

Publishing Research at The College of The Bahamas

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ABSTRACT

The College of The Bahamas has published 20 volumes of a research journal since 1980. The journal has had a stop-and-start history, undergone three name changes, and in 2008 made a major move from a print to an online environment. This overview of publishing a research journal at the College of The Bahamas traces its history and evolution through the years from a print journal to an open access electronic journal and to the *International Journal of Bahamian Studies*.

INTRODUCTION

The College of the Bahamas (COB) was founded in 1973 and its first students graduated in 1978. The founding of the COB was among the exciting developments of the newly independent Commonwealth of The Bahamas. At last this young country had its own, home-grown tertiary-level educational institution. Academic staff, both Bahamian and foreign, were drawn from within the Bahamas (many “masters” from Government High School transferred to COB to become lecturers) or were recruited from abroad. When reviewing documents from the early years of COB one feels the enthusiasm and excitement that faculty felt at being part of a newly established college, ready to face the challenges of building a new institution in a new nation.

Among the hallmarks of an institution of higher learning are its research activities and the dissemination of the products of that research through publications, particularly in a

research journal. COB’s Academic Affairs department established *College Forum*, the College’s research journal in 1980. In the introduction to the first volume, COB Principal Jacob Bynoe and Dean of Academic Affairs Claire Hepburn wrote that the *raison-d’être* of the journal was “not only to spread the results of academic activity in the College but to stimulate participation in such activity and an exchange of ideas by a broad cross-section of interested members of the Bahamian community” (1980, p. 1). They outlined the policy agreed to by the editorial committee “... that the journal will deal the concerns of the society without being parochial, that it will maintain stern academic discipline without becoming too esoteric or confined to an exclusive readership, and that it will contain a wholesome mix of papers on painstaking empirical research, and on sustained analytic inquiry” (p. 1). This original policy statement has been repeated in subsequent volumes of

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the journal and has guided editorial policy since.

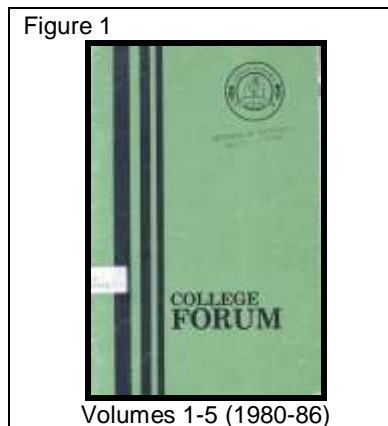
Publishing a journal is not without its challenges for a journal's editorial board: financial and administrative personnel are needed to support the journal; faculty need to find time to research, review and edit articles in addition to teaching. The research journal of COB has not had an entirely easy time. There have been 20 volumes published in the 40 years of COB; sometimes several volumes were produced annually, followed by a hiatus of several years before another volume appeared. Despite the difficulties of producing a journal, through the years some editors have optimistically called it a quarterly journal – although it was never more than an annual publication. The history of the journal can be divided into four periods: the early years, 1980-1986; the 1990s, and the new century, 2001-2005 and the online era, 2008 onward.

The Early Years: Volumes 1-6, 1980-1986

In the early years, *College Forum* was very much a home-grown, low-budget production. It was sized 8½" x 6", with a plain glossy cover emblazoned with the College's crest and horizontal lines along the left side of the cover (Figure 1). The volume and year designation was missing from the cover of the first two volumes. The first two volumes were printed in one column (which was changed to a standard research journal format of two columns in the following 4 volumes). The choice of typeface changed as well. Volume 1 used a plain sans-serif typeface whereas the subsequent volumes adopted IBM's Courier. In the days before word processing, editorial assistants had the enormous responsibility of typing the articles for the journal. There are very few illustrations and of course there are no colour illustrations apart from the coloured cover.

There were two journals designated Volume

5: one in 1984 and the other in 1986. The first Volume 5 was the transcript of a series of lectures given at the College.



