Editor’s Note

M. Sue Baughman, ARL Deputy Executive Director and RLI Editor

As I write this introduction to this Research Library Issues on library and campus safety, I see an e-mail in my inbox about a shooting at The Ohio State University (OSU) where my niece, Sarah, is a student. I go to the CNN website to see what is happening and I send Sarah a text asking if she is safe. Fortunately, I hear from Sarah an hour later that she is no longer in lockdown on campus and has returned to her apartment.

This incident at OSU and others like it are no longer unusual phenomenon, unfortunately. Universities and libraries have protocols for dealing with safety issues and staff are trained to manage these occurrences. However, when there is a real emergency, instincts kick in and people respond in unpredictable ways.

When a shooting occurred in fall 2014 at Florida State University’s Strozier Library, the ARL community was anxious for news from Julia Zimmerman, dean of University Libraries, to hear library staff and users were safe. As Julia points out in this issue’s first article, it took time to sort through the events of that night and much longer to sort through the impact the incident had on library staff, students, and the campus community. Julia and Susannah Miller, associate dean for library administrative services, tell the story of the staff who were in the library when the shooting occurred. More important than the details of that horrific night, however, are the steps taken by the library leadership, campus, and police following this tragedy, which Julia and Susannah also describe.

Shortly after we approached Julia in spring 2016 to write about Florida State’s experience, there was a shooting at UCLA. In this issue’s second article, Ginny Steel, UCLA university librarian, describes the number of people pouring into the campus libraries and the desire of library staff to help everyone be safe, while not knowing where the “active shooter” was at any given moment. Ginny discusses the lack of information and
the incorrect information circulating that day, which amplified fears. She shares lessons learned as a result of the incident and a campus task force review that followed.

ARL thanks Julia, Susannah, and Ginny for sharing these stories. They are useful to all of us and remind us we can be called upon to act at any time.

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