

PREFACE TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE:
NEW JERSEY'S THREE CONSTITUTIONS

BY ROBERT G. SEWELL, EDITOR

"A study of a state's constitutional development can provide important insight into the broader issues of that state's political, economic, and social growth." This statement from Robert F. Williams in his updated edition of *The New Jersey State Constitution, A Reference Guide* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997: xlix) is born out by the articles presented here.

Maxine Lurie's opening article, "New Jersey's Three Constitutions: 1776, 1844, 1947" provides an overview of the state constitutional progress over three centuries. Based on a major exhibition that was on display in the Alexander Library at Rutgers during the first half of 1998, Lurie's article draws on the most important primary sources. The second article, "Democracy Works in New Jersey," is a reprint of an article published in October 1947 and written by a young instructor in the Department of History and Political Science, Richard P. McCormick. McCormick's contemporary reportage on the 1947 New Jersey Constitutional Convention held on the Rutgers University campus conveys the excitement surrounding the convention that resulted in New Jersey's changing from a state with one of the worst state constitutions to a state with a constitution that has become a model for others.

Nicholas Turse investigates an abortive attempt to create a new state constitution in "Vote No: Archbishop Walsh, the Catholic Church and the 1944 New Jersey Constitution." In a nice bit of archival detective work, Turse uncovers the story of patronage, religious block voting, and the big boss politics of the Jersey City mayor that characterized the times and led to the defeat of the 1944 constitution. In her article, "The New Jersey Constitution and the 1875 'Thorough and Efficient' Education Amendment," Harriet Sepinwall writes about an amendment to the 1844 constitution that was incorporated into the 1947 constitution. Her detailed survey of the history and politics surrounding the writing and acceptance of this key amendment demonstrates that the issues that concerned nineteenth century New Jerseyans are still with us today: Whether public funds should be used to support private and religious schools; how to counteract the tendency of rich districts to get richer and poor districts to become poorer in their ability

to support public education; what form of taxation and funding most fairly supports public education. These are serious issues that a democratic society must confront and resolve.

Hopefully, this volume of the *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* will add valuable illumination to these issues. In addition, the complete texts of the three New Jersey Constitutions are appended so that the reader may have ready access to them.

P.S. We are exploring ways to exploit new technologies to distribute the journal. We are seriously looking into developing an edition of the *Journal* that will be available on the internet. Please let us know if you would be interested in seeing the *Journal* on-line.

Pamela Spence Richards (1941-1999) died on September 20, 1999. She was the editor of the *Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries* for fourteen years and following that service remained on the editorial board until her death. She was a vivacious person with a sparkling wit, a wonderful colleague, and a thoughtful editor of the journal. She was responsible for vols. XLII (1980)- LVI (1994), including special issues on Special Collections Related to Women (December 1994), A Celebration of Twenty Years of the Mary H. Dana Women Artist Series (June 1992), New Technology and Library Construction (December 1992), Agricultural Information (June 1993), and A History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey (June 1994). Her editorship of the *Journal* was only one of many accomplishments, one for which the University Libraries are deeply grateful.