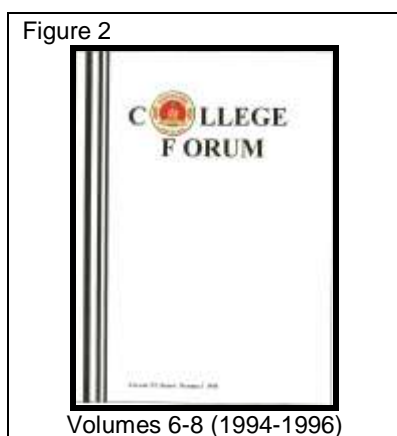
Although an Editorial Board is mentioned in the introduction to Volume 1, a list of editors was not published until Volume 3: Co-editors were Pandora Johnson and Joan Vanderpool and Consulting Editors were Jonathan Young, Margaret Thomas, John Trainor and George Stuart. It is not clear what the role of consulting editors was – though it is possible that they constituted the actual editorial board. All these first volumes direct potential authors to submit their articles to the office of the Dean of Academic Affairs. Volume 5 of 1986 included a short preface from the Editorial Board reiterating the goals and objectives of the journal, stressing “the importance of research as an integral and indispensable part of the intellectual and cultural development of mankind” and that their role of the publication was to “nurture the idea of scholarly research from the embryonic state to full academic maturity” (p. i).

A copyright statement appeared in Volume 4 (©College Forum, 1984), which effectively meant that the contents of the journal could not be copied or distributed without permission. Volume 5 (1984) is the first to include subscription information. Institutional subscriptions cost \$20.00 (including postage and handling) and individual subscriptions were \$9.00.

The 1990s: Volumes 6-9, 1994-1997

After a hiatus of 8 years, the journal resumed publication in 1994 with Volume 6 and successfully produced four annual volumes in succession. In the preface to the resurrected journal, Dr Bethel, the Principal of COB, stated that the journal had been suspended due to several factors: the untimely death of its new editor, Dr Kureyang in 1986, financial constraints, and the lapse of the Research and Publications Committee. Responsibility of the journal had been passed to the newly-established Research Unit and there was hope that once again, College-produced research could be published in its own journal. (p. vi).

The new journal adopted a new look – the cover was reminiscent of the earlier volumes with the left-hand horizontal bars and the College crest; however, now the crest was incorporated into the name, becoming the letter "o" of College and the crest was in colour (Figure 2). This cover was used for volumes 6-8. Volume 9 used the same “brand” but added a photograph of the College portico in the upper left hand corner of the cover, and included the table of contents on the cover. – clearly a step to make the journal more accessible and attractive to potential readers.



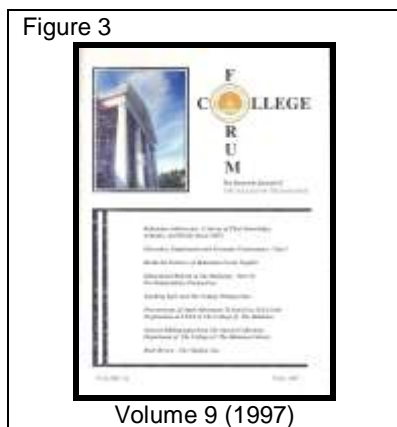
The journal was published with a one column layout and volumes 6-8 were still in a small format, just slightly larger than the previous volumes, with the dimensions of 9" x 6". The

single-column layout was retained by all volumes of the journal until Volume 14. All volumes used a standard serif font, Times Roman or something similar.

With Volume 6, however, the journal took on a more professional look and feel. Inside the front cover was information about the journal, ordering information, instructions to contributors, and the copyright statement which was considerably more elaborate than in previous issues. Submissions would now be directed to the Director of the Research Unit. The following two volumes, 7 and 8 were quite similar in layout and appearance. In Volume 7 the journal finally got an ISSN (an International Standard Serial Number), which is a unique 8-digit number used to identify periodical titles.

Subscription rates had increased to \$35.00 for institutions and \$15 for individuals and foreign subscriptions had to pay a \$5.00 surcharge. The instructions to contributors did not specify any particular bibliographic style format and there was no mention of submissions undergoing a peer review. The same preface from the Editorial Board was included in volumes 6-8.

