
Looking Back, Looking Forward

Courtney McDonald, RUSA President 2020–21

Courtney McDonald is User Experience Librarian and Associate Professor, University Libraries, University of Colorado Boulder; email: crmcDonald@colorado.edu.

On March 4, 2020, just a few days before changes and closures associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic swept across the United States and the world, our previous issue (vol. 59, no. 2) was published. It is accurate to say, though a bit of an understatement, that a lot has happened since then.

This period has surely been one of the most unusual and challenging years ALA, its members, and indeed the world, have ever faced. Like each of you, and like professional membership organizations everywhere, both ALA and RUSA faced challenges of various types through this period. Let me offer my sincere apologies to all of you, our authors, column editors, and readers, for the disruptions and delays in publication and communications for the journal.

In the face of the hardship, difficulty, and loss of life occasioned by the global COVID-19 pandemic, I have been continually amazed and touched by the warmth, generosity of spirit, and dedication to our professional community displayed by RUSA members, RUSA Executive Director Bill Ladewski and everyone at the RUSA office, and by our colleagues across ALA. I particularly want to thank ALA Executive Director Tracie D. Hall and the ALA Executive Board for their support of RUSA.

During this tumultuous time, RUSA stayed the course: we welcomed approximately three hundred new members transitioning from ASGCLA in September 2020; a new Definition of Reference, one of RUSA's key professional standards documents, is now completing the final stages of review and approval through RUSA's Professional Resources Committee; and the RUSA Futures Task Force was instrumental in developing a strategy for long-term financial sustainability for RUSA, touching on areas such as membership engagement, the RUSA awards program, and the RUSA publications program.

Following on the work of the RUSA Futures Task Force, in April 2021 we charged the RUSA Publications Task Force to review and assess the current RUSA publications program. Their goal is to identify key publications and communication needs of the RUSA membership to articulate a sustainable, meaningful content strategy for RUSA publications. Their work will encompass not only communication regarding section and division activities (e.g., RUSA Update, e-newsletter) but also peer-reviewed or edited publications contributing to the literature of reference and user services, such as this one. The Task Force will soon be canvassing the membership for their input, so I encourage you to share your thoughts on this important work via their survey or direct via email

to rusq@ala.org. We look forward to hearing their recommendations by spring 2022.

I want to conclude by recognizing the dedicated work of Barry Trott, who is serving not only as chair of the RUSA Publications Task Force, but also as editor pro tem for this combined issue. Barry exemplifies the leadership, collegiality, dedication, and service that is a signature of RUSA, having served not only as editor of *RUSQ* from 2012 to 2018, but also as RUSA president in 2010–11. I've learned so much from his insight and expertise. It has been not only my honor but a very great pleasure to have had the opportunity to work closely with Barry on this issue.

Editor's Note: To facilitate production of this combined issue 3 and 4 of the journal, we chose not to include the professional materials, reference sources, and BRASS best business sources reviews. Those reviews will be published in three *RUSQ* supplements this fall on the RUSA Update site (<https://tinyurl.com/rusq59-dig-suppl>). We thank our review editors, Anita Slack and Calantha Tillotson, and their reviewers for their work.