
Visions of RUSA Future

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It is somewhat traditional for RUSA presidents to focus their final "From the President" column on the future of RUSA and the profession. I think that the future of librarianship is, as ever, strong and exciting. In ten years we may not be doing what we are doing right now, but we have always looked for the best ways to serve our patrons, and that often means change. Our core mission—finding, organizing, accessing, and sharing information and resources—is always going to be a requirement of the world. As long as we navigate the future with our values as our compass, as long as we are open to change and can manifest that change, we will be fine.

In fact, we will be more than fine. No matter the methods of change, we will continue to buy the books that light up the world for readers, point readers to them, and share their delight. We will continue to support the researcher who one day finds the clue that leads to the cure for cancer. We will build bridges between patrons, technology, and collections and help our users explore the vast resources our predecessors helped construct. No one creates or invents anything in a vacuum. Every author, scholar, or inventor who has ever changed the world has done so through the sparks of ideas gained from a vibrant curiosity about, and engagement with, the world. Librarians are the Virgils in this process—the guides, finders, sorters, and arrangers of all that possibility. As indispensable light, we will be fine.

It is that role and mission that energizes me about RUSA's future as well. We also can look toward a horizon that is exciting and full of potential. As we have done for decades, and as we will continue to do for decades more, we shape and guide the profession through the thousands of gifted librarians willing to lend their expertise and labor to the process. Because RUSA is dynamic and open to ideas and change, it is very hard to say what we will look like tomorrow, much less five or ten years from now. However, I think there are some areas we are thinking about today that will bear fruit in the future.

VIRTUAL

At the 2009 Midwinter Meeting and the Annual Conference, RUSA experimented with having committees meet completely in a virtual setting. I think we will continue this trend as schedules and budgets make it more and more difficult to justify face-to-face meetings for all but the most critical of reasons. I think we are going to start asking if we can meet our needs via conference calls, videoconferences, or some yet-to-be invented online tool. Sooner rather than later, we are

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going to look around the room at some conference and ask ourselves if what we just did in an hour was worth the travel time and costs. When it is not, we will change our default of meeting in person to meeting virtually, and that will not only change how RUSA works, it will change who is willing to serve on committees and open RUSA to a whole new set of expert members who are currently shut out of the process because of a lack of financial support.

CONTENT BEYOND CONFERENCE

As wonderful as ALA conferences are, not every RUSA member attends, and not everyone who could benefit from our content belongs to RUSA or ALA. Part of our growth as an association and our influence on our profession depends on us sharing what we know as widely as possible. To do that, we need to push our content outward. At the Midwinter Meeting and Annual Conference we made a small but important first step in this direction—we recorded events and programs and made them available to anyone who was interested. I think that, over time, this will become commonplace, and much if not all of our programming will one day be captured and archived. I look forward to the day when our content is as widely available and sought after as the TED Talks.

SHARING THE WEALTH

The Public Library Association (PLA) recently moved to create communities of interest instead of a formal committee structure. It will be interesting to see how these communities develop, but in terms of RUSA's future, one thing they highlight is the need to build a broad community and share with each other what we know. RUSA already does this at the micro level with our discussion groups, programs, and pre-conferences, but we don't do much on the macro level. In the future, I think that will change as how we communicate and how we meet to do our work shifts and rearranges. The shift will help RUSA serve as a vibrant clearinghouse of our shared expertise and knowledge. I look forward to the day a librarian needing to get up to speed on the newest trend in interlibrary loan can scan the Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section's (STARS) contributions to our clearinghouse and find a list of the ten best articles on that trend published during the year. We know so much, and we can do so much good together, we just need to find a way to share.

Since I am writing this (thanks to the quirky schedule of *RUSQ*'s quarterly deadlines) in early January, I would like to close this peek into RUSA's crystal ball with three resolutions. Resolutions that, if we all resolve and fulfill, would go a long way in creating a future-RUSA that is dynamic, adaptive, responsive, and ready and eager to change.