Although Volume 9 is included in this same time period, it represented a departure from the “sameness” that had come to characterize the journal. First of all, the cover was more attractive and the table of contents was printed on the cover, rendering the contents accessible to the casual reader (Figure 3). The journal itself was larger in size but, like all former volumes, it was not bound, but was stapled together. A formal bibliographic style was finally adopted: APA 4th edition. Other changes were that manuscripts were to be submitted to the Editor of the journal and the copyright statement gave authors permission to reproduce their articles for personal use.



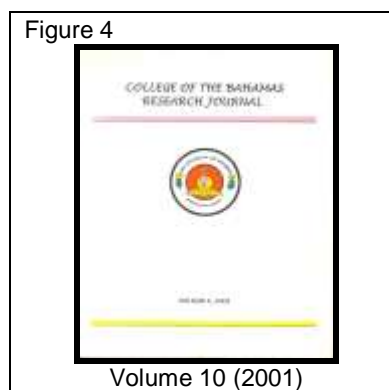
A significant change was that the names of the Editor and the Editorial Board were listed along with their departmental affiliation. Therefore we learn that Volume 9 was edited by Dr Eleanor Thompson and drew board members from the Humanities, Natural Sciences, Libraries, and Education Divisions. As well, the journal listed the Readers – the peer-reviewers – although the fact that the articles had been subject to peer-review of some sort was not explicitly stated. The readers were co-opted from the local and international academic communities, and almost all are Bahamian or had a connection to the College of The Bahamas.

A New Century: Volumes 10-13, 2001-2005

Volume 10 made its debut in 2001 under the editorship of Dr James Urwick, a professor in the School of Education and with a new name (and a new ISSN): *The College of The Bahamas Research Journal*. The name was changed because the College's weekly radio broadcast was also called *College Forum* and caused confusion. Although the new name was not particularly creative, including "research" in its title may have been an attempt make the journal appear more scholarly.

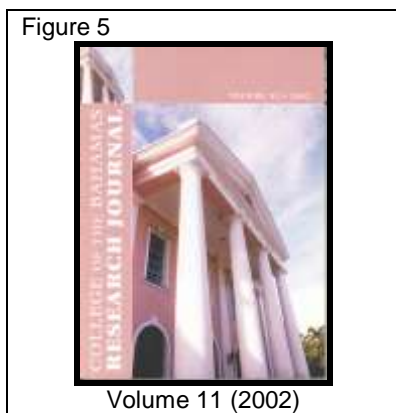
In addition, Volume 10 sported a new cover design, somewhat reminiscent of the volumes published in the 1990s – subdued and simple – with just the College crest in colour, the

journal name and the volume and year designation at the foot of the page and the size returned to a smaller format: 9 ½ x 7 ½”.



Information for contributors was given on the back inside cover and re-stated the policies of the journal as they were given in previous volumes – basically word for word. Included in the information about the journal on the first page was the fact that it is a “refereed research journal” (2001, p. i). Further information on the review process is given on the back cover: articles were subject to a preliminary editorial review, then assessed by reviewers from within and outside the College. Volume 11, edited by Anne Lawlor and Volumes 12-13, edited by Marie Sairsingh-Mills (2005), clearly defined the journal as “... a scholarly, peer-reviewed research journal, published annually by the College of The Bahamas” (p. 1).

Volumes 11-13 featured a dramatic new cover with a colour photograph of the portico of the Oakes Field Campus (a photograph taken by Andrew Seymour of the Libraries and Instructional Media Services Department) and a new layout with the journal title parallel to the spine (Figure 5). The table of contents of the journal was printed on the back cover and the volume and year designation was placed on the upper right-hand corner of the front cover. The size of the journal had also increased to 10½" x 7½" and was now glue bound, giving a professional look.



In her editorial in Volume 11, Anne Lawlor wrote that there had been an unprecedented number of submissions for the journal that year and that she hoped the journal would one-day go online. The following year in Volume 12, editor Marie Sairsingh-Mills reported that several universities abroad had taken out subscriptions (as a result of a promotional campaign to libraries at universities with Caribbean studies programmes), which augured well for the dissemination of the results of research in The College.

