November 19, 1998

To: Library Representatives,  
Department Chairs

From: Brian Williams  
Chair, University Library Committee

Re: Library Journal Review

Dear Colleague:

At the September faculty meeting, a revised process (attached) for the identification and selection of journals and periodicals important to the University was approved by the faculty. As the first step in implementing this process, the University Library Committee is asking that your department or program carry out a careful, critical review of its needs with respect to journals and periodicals. The intent of the current review is not to identify titles for possible deselection. By participating in this process, you help identify titles serving as the core of a collection meeting the needs for teaching and scholarship within your discipline.

In this review, we ask that you undertake three specific tasks. First, we ask that your department rank journals currently acquired as either “Essential”, “Important”, “Supplementary”, or “No longer of interest”, much in the fashion that book orders for the library are now rated. Please find attached a list of journal titles considered to be relevant to your department; please include and rank any additional titles that might be of interest to members of your department. Second, we ask that your department identify titles either not currently received in the library or perhaps deselected in earlier reviews which appear “Essential” to your needs. Finally, as a guide to setting priorities among competing needs, we ask that your department include its reasons or justifications for determining that a title is “Essential”. At any stage in the review process, we would encourage consultation with subject librarians and representatives on the University Library Committee (see below) in developing lists of “Essential” titles and supporting justifications and reasons.

The manner is which these tasks are accomplished is at the discretion of individual departments or programs. Feel free to proceed as you wish in identifying “Essential” titles or even the preferred mode of access (print or electronic) to titles. An example of how one department conducted its review is offered by Economics. The Economics department began its review of core economics journals with a simple survey of its members. Each department member was asked to provide a list of the journals that he or she considered to be “Essential”, “Important”, and “Supplementary”. Once the surveys were completed, the results were compiled and compared to the list of economics journals currently held in the library’s collection. Department members differed in their ratings of journals; in some cases, individuals rated some journals as “Essential” which were rated by others as “Important” or “Supplementary”. Through the survey, department members also identified a few journals considered to be “Essential” that were not currently in the library collection. The Economics department, with the help of the library staff, also collected data on the economics journals in the collections of several of Bucknell’s frame of reference schools.

The department then met to compare the current collection and ratings of economics journals at Bucknell to the list revealed through the survey, as well as to the journal collection at the frame of reference schools with departments similar in size to Bucknell. On the basis of this comparison, the
department decided to request some additional journals based on its identification of “Essential” journals that were not already in the library collection. The department also identified a small number of journals that could be deselected. Finally, the department then prioritized its final list of journals to be requested, based on the needs of untenured members and on alternative means of electronic access, and began discussions with the library on how these changes might be implemented.

We ask that this review identifying “Essential” titles be fully completed by the end of February, with reasons as to why a title is “Essential” included. The later steps in the review process would then be carried out throughout the rest of the spring. Because of the calendar schedule under which journals are obtained, we would note that any change implemented as a part of this current review would not be complete until the calendar year 2000.

If you have any questions or comments about this review process, please feel free to contact either your subject librarian, a representative on the University Library Committee or Tara Fulton, Associate Director of Library and Information Services. Representatives on the University Library Committee for 1998-9 include:

Jai Kim, Civil Engineering, for Engineering
Janet Knoedler, Economics, for the Social Sciences
Amy McCready, Political Science, At-Large
Slava Yastremski, Modern Languages, for the Humanities
Brian Williams, Chemistry, for the Natural Sciences

On behalf of the University Library Committee, let me thank you in advance for your efforts in identifying journals and periodicals of fundamental importance to the University, and for starting a process which we hope will better serve the needs of faculty and students in the future.

Brian Williams, Chair
University Library Committee

Cc: Subject Librarians