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Undergraduate

INTERVIEW WITH BSJ STAFF ADVISOR

LEAH CARROLL: BSJ THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

Kapil Gururangan, Susbrita Neogi, Prashant Bhat, Jared Rosen, Jingyan Wang

After graduating from Berkeley with a PhD in sociology, Leah Carroll returned to UC Berkeley in 2001 as the director of the Haas Scholars Program. Like Professor Kane, Leah became involved with Berkeley Scientific Journal through the undergraduate research programs in the Office of Undergraduate Research. She has guided BSJ since then and served as the staff advisor. Her experience in research and undergraduate education has been an invaluable asset, and her new position as the Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research is a testament to that. Leah's new book, "Violent Democratization: Social Movements, Elites, and Politics in Columbia's Rural War Zones," shows her all-encompassing involvement in research, both in a mentoring and in pursuing her own fields of interest.

BSJ: Can you begin by telling us how BSJ began?

Carroll: BSJ began as an independent group of students who were really revved up and wanted to start their own journal. They went to Caroline Kane because at that point she was very involved in BSP, UC Leeds, and McNair. I informally called her the "goddess of undergraduate research at UC Berkeley in the Biological Sciences". She was always at every undergraduate research event for biology. A lot of people would stop by her office to get her advice on research issues. She's an amazing person. So they went to her first and for a number of years she had an HHMI grant and she shared part of it with BSJ— around \$1500 per year. So it was supplemental. When BSJ came to the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) at first, the budget was \$10,000 per year. There were really big printing

costs because the journal were of very high quality. For a while, BSJ had advertising to supplement the high printing costs.

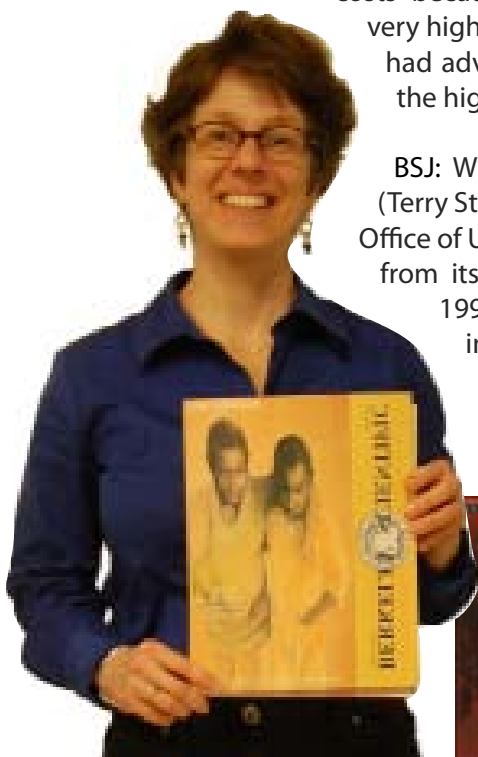
BSJ: When did you and Terry (Terry Strathman, Director of the Office of Undergraduate Research from its inception in the early 1990s until her retirement in June of 2011) get involved with BSJ?

Carroll: I didn't come to the OUR until 2001. Terry started in the early nineties, with URAP. BSJ formed out of the journal that ran for the Biology Fellows Program. Terry told me they were just a student group with no staff affiliation before they came to us. But they needed a continuing source of funding. The editor then approached Don McQuade, who was the Dean of the undergraduate division of L&S, for money, probably on Caroline's advice. Don asked Terry for her two cents since BUJ (Berkeley Undergraduate Journal) had just come to the OUR. She thought it made sense for us to take BSJ in. Initially the BSJ had an office in Campbell Hall and then Wheeler Hall.

BSJ: How has BSJ changed over time, in terms of publishing and content? How has BSJ evolved?

Carroll: They used to have these giant group meetings every week in Campbell Hall, and they were very loud because all of the sections would meet all at once. There was a tradition of humanities people involved, which has since dropped out. I think now it is almost exclusively science undergraduates.

The print part absorbed a lot of time and energy both of the BSJ staff and me. From the BSJ side there were the tasks of finding advertising, the additional layers of layout that needed to be done before sending it to the publishers such as preparing the photos, choosing the binding, and getting competitive bids from at least two



printers. Some years people would drive to the printers in South San Francisco to pick up the journals because they were on tight deadlines. The issues would come back and they would be mailed out to about 500 to professors. Often, they would be clever and make the mailing party coincide with the recruitment meeting so they'd get the new recruits to do the labeling and they could see what the final product would look like. As time went on, a few things happened. When they first started out, the programs they used for layout were extremely expensive and most computers weren't even capable of running it. We had it on the BSJ machine and they would work in the office. When more students learned how to use the

the one who made the website very high-tech. He was very aggressive in getting advertising money and in fact, BSJ still has some money left over from his time, to be used for software. I remember him very fondly because he was one of those editors-in-chief who wouldn't go away. There was one issue that needed to get to the publisher and he kept sending e-mails from India and was managing BSJ from abroad so that the issue would make it on time. There have been some very interesting personalities in BSJ over the years.

BSJ: What do you find most rewarding being the BSJ advisor?

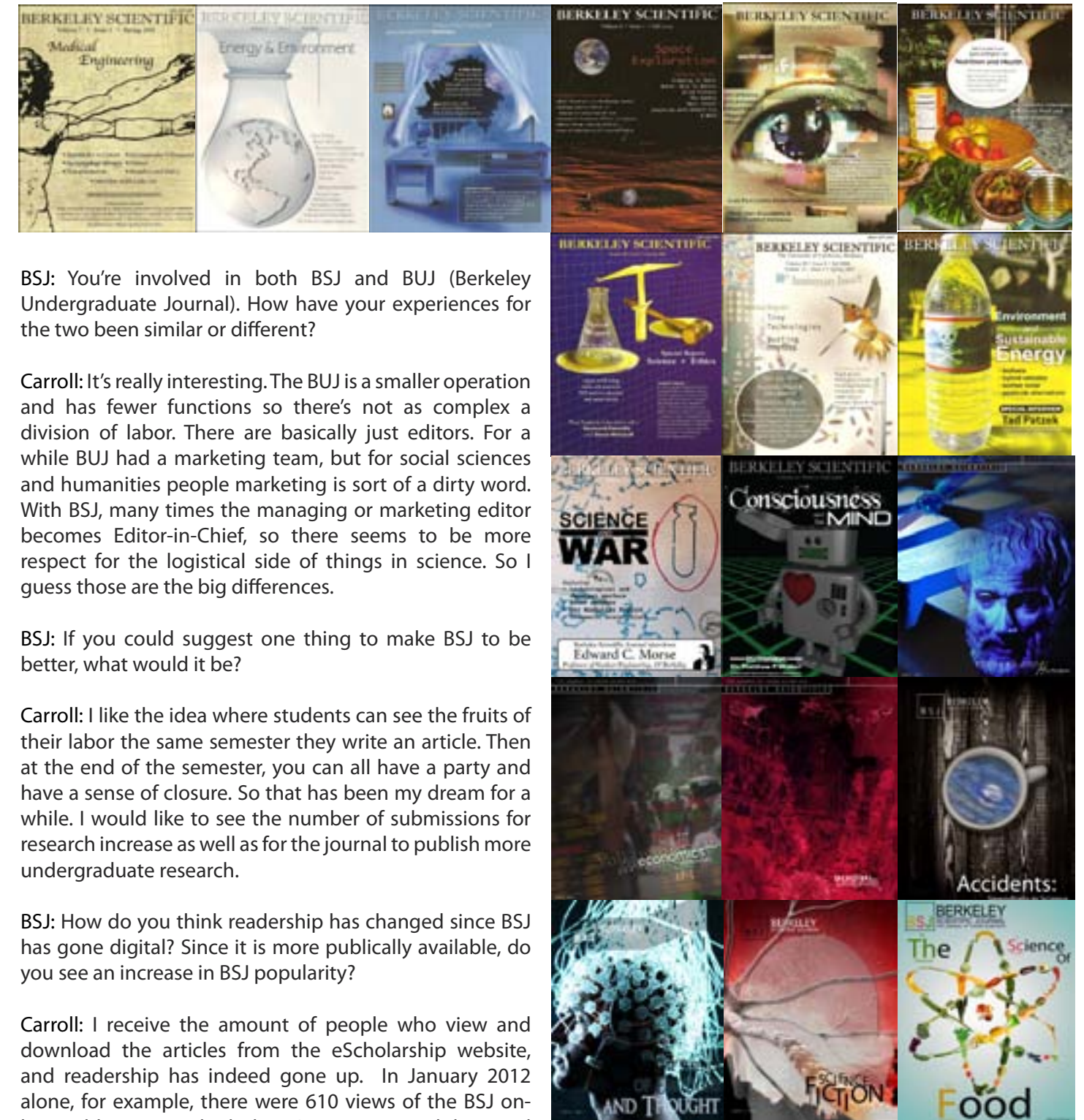
Carroll: This could be said of working with students in general, but I love watching students navigate the logistical tasks and figuring out how to manage the leadership role to motivate their staff while trying to make things easier and systematizing them."

"I love watching students navigate the logistical tasks and figuring out how to manage the leadership role to motivate their staff while trying to make things easier and systematizing them."

software and more students were able to have it on their own computers, the layout started happening offsite more often and the office started getting used less and less. That was a shift that happened over time. It seems to me that the sections started to meet more independently, which I didn't think was a great thing because some of the social aspect was dropped, such as the research people getting to know the layout people. I'm actually really happy that you now have gone back to having a single meeting where the different groups meet in different corners of the room. It allows for some cross-pollination, coordination, and just people getting to know each other. One of the reasons people join organizations like this is to get to know other motivated students.

them. On a good year there's a lot of creativity, and this is a good year for you guys. Taku Xu has found a really ingenious way of mechanizing the layout process. The guy who came before was a very, very high level designer, but he did it in a very laborious manner that no one else without his skills could do. Taku has found a way to make the process accessible to lower skilled people. He's kind of aggregated commands in a way and made it sort of the Macintosh of BSJ layout. I admire that technical innovation. I think that the Berkeley Scientific Journal DeCal is a fantastic idea and it really seems to be working. There are things that people have thought of that haven't really occurred to me that I just find inspiring, especially when people are on the cutting edge technologically and are just thinking outside the box. Plus, this is the first time you are doing staff interviews; I think this is an interesting thought because in the world of undergraduate research, staff probably plays a larger role than in graduate research.

Another major trend throughout BSJ's history were some very high-achieving editors. We had a University medalist who was a BSJ-er. Margaret Chow, in 2004. We had an editor-in-chief, Shail Gala, who was a bioengineer; he was



BSJ: You're involved in both BSJ and BUJ (Berkeley Undergraduate Journal). How have your experiences for the two been similar or different?

Carroll: It's really interesting. The BUJ is a smaller operation and has fewer functions so there's not as complex a division of labor. There are basically just editors. For a while BUJ had a marketing team, but for social sciences and humanities people marketing is sort of a dirty word. With BSJ, many times the managing or marketing editor becomes Editor-in-Chief, so there seems to be more respect for the logistical side of things in science. So I guess those are the big differences.

BSJ: If you could suggest one thing to make BSJ to be better, what would it be?

Carroll: I like the idea where students can see the fruits of their labor the same semester they write an article. Then at the end of the semester, you can all have a party and have a sense of closure. So that has been my dream for a while. I would like to see the number of submissions for research increase as well as for the journal to publish more undergraduate research.

BSJ: How do you think readership has changed since BSJ has gone digital? Since it is more publically available, do you see an increase in BSJ popularity?

Carroll: I receive the amount of people who view and download the articles from the eScholarship website, and readership has indeed gone up. In January 2012 alone, for example, there were 610 views of the BSJ on-line publication. I think the BSJ is on very solid ground right now, ready to revive the strengths of the past such as a strong sense of community, while embracing new technologies such as on-line publication and "democratized" layout techniques, and new recruitment strategies such as the BSJ DeCal. I greatly look forward to the BSJ's next decade.

