

From the Editor

This first issue of the *Research Journal* under my editorship is also the first under new publication policies (see page ii). Henceforth, the pages of the *Research Journal* will be open to submissions from scholars not formally affiliated with the American Bar Foundation as well as those who are, and article and research note manuscripts submitted for publication will be evaluated by knowledgeable referees before publication decisions are made. Our readers, however, will still find a continuity of purpose.

This journal was founded in 1976 by Spencer L. Kimball, then executive director of the Foundation. Under his editorship, the *Research Journal* has reflected the breadth and vitality of the Foundation's multidisciplinary research program. Although the character of a scholarly journal always eludes precise definition, the *Research Journal* has gained special recognition as an important source of scholarly research on the structure and workings of the legal profession, the delivery of legal services, the actual operation of legal institutions, developments and trends in the law and legal policy, and a variety of related topics. Like the Foundation's research program, the *Research Journal* has been multidisciplinary in the truest sense of the word, publishing both doctrinal analyses and empirical studies, as appropriate to the subject addressed.

I think it is fair to say that the *Research Journal* has taken on a unique character, a blend of contents between the traditional student-edited law reviews and the journals of the social science disciplines. By drawing on the empirical research expertise of the Foundation's research staff, the *Research Journal* has been more able than the law reviews to present empirical studies of the law in action. At the same time, however, because of its concern with legal questions and institutions rather than with the theoretical development of any particular discipline, the *Research Journal* has had a more direct concern with legal policy developments than one typically finds in the social science journals. I do not mean to overstate these differences—indeed, I think the *Research Journal* has published and should continue to publish the full range of relevant research and analysis. Nevertheless, by its unique character, the *Research Journal* provides a much needed bridge between legal scholarship and other pertinent scholarly disciplines. That is the role that the *Research Journal* will continue to follow.

Our purpose in adopting new publication policies is not to change direction, but simply to facilitate further growth. Refereed publication policies are commonplace among the journals of virtually all learned professions except law. Essentially, a refereed publication policy means that all manuscripts being considered for publication will be sent to several reviewers chosen because of their expertise regarding the subject matter and research methods. To assure as much objectivity in these evaluations as possible, the authors of manuscripts will not be identified to reviewers and the identity of reviewers will not be disclosed to authors. This evaluation process is not mechanical, however; it does not consist merely of reviewers' votes to publish or not. Rather, it is a way of obtaining qualitative assessments to inform editorial decisions and to provide the authors with suggestions for improving manuscripts. While the editor must still make publication decisions, the institutionalization of refereed evaluations enhances the likelihood of sound decisions. To implement this process, we have expanded the *Research Journal's* distinguished editorial board (see page iii). We expect to call upon board members to act as reviewers or to suggest other scholars who would be appropriate reviewers for particular manuscripts.

The decision to open the *Research Journal* to submissions from the larger community of law-related scholarship is consistent with the Foundation's mission, which has always included the dissemination of knowledge about the legal system as well as the creation of such knowledge. Through visiting scholar and affiliated scholar appointments and other professional contacts, the Foundation's research program contributes to the dialogue among law-related scholars in addition to producing research findings. We believe that an open publication policy, coupled with the use of reviewers drawn from the larger scholarly and professional community, will further contribute to that dialogue.

The adoption of an open publication policy with regard to articles and research notes is also consistent with the expansion of the Review Section that was initiated in the third issue for 1982. Under the editorship of Howard Erlanger of the University of Wisconsin, that section emphasizes review essays and book notes rather than traditional book reviews. The review essays allow knowledgeable scholars to assess and comment on developing lines of analysis and thought in particular areas of inquiry. We hope that these essays will spark increased dialogue among scholars addressing similar concerns, though possibly from differing disciplinary perspectives. Book notes will provide readers with brief descriptions of the contents of recently published books.

Our hope is that these policies will enhance the role of the *Research Journal* as a vital source for research and commentary on legal policy and institutions.

T.Y.D.