Since the re-launch of the journal in 1994, the editorial board had become fairly stable with members serving for successive years and the Research Unit providing support for the journal (generally the Director of the Research Unit was an ex-officio member of the Editorial Board). However, the editor continued to be changed very nearly every year.

The Online Era: Volume 14, 2008 onward

Volume 14 heralded radical change as the journal moved from print to an online, open access electronic journal. This innovation meant that the audience for COB research would no longer be limited to the few university libraries with a print subscription. The electronic or online journal was registered in directories of open-access and online journals, such as Directory of Open Access Journals at the University of Lund (DOAJ), OAIster, and Google Scholar, which increased

the opportunity for scholars interested in Bahamian topics to find articles published in the journal.

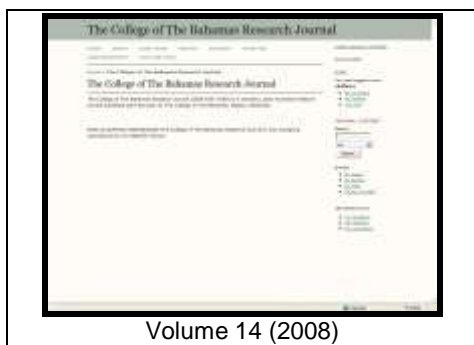
The College chose to publish the research journal using the Open Journal Systems software (<http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs>), an open source solution for managing and publishing scholarly journals. Among the advantages are lower publishing and distribution costs compared to a traditional print journal, software customization, free software, sound documentation and good systems support, and finally, streamlined managerial processes involved in scholarly publishing (peer review, editing, layout, etc.). The new online journal was supplied with a new e-ISSN.

In addition to publishing new volumes electronically, all back issues of the journal were digitized. Scanning all back issues took hours of preparation to ensure that the best copies of the back issues of the printed journal could be found. Each article was scanned to 600 dpi and where necessary the scanned image was corrected. Each article was saved as a unique pdf file and analyzed so that each word could be searched by the software. Because most of the documents were not native pdf files (only volumes 12 and 13 were produced using publishing software), there might be some errors in the scanned image; however, they are about 98% accurate.

Each volume was reconstructed in the Open Journal Systems software and published online. Each article was supplied with metadata: keywords, author information, title, and an abstract.

Concurrently, papers submitted for Volume 14 (Figure 6) were also prepared for publication electronically. This entailed creating a new layout of the journal articles: decisions were made regarding the look, the typeface, and the use of columns, headings and footers.

Figure 6



Volume 14 (2008)

The digitized journal back volumes and the new volume were launched in late September 2008.

A New Decade, A New Title

In 2009 the Editorial Board of the *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* proposed that the journal sharpen its focus and only publish articles relating to the field of Bahamian studies. Since there was no other niche Bahamian studies journal, it was obvious that the College of The Bahamas should do so. In addition, as the College was taking steps toward transforming from a college to a university, the name of the institution would also change, which would, when it happened, force a name change for the journal.

An analysis of the content of the articles published in *College Forum* and the *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* indicated that well over 75% of articles addressed Bahamian-related topics (only 30 of the 87 articles were non Bahamian, and of those, 8 had Caribbean content); therefore, it seemed to be a natural step to tighten the focus of the journal and rename it *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies* (Figure 7) with the publication of Volume 16 in the autumn of 2010.

Like its predecessors, the IJBS continued as a multidisciplinary journal, publishing articles in the disciplines of politics, history, economics, language and literature, linguistics, religion, the environment, cultural heritage, social issues and development—in effect, any scholarship focussing of issues relevant to The

Bahamas and Bahamian-relationships with the international community. The international aspect places the journal on the global stage and was meant to encourage scholars interested in The Bahamas, whether they are physically located in The Bahamas or elsewhere, to apply a broader, global perspective to their analysis.