SUBSCRIBE TO RUSA-L

You know how the experts during New Year's tell you to make realistic resolutions with goals that are achievable? Well, here

is one you can achieve in less than a minute. If everyone in RUSA would subscribe to RUSA-L, it would give RUSA a way of talking to everyone at once. Right now, the only way we can do this is through *RUSA Update* or to pay for a membership-wide bulk e-mail. To create our future, it is important that we can all share with each other. RUSA-L is the best way we can send important news about the association, conferences, programs, and calls for input.

It just takes a second to subscribe: Send an e-mail to sympa@ala.org with the following subject "subscribe rusa-l firstname lastname" (replace "firstname" and "lastname" with your first and last names.) Do not put anything in the body of the message.

POST SOMETHING TO THE RUSA BLOG

Until we think of a better way, the best place to start RUSA down the path to a vibrant clearinghouse is to post to our blog (<http://rusa.ala.org/blog>). Not only is it a resolution you could fulfill in less than thirty minutes, it is a way to share what you know with the rest of us. Post anything: a website you find useful, an article that helped you figure something out, an explanation of a new 2.0 tool and some example uses, a blog that you follow and think others would enjoy, a list of resources, your best pathfinder or booklist—anything that you think would enrich our community.

The reason RUSA is such a dynamic organization is because all of its members are engaged with the profession in vital ways. This comes out in committee meetings and discussion groups but not very often during the rest of the year because we very rarely share this kind of clearinghouse information with each other. We should resolve to change that.

To post to the RUSA blog, you must first create an account. In the upper-right corner of the RUSA Blog page, under "Welcome," there is a link that states, "Don't have an account? Create one here." Click the link, choose a username, and type in your e-mail address. This creates a new blog account and gives you a username and password. E-mail Chris Cieslak (ccieslak@ala.org) your blog username and e-mail address, and he will add you to the verified authors list and send instructions on how to post.

WASH THE DISHES

This is sort of insider baseball talk, born out of long conversations about what we do and do not do well. We are great cooks—we put on amazing programs, write important and useful guidelines, and hold valuable discussion groups. However, for the most part, unless you attend one of these fantastic events you would never really know they happened. This is because, while we are great cooks, we don't like to wash the dishes. We don't excel at following up after an event. Either we are too slow to get things posted or we never post them at all. When we do post things, it tends to be in so many different places that searchers get confused and frustrated. We need to resolve to wash the dishes, and we need to figure out just what that means.

This is going to be a process for RUSA. There is too much history of not doing it and too many places within ALA to do it for it to happen overnight. But for right now, it would go a long way if everyone in charge of a RUSA program, discussion group, preconference, and so on, could resolve to post any handouts created for the program on the RUSA blog before

the program starts and post a summary of the program within twenty-four hours of its completion.

It has been the honor of my professional career to serve as RUSA's president. I thank you for the opportunity and wish you each individually, and RUSA as a whole, the best future possible.

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ing more than ten reviews in the "Reference Books" section of "Sources": Carla Wilson Buss, Dona J. Helmer, Eva Lautemann, Colleen Lougen, Marion S. Muskiewicz, Lisa Roberts, J. Christina Smith, and Martha E. Stone. Jenny Stenis, Larry Cooperman, and Anthony Stamatoplos reached the achievement of contributing six or more reviews to the "Professional Materials" section. These distinguished reviewers will be acknowledged at the RUSA Awards Ceremony at the 2009 ALA Annual Conference in Chicago this summer.

As usual, *RUSQ* highlighted the important work of RUSA sections this past year. Annual listings included "Best Free Reference Websites" by the Machine Assisted Reference Section (MARS); "Best Historical Materials" by the History Section's Historical Materials Committee; "Outstanding Business Refer-

ence Sources" by the Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS); "Notable Books" by the Notable Books Council; "Outstanding Reference Sources" by the Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES); and "The Reading List" by the CODES Reading List Council. RUSA guidelines have long influenced professional practice. Two sets of revised guidelines were published in volume 48: "Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults" and the "Interlibrary Loan Code for the United States."

I want to thank all those hard-working individuals behind the scenes at ALA Production Services and the RUSA office. Finally, I need to thank my home institution, the Penn State University Libraries. I am truly lucky to work for an institution that values the integration of service and scholarship.