

# Forces

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## Introduction

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## INTRODUCTION

## WHY FORCES?

By Texas Poet Laureate: Carol Coffee Reposa -  
30th Anniversary Speech reprinted at the request of the author.

"I am delighted, honored, and above all proud to help launch this milestone 30th edition of *Forces* and would like to thank Collin College President Dr. Neil Matkin, the Board of Trustees, and Professor Scott Yarbrough for inviting me to take part in these proceedings. I think that all of you here at Collin are very fortunate, first in your capacity to produce a journal of this caliber and—even more important—in having leadership that recognizes the immense value of supporting such an endeavor. How lucky you are!

There probably are scores of reasons to cherish literary journals like *Forces*, but five stand out to me, so here they are. **REASON #1:** The ideas and images they contain ripple out into the communities they serve and to the world beyond, enriching the lives of their readers and thus exerting immeasurable influence.

But that's just the start. **REASON #2:** Literary journals advance—and often launch—careers. Periodicals like *Forces* have brought to the public the words of such literary titans as Edgar Allan Poe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Ernest Hemingway and have given us such works as *Great Expectations*, *Anna Karenina*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Moby Dick*, all of which first appeared serialized in literary journals well before they ever emerged as stand-alone titles.

**REASON #3:** Literary journals stand as bulwarks against oppression and autocracy. In his landmark *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville warns us against what he calls 'tyranny of the majority,' or mob rule, but adds that the existence of a free press—including, of course, serial publications—is a sure-fire way to preserve freedom and independence of thought. Thus, when you support journals like *Forces*, you not only advance the arts; you protect our democracy.

**REASON #4:** Even as periodicals safeguard civil liberties, they also unite us. In a nation as diverse as ours, there must be at least a few common threads to pull us together, and journals do just that. If people are reading and responding to the same stories, poems, and essays from coast to coast, mountaintop to seashore, farm to sprawling city, they will have at least some shared values no matter how different they may be in other ways.

**REASON #5:** Works included in literary journals often draw attention to public ills and thereby change society for the better. Consider this dramatic and famous example: Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, a blistering expose of dirt, danger and exploitation in Chicago's notorious meat-packing industry, stirred up a firestorm which resulted in passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act and the creation of the FDA. Today, anywhere in this country, we can buy brisket for our weekend cookout without wondering whether eating it will kill us. And for this reassurance we may thank a single writer and a single novel which first appeared (you guessed it) serialized in a literary journal.

I work for a small literature/arts quarterly published in San Antonio. Like many of its kind, it struggles financially, and people sometimes ask me why I continue to toil for a magazine that might go under any day. It never takes me long to reply. When I think of all the good that literary journals do—generating positive ripple effects in the community, launching careers, protecting democracy, fostering dialogue and toleration, spearheading social reform—my answer is always this: The question is not why I work for a literary journal. The real question is, 'Why don't you?'"

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As editor of *Forces*, I would like to thank Carol for taking her time to express the importance of Collin College's continued support of our journal now in its 31st year of continuous publication. To put that into prospective, the first editor, Dr. Peggy Brown will be retiring this year, which marks the longevity and vibrance of the journal. As always, thank you to Dr. Neil Matkin and the Board of Trustees, Digital Commons Manager Mindy Tomlin-Paulson, the student editors, Dean Dr. Meredith Wang, Dr. Kelly Andrews and Public Relations Staff Marlene Miller, Donna Kinder, Keli Fink, and Nicole Luna, and the ultimate *Forces* team, Rachel Walker, Deborah Hall, and Susan Matthews.

*Forces* Editor – R. Scott Yarbrough