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MARCH 18, 1992

# Board of trustees names new president

**John Duff,  
Chicago  
Library  
Commissioner,  
accepts post**

By Art Golab  
Editor

It's official. After months of speculation, the Columbia College board of trustees unanimously voted to name Dr. John Duff as successor to retiring President Mirron Alexandroff.

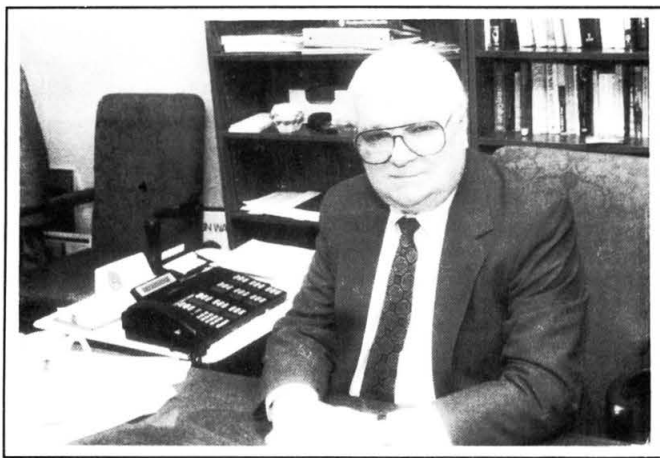
Though Columbia is getting a new president, the overall direction of the school is not expected to change significantly.

I expect the new president to strengthen the college's already strong tradition in the areas of open admission and diversity, said Executive Vice President Bert Gall, who also was on the search committee.

Outgoing President Mirron Alexandroff said that Duff will be faithful to the mission of Columbia and will rely on the people who remain to implement it.

For the last six years Duff has served as Chicago Public Library Commissioner. In that time he oversaw the successful completion of the new Harold Washington Central Library building, and according to some library staffers, helped to maintain the library's services in the face of increasing financial cutbacks.

Mayor Richard M. Daley said, The Chicago Public Library's loss is Columbia College's gain. John Duff guided the library through a very difficult, yet exciting period in its



John Duff, Columbia's new president

Nick Oza Staff Photographer

history.

Though Duff, 60, has been library commissioner since 1985, his academic career stretches back to 1960, when he became an instructor at Seton Hall University, in South Orange, New Jersey. He holds a master's degree in history from Seton Hall, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University.

During the '60s, Duff rose through the ranks at Seton Hall and by 1968 had become a full professor. An expert on immigration history, he has written a book, *The Irish in United States*, and has edited two books on slavery.

In 1971, Duff was appointed provost and executive vice president at Seton Hall. From 1976 to 1981, Duff served as president of the University of Lowell, in Lowell, Mass.

In 1981 the Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education appointed Duff chancellor, putting him in charge of the state's 29 public college and university campuses.

A 1985 *Chicago Tribune* article profiling Duff said that he endeared himself to college presidents

through his ability to wrest education money from the state legislature. Gerald Burke, president of Massasoit Community College in Brockton, Mass., was quoted as saying. It takes a particular political skill to deal with 29 college presidents; we're all prima donnas and we all think we know everything. But we know John's always there if we have a problem.

Duff's tenure at the Board of regents was not without its problems, however. A Boston Globe story accused him of sending a letter to members of the board soliciting contributions to a political fundraiser. This is a technical violation of Massachusetts law. Ultimately the Board of Regents, while expressing its continued support for Duff, reprimanded him for a single instance of an inappropriate action.

Duff told the *Chronicle* that the letter had been sent without his knowledge by an aide who was ignorant of a little-known law.

## Residence halls a possibility, says Duff

to accomplish as Columbia's new leader. He outlined some of his plans in a brief interview with the *Chronicle*.

Addressing the shortage (or nonexistence) of student housing, he said, We'll be looking into residence halls.

He also said that he would like Columbia to become less dependent on tuition to fund operating costs. To do this he would like to expand the endowment fund so that interest from the fund could pay more day to day expenses of the school.

Before Duff joined the Chicago Public Library, its endowment fund was around \$1,500, he said. Now the fund contains more than \$13 million. Though Duff gave much of the credit to library board member Mrs. Cindy Pritzker and the rest of the board, he admitted that he had a lot to do with the day to day fundraising activity.

Newly appointed President John Duff won't assume the post until August 31 of this year, but he is already thinking about what he wants

## Gall gets new post, title

At the same time it announced the appointment of John Duff, the board of trustees also promoted Executive Vice President Bert Gall to the newly created post of provost and executive vice president. According to Alton B. Harris, chairman of the board of trustees, Gall's long Columbia service assures that the college will enjoy continuity and experience in its leadership.

Gall said the provost position involves being a "chief operating officer," and that in addition to previous duties, he would be "getting more involved on the academic side."