Figure 7



Volume 16 (2010)

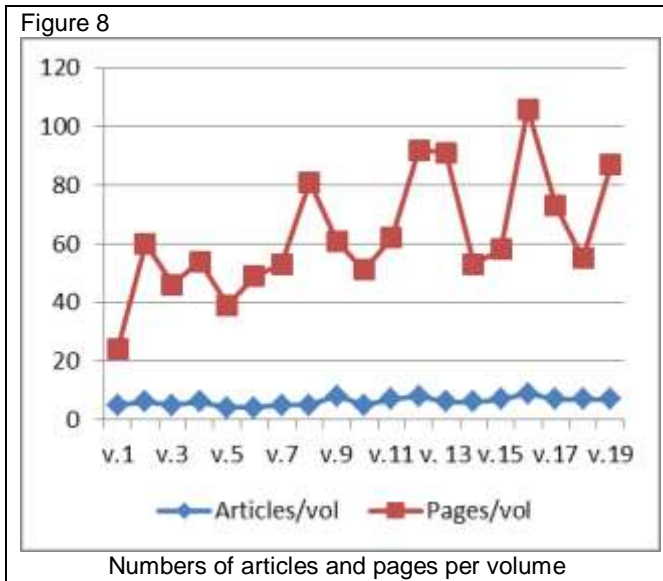
Methods

Counts were made of each published volume: number of articles, number of pages per volume, type of articles, number of authors per article, and discipline or classification of the articles. Three volumes were not included in the analysis: Volume 5 (1984) because it was composed of the transcripts of speeches delivered in the College's Distinguished Lecture series and Volumes 17, no. 1 (2011) and Volume 19, no. 2 (2013), the Caribbean Art Music Bibliography, as they represent complete stand-alone works. Two articles published in two parts in succeeding volumes were counted as one article.

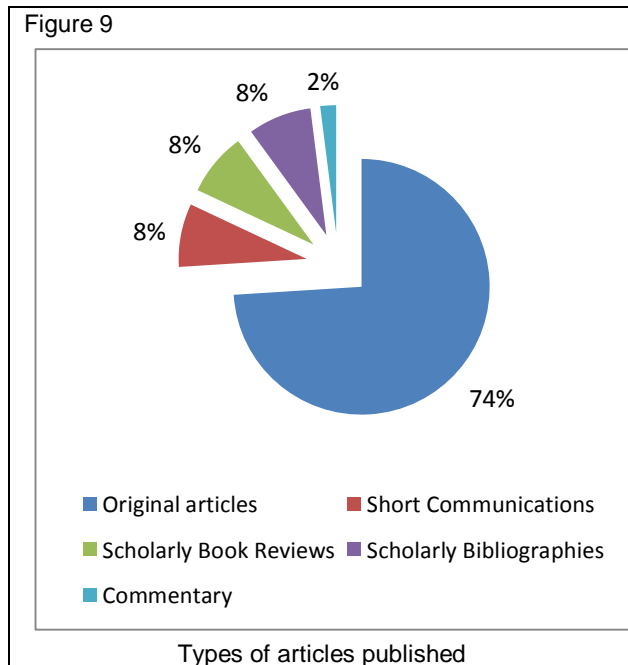
Results

In the 19 volumes analysed, there were, on average, six articles per volume. The average number of pages per volume was 66, with the largest volume having 106 pages and the smallest, Volume 1, having 24 pages. Figure 8 illustrates how the number of pages in each volume has been trending upward whereas the number of articles per volume has not varied

much over time.

