

**Messages from MARS, the Newsletter of the RUSA Machine Assisted Reference Services Section**, Hui Hua Chua and Laura Jordan, Editors

December 2007

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**From the Chair**

Dear MARS Friends,

A new year is approaching, and we are all looking forward to an early Midwinter meeting in Philadelphia where we have sometimes enjoyed a beautiful snowfall! We can especially anticipate the always cutting-edge Hot Topics discussion. At Midwinter the discussion will focus on "Web 2.0 Tagging Technologies to Increase Patron-Library Interaction." Many thanks to chair Nancy Cunningham and the Hot Topics committee for coming up with another very interesting session that will help us stay up-to-date between the programs at annual meetings. Also, just prior to Midwinter, we have the January 9<sup>th</sup> deadline for making a nomination for the MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate, more popularly known as the "My Favorite Martian Award."

As you plan for 2008, please consider submitting an entry for review by the Management of Electronic Resources and Services Committee in their second annual poster session. A new year also brings another round of MARS elections, and we encourage you to vote. We are very grateful to Mary Popp and the Nominating Committee and to those who have agreed to be candidates for MARS positions. We have an outstanding slate of nominees. Soon you should also think about adding the jointly sponsored MARS and RSS pre-conference, "Reinvented Reference 4: Emerging Technologies for Reference Services" at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, California to your calendar.

Also in 2008, we ask that you give special consideration to the name of our section. In 2006, MARS celebrated our thirtieth anniversary. During the founding year of 1976, the Viking mission to the planet MARS was a very exciting development in space exploration. The successful Viking landing combined with professional concerns about newly emerging uses of computer applications for reference services to make the name of the new section, MARS or Machine-Assisted Reference Section, an appropriate one. Many of us have a great fondness for the name of the section, though we also realize that the "machine-assisted" phrase in the name has become outdated in our rapidly changing world of information technology. At many recent meetings of the MARS Executive Committee, the name has generated some informal discussion. We are particularly concerned about how newcomers to the library profession and to ALA might perceive the name. We wonder if the name is sufficiently clear to convey the professional support that MARS offers its members. So we have a few questions to consider. Should we retain the name "MARS" and its current reference to the "Machine-Assisted Reference Section?" Or should we keep the name "MARS" but change its reference terms? Or should we develop an entirely new name? We will be seeking a way for the MARS membership to comment and to participate in any continuing discussion about a name change. In the meantime, please write to me at the e-mail address below if you have ideas you wish to share.

Please note that Midwinter offers a possible opportunity to comment on the section name and on any other ideas you have for the section. MARS will hold another all-committee meeting on Sunday, January 13, 2008 from 8:00am – 10:30am at the Doubletree Hotