Introduction

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In presenting this collection of essays in honor of W. Boyd Rayward—“Boyd” to those who are on first-name terms with him—we are not simply drawing attention to the work of a consummate historian but also celebrating someone who is deeply respected for his approachability, humility, and genuine interest in the lives of the many friends he has gathered around him over the years. Not all academics, by any means, combine intense intellectual labor with a human touch, but Boyd does this in spades. He is a true gentleman scholar (in applying the word “gentleman” in this context, we relieve it of its use to designate a person of leisure from the privileged classes; rather we emphasize that part of its connotation that signifies someone who is well-mannered, sociable, and considerate—in short, someone who manifests a true gentillesse d’esprit).

Boyd is best known, and revered, as the scholar who rescued Paul Otlet (1868–1944) from obscurity, thus implanting him as the “father of documentation” into the disciplinary consciousness of library and information science. Otlet’s grand, bibliographic/internationalist project, to which he devoted himself for over half a century, is considered to be a prime precursor of the Internet. It is to Boyd’s enduring credit that a quarter of a century before the Internet became a popular technology, and at a time when the term “information society” had yet to enter our vocabulary, he recognized the great significance of Otlet and his visionary ideas. Following his 1975 book on Otlet, The Universe of Information, Boyd went on to become the leader of an academy of historians interested in exploring not only Otlet’s thoughts and schemes but also those of his “information” contemporaries who together formed what can be called the modernist information (or documentary) movement of the period from around 1890 to World War II. Through his research he maintained this leadership role even while undertaking demanding managerial tasks as dean of schools of library & information science in the United States and Australia.
Lately, Boyd has supported the proposition that it is possible to conceptualize a field labelled “information history,” encompassing the history of the modernist information movement but going well beyond it temporally and thematically. Indeed, we are fortunate to be able to include in this Festschrift an (until now) unpublished essay by Boyd on this very subject. For Boyd, the history of information—of its systems of management, organization, and dissemination—is not confined to the Otletian era. Boyd’s own research topics have spanned the centuries, from the seventeenth-century Republic of Letters to the late twentieth-century convergence (not simply amalgamation, he would argue) of library science and information science.

It is in the nature of history and the humanities that its scholars often find themselves leading a “solo” life (although collaborations have undoubtedly been on the increase in recent decades). Following in this tradition, Boyd has cultivated his own strip of land, and with tremendous results. But he has also offered his services to those who labor in nearby plots. Being the primary node in the Otlet scholarly network has automatically plugged him into networks that overlap it, and he has pursued links within these networks energetically. Boyd has won the reputation of being a great facilitator, running or helping to run academic events, passionately and carefully corresponding with colleagues, and editing the work of others. Regarding the latter—as the hundreds of scholars who have experienced the flourish of his meticulous corrective pen would no doubt testify—Boyd is rightly regarded as a supremely gifted editor, most recently of this very journal but also of other journals, including Library Quarterly, as well as of a number of books, many of these arising from conferences he has organized or co-organized. In short, Boyd brings people together, and brings people on.

When we approached authors to see if they were interested in contributing to this Festschrift, we were overwhelmed by the wave of goodwill that rebounded. Such was the scale of the response that it has been necessary to divide the Festschrift into two parts: Issue 2 (Fall, 2013) and Issue 3 (Winter, 2014) of Volume 62 of Library Trends (the contents of the second part of the Festschrift can be viewed on the back cover of this issue). We have not taken it upon ourselves in this introduction to present a blow-by-blow account of each article. We simply point to the significance of the division of the Festschrift into four sections: (1) The Work of W. Boyd Rayward and Its Influence; (2) Documentation, Classification, and Information Management; (3) Libraries, Museums, and Archives; (4) Information History. Sections 1–2 will appear in the first part of the Festschrift, Sections 3–4 in the second. The titles of Sections 2–4 reflect closely the intellectual territory Boyd has explored in his extensive writings over nearly half a century—writings that, in terms of their style, are consistently and refreshingly clear and well organized, and thus accessible.
In this collection, we have brought together colleagues of Boyd from eight countries: the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, and, as one would expect, his native Australia. This geographical diversity maps well onto Boyd’s own academic travels to, and sojourns and appointments in, Europe and the United States over the decades. Authors were permitted to address any topic they wished, as long as their essays had a historical perspective. Apart from those who charged themselves with the task of describing and discussing Boyd’s impact, authors were not asked to frame their contributions in Boyd’s work—although quite a few nonetheless referred directly to his outputs and an even larger proportion cited them as a matter of course, as one would expect given the huge influence he has had on the areas of study the authors represent.

This *Festschrift* has not been produced to celebrate any particular event—no landmark birthday, no special award, no anniversary. It certainly does not celebrate Boyd’s retirement, which *officially* occurred at the end of 2007 when he left the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois. We emphasize “officially” because in retirement Boyd seems to have been as busy as ever, editing books and journals, organizing conferences, contributing to film documentaries, and revisiting Belgium on several occasions to continue his research on Otlet and the information universe of which he was a large part. Boyd also remains Emeritus Professor at the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management, University of New South Wales as well as at Illinois (where he and Dr. Eugene Garfield, pioneer of bibliometrics and scientometrics, have endowed the Paul Otlet Lectureship, which will be launched in 2014). We wish Boyd many more years of fruitful academic engagement, investigation, and production.

**References**

Rayward, W. Boyd. (1975). *The universe of information: The work of Paul Otlet for documentation and international organization.* Moscow: VINITI.

Alistair Black is a full professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is author of the following books: *A New History of the English Public Library* (1996) and *The Public Library in Britain 1914–2000* (2000). He is coauthor of *Understanding Community Librarianship* (1997, with Dave Muddiman); *The Early Information Society in Britain, 1900–1960* (2007, with Dave Muddiman & Helen Plant); and *Books, Buildings and Social Engineering* (2009, with Simon Pepper & Kaye Bagshaw), a socioarchitectural history of early public libraries in Britain. With Peter Hoare, he edited volume 3 (covering 1850–2000) of the *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (2006). He has recently been researching the history of corporate staff magazines and libraries, and the design of public libraries in the 1960s.

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Academy of Arts and Sciences; he is also a member of the Academy’s e-Humanities Research Group. He holds a chair in digital methods and historical disciplines (in particular the history of scholarship and information sciences) at the University of Amsterdam. In 1991 he obtained his PhD in art history from Groningen University, The Netherlands. He publishes regularly on the history of architecture, fortification, and town planning; the history of cartography; and the history of science. He has also written extensively on the history of library and information science, especially in relation to the life and work of Paul Otlet, the history of classification, the history of the World Wide Web, and the history of visualizations of knowledge.