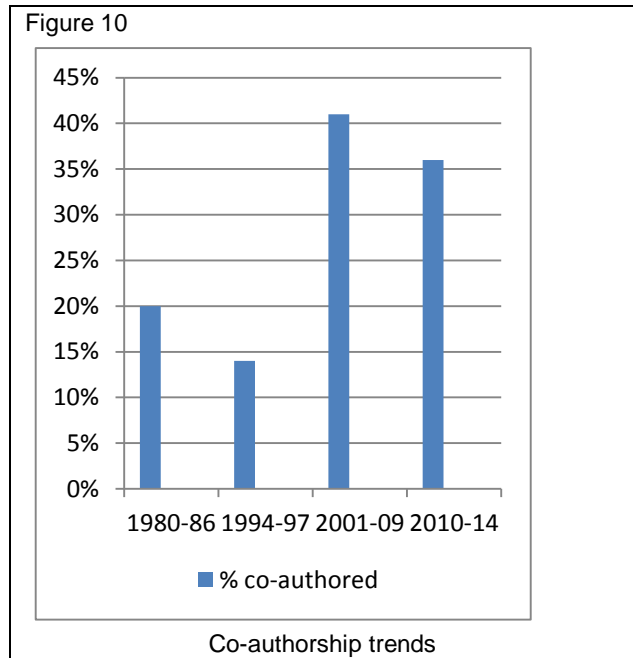


Of the 117 articles published between 1980-2013, the overwhelming category is the original scholarly research article with equal numbers of book reviews, bibliographies and short communications. Figure 9 illustrates the distribution of types of articles published.



Over 74% of all articles were written by single authors. However, since 2000 there has been a shift of submissions toward co-authorship: since then, 36% have been written by two or

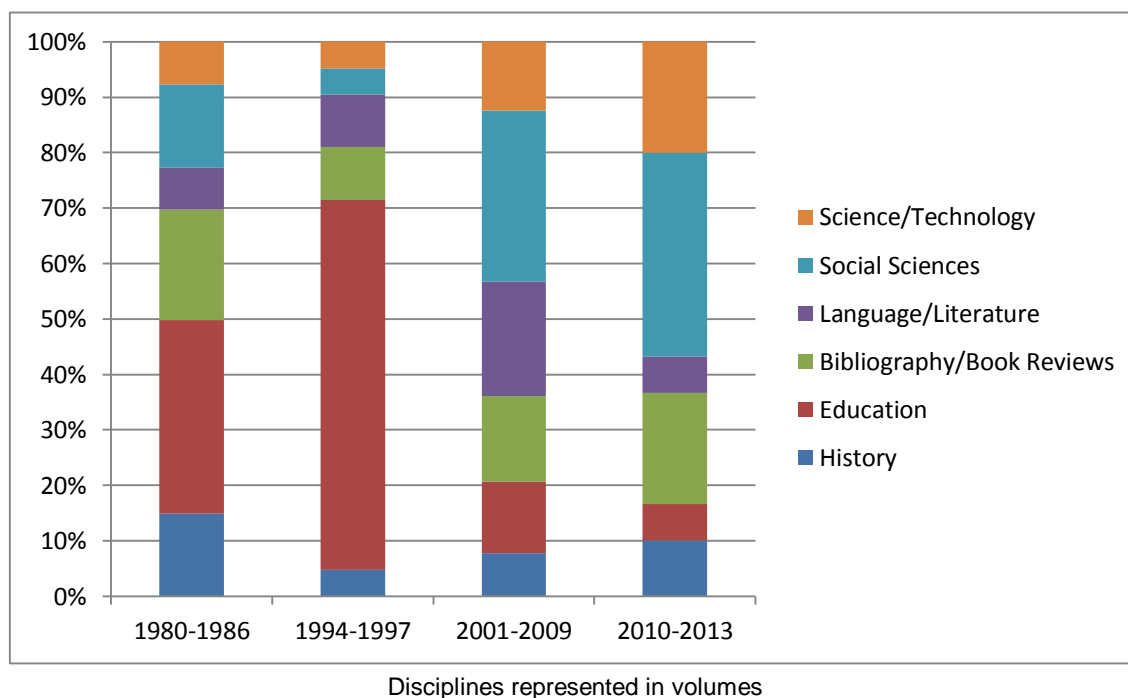
more authors. Figure 10 illustrates the trend.



Since its inception, the journal has been multidisciplinary, publishing articles from a variety of disciplines, dependent upon what manuscripts were submitted. Articles (N = 117) were classified into broad categories: Science and Technology, Social Sciences, Language and Literature, Bibliography and Book Reviews, Education and History.

While classification is subjective and may be open to interpretation, these broad subject categories give a picture of the multidisciplinary nature of the journal's contents, and Figure 11 illustrates how the mix of disciplines has changed over time. Education-related scholarship has fallen off considerably but has been offset by an increase in articles in the social sciences (political science, economics, anthropology, sociology, law). Science-related articles have increased in number whereas the number of language and literature articles has decreased. Historical articles have been more or less consistent and constant.

Figure 11



Discussion

Neither print-based journal, the *College Forum* or *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* has been cited in other academic research, largely because the journal was not available in libraries outside of The Bahamas nor was it included in abstracts and indexes. A further impediment was the lack of an office for the journal within the College.

A search of WorldCat™ (which reports the holdings of thousands of university and research libraries around the world) revealed that *College Forum* was held by one library: the University of the West Indies in Trinidad; and *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* was held by two libraries in the United States: the University of Illinois and University of Texas at Austin. Searches of other national library databases were no less fruitful. Neither variant title of the journal appears in the National Library of Canada's Amicus database – which indicates that no Canadian libraries report holdings of the journal. Neither title is listed in the Library of

Congress nor in the British Library databases. What is even more surprising is that copies were not available at the University of Florida at Gainesville in their extensive Latin America and Caribbean collection. Extensive searching of library catalogues which might possibly have the journal (owing to their exhaustive holdings or research interest in the Caribbean) was completely fruitless. The only success was the University of London's unified library database, which indicated that the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (ICOMM) had holdings from Volume 10, 2001.

Using OCLC's Connexion™ database to search the three variant titles of the journal reveals that the online version of the journal is now included in the library databases of hundreds of libraries and national libraries (who report holdings to OCLC). *College Forum* is in 95 libraries, *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* in 151 and the *International Journal of Bahamian Studies* is listed in 187 libraries. This is evidence that the journal is available to a much wider potential

audience.

Scholarship published in the journal has not been easy to find and use by academics because the journal was not indexed by any commercial indexing and abstracting companies (EBSCO, CAB, ERIC, etc.) nor was it included in regional resources such as Mitchell's *West Indian Bibliography* (2012). A search of Google Scholar and EBSCO made in 2007, before the journal was digitized and metadata submitted to DOAJ, revealed that *College Forum* had been cited once: Urwick (2002) referenced an article by Davis (1995). The *College of the Bahamas Research Journal* had been cited once by Fielding, Samuels and Mather (2002) referring to an article by Fielding and Samuels (2002). Quamina-Aiyejina (2006) included two articles from the journal in her bibliography on education in the Bahamas.

Searching the journal's title in Google Scholar in July 2014 revealed a much different result: all the articles have been indexed by Google Scholar and the "cited by" feature indicates that many articles have been referenced in new scholarship. As research and interest in Bahamian studies grows internationally, a comprehensive citation analysis should be undertaken. However, preliminary indications are that the effort to digitize the journal has been beneficial.

Another hurdle that impeded the sustainability of the journal was the lack of a home or secretariat within the College. Had such an office existed, a secretariat might have attended to the day-to-day details involved with managing a publication, such as sending renewal notices to subscribers as well as providing logistical support for the journal's editors, promoting the journal, preparing the call for papers, responding to inquiries and the like. As well, such an office might also have

managed the paperwork—sending letters of acceptance and rejection, or simply mailing out issues of the journal had there been a request to purchase a copy, in addition to maintaining files. Without a secretariat to arrange for announcements to be sent to other journals to solicit submissions from outside the College or The Bahamas, or to send announcements to former contributors, and without a web presence for the journal, the journal lacked an institutional memory to sustain any momentum it might have gained and to prevent the periodic lapses that have occurred in its publishing history.

Conclusion

The new *IJBS* is a viable journal that exists to publish scholarly and research articles with a Bahamian focus. Having undergone a metamorphosis from print to electronic format as an online open access journal, the profile of the journal has been raised both locally and internationally. Articles are accessible through the Google and Google Scholar search engines as well as through commercial databases, which has allowed students, researchers and scholars to make use of the journal.

The *IJBS* is also a tool that university administrations can use to promote the university internationally. It could be used to attract researchers and scholars, to attract potential students and, overall, to raise the public's perception of the value of the university. The journal is the organ through which College faculty's expertise and opinion can be shared with the wider community and the world. The existence of a viable, robust academic journal can also enhance the academic profile of the College, proving that the College is truly ready to become a university. And finally, the journal is a forum for dialogue on topics of Bahamian interest.

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