a traditional department of special collections that has come together in many respects with a regional history collection and the university's archives, I can attest to the relevance of this theme. Beginning in mid-2001, these three independently functioning departments converged to create a single public service point in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas. Four reading rooms, three reference desks, and several reference collections were reduced to one desk, one reading room, and one reference collection. We recognized that librarians and archivists have different outlooks and cultures, but we also quickly recognized that we are of course in the same business of providing effective access to primary materials for researchers. Most users saw this right away, as they discovered previously unknown materials from collections with which they had not been so familiar, all of which are available through a single catalog and in a single reading room. The convergence was not easy, and there even were some moments of despair, but ultimately we all came to agree that the merged service provides better access across the collections and our shared professional expertise than had been true in our more fragmented past. My colleagues in University Archives and the Kansas Collection have taught me much, and I believe that they would say the same about their contact with me. I know I am a much better special collections librarian as a result. To colleagues who may be contemplating a convergence, take heart and forge ahead!