



From *Seminarian* to *Librarian*

There's nothing like a library, says **Tom Alrutz, B.A. 1966, M.S.L.S. 1972.**

“Working in libraries means being with people, solving problems, providing help and information, and trying to lead an organization with all the parts pulling in the same direction,” he explained.

But his vocation wasn't always so clear. When Alrutz first stepped onto campus in 1964, his plan was to become a priest and a member of the Marist community. Like many seminarians, Alrutz studied philosophy (at Catholic University) and theology (at Marist College and St. Paul's College). When the Marist Fathers gave him the assignment of director for the seminary's library, his passion for library science was awakened.

After studying theology for three years, Alrutz decided the priesthood wasn't for him, but was unsure of where to go next. He started working part time at the Fairfax County Public Library in Virginia. His supervisors quickly saw that he had a talent for library science and pushed him to apply for funding for his master's degree.

At the time, the federal government was desperate to train more librarians and Catholic University was one of the only schools in the area with a library science graduate program. So Alrutz found himself back at his alma mater.

“Surprisingly enough, my time in the seminary really prepared me for my career in libraries,” said Alrutz. “My philosophy career taught me to think and reason, be logical, be organized, be probing, and be open. Library science at Catholic was right in the same vein, with a mix of theoretical and practical.”

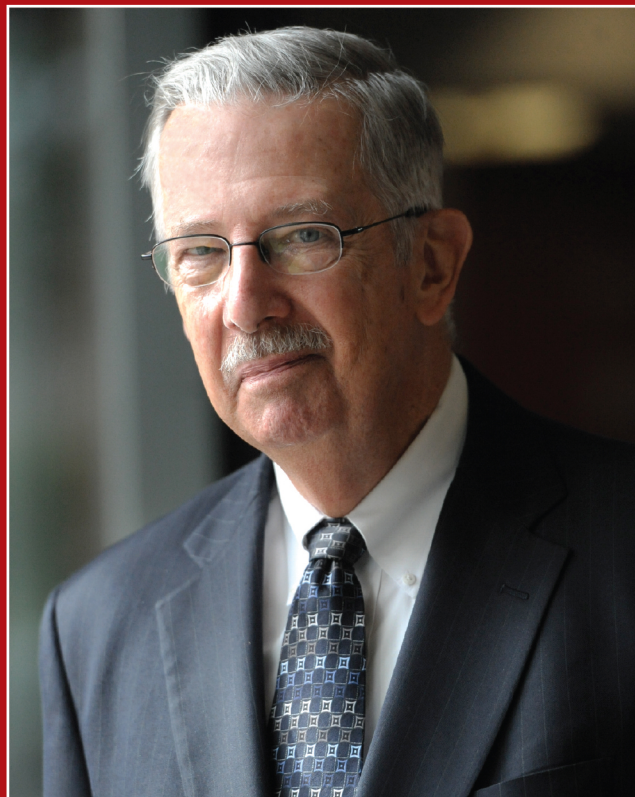
After 11 years working at Fairfax County Public Library, he launched a new career at the Newark Public Library in New Jersey, serving as its director for eight years. From there, he became the associate and deputy director of one of the largest libraries in the country, The New York Public Library. He remained there for more than 20 years until he retired in 2009.

Catholic University also left him with a deep appreciation for music. One of his fondest memories is leading Marist College Choir, directing the music each year for Christmas Midnight Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was through working part time as a music director after school that he met his late wife. They were married 36 years.

Today, Alrutz is officially retired, but the Newark Public Library has called him back to serve as interim director.

“Even retired, I just can't stay out of the library,” says Alrutz.

— E.L.W.



Why I Serve...

“I have been back to the campus many times over the years while I lived in the D.C. area and I still go back from time to time, but I've never been to a CUA reunion. This year will be my 50th anniversary and I thought it was time. When the President wrote me a letter and asked, I thought I wouldn't be representative of my class, given that I was in the School of Philosophy and the seminary. To my surprise, one of the biggest chunks of my graduating class was from the School of Philosophy.”