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OPEN RIVERS : RETHINKING THE MISSISSIPPI



**NETWORKS &  
COLLABORATION**

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from multiple perspectives within and beyond the academy.

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The cover image is of a Healing Place Collaborative network diagram. Members are listed around the outside of the circle and each line between them indicates a collaboration or work done between those two members. Image courtesy of Mona Smith.

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## Contact Us

Open Rivers  
Institute for Advanced Study  
University of Minnesota  
Northrop  
84 Church Street SE  
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Telephone: (612) 626-5054  
Fax: (612) 625-8583  
E-mail: [openrvrs@umn.edu](mailto:openrvrs@umn.edu)  
Web Site: <http://openrivers.umn.edu>

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## INTRODUCTION

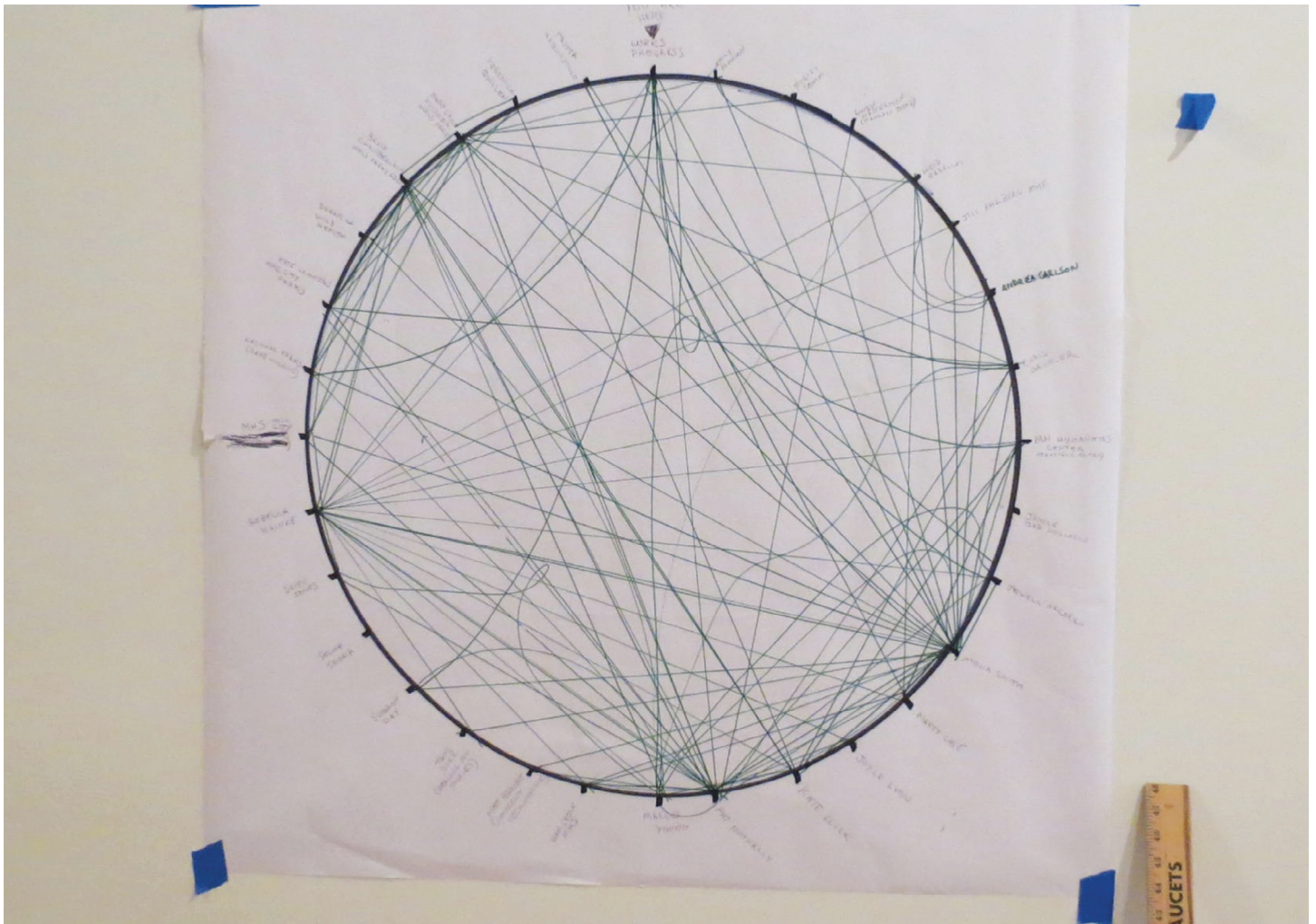
# INTRODUCTION TO ISSUE FIVE

By Patrick Nunnally, Editor

When I got fully engaged with Mississippi River work, in the mid-90s, there was a lot of talk about public-private partnerships. That has ebbed and flowed and morphed over the years, but the idea of partnership has remained. Pretty much anyone in any sector—public, nonprofit, or corporate—understands that work

beyond a small one-time project rarely happens through just one entity.

The features in this issue celebrate partnership and collaboration. Taken separately or together, this issue's articles focus on community work as opposed to scholarship. They will, we hope, show



*Healing Place Collaborative (HPC) network diagram. Each line represents work or collaboration between two HPC members. Image courtesy Mona Smith.*

community folks the work of others that they can learn from. We hope also that campus people can see the range of community partners and what they do, and see possibilities for expanding their engagement in particular ways they hadn't thought of. These articles illustrate a range of ways to engage in collaboration; if you know of a great collaboration that is not mentioned here, let us know and maybe we can get that case written up for a future issue.

Our Minneapolis campus is almost completely within the boundaries of the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, a unit of the National Park System that is known as a "partnership park." The feature by Superintendent John Anfinson (A U of M graduate, by the way) examines a number of the formal partnerships that enable the park to do the work that makes it successful. Our River Life program, as well as any number of individual researchers and instructors, has worked with park staff on a variety of projects over the years; we will have to figure out how all of that work can be rolled into a more formal agreement. That agreement would be a significant asset for the University and we trust it would be valuable for the park as well.

The work of the Healing Place Collaborative shares a geography with the local national park unit, but operates quite differently. The series of interviews offered here reflect the decentralized nature of the Collaborative's work, and the myriad ways that significant work is taking place by partners either individually or in various combinations, but all working under the aegis of "healing," "place," and "water." The Collaborative's November meeting perhaps exemplified the mutual strength members give each other; "How We Are Caring," a collection of reflections from that meeting, is included as a sidebar to the multiple voices in the article authored by Martin Case.

The river in our community is, of course, connected to the broader Mississippi River and,

through the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. Two additional features in this issue trace collaborative efforts that work toward the overall health of these waters. Kelly McGinnis articulates a number of the key principles underlying the collaborations among 50+ organizations of the Mississippi River Network. America's Wetland Foundation, as described in the article by Valsin Marmillion, works differently, by convening groups that don't normally work together into efforts that find innovative responses to seemingly intractable solutions.

Collaborations among multiple partners can achieve great things, but there will always be a need for good, old-fashioned river advocacy. John Helland describes the general perspectives offered by some of the most prominent national river advocacy groups; nearly all of them can be followed through social media if any in particular pique your interest. On the subject of national perspectives on rivers, Joanne Richardson reviews the current touring exhibit, "Water/Ways," which is anchored by the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street show on the importance of water in our lives.

Our final three columns bring us back to the campus of the University of Minnesota and its vicinity. Laura Matson offers an examination of the treaty provisions that underlie much of the conflict over the Dakota Access Pipeline and its crossing of the Missouri River near the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's reservation. The conflicts over water and the pipeline itself are fairly well known, but the treaty provisions are not. Hilary Holmes describes for us a quite different geography, Bridal Veil Falls, which formerly fell untrammelled into the Mississippi River near Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. Finally, Monica McKay gives us hope for the continuation of partnerships like those covered in this issue. Her account of various programs in the University of Minnesota's Center for Community-Engaged Learning indicates that collaboration can, perhaps, be taught.

It is appropriate in these times that we write intentionally about “hope” and teaching early career people about patterns of collaboration. As I discuss more fully [here](#) these are challenging times for people committed to issues of water, sustainability, place, and equity. I welcome your comments.

That is indeed a hopeful lesson for us all. Happy reading, everyone!

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## About the Author

Patrick Nunnally coordinates the River Life Program in the Institute for Advanced Study at the University of Minnesota. He serves as editor for *Open Rivers* and was one of the lead scholars for the University’s John E. Sawyer Seminar, “Making the Mississippi: Formulating New Water Narratives for the 21st Century and Beyond,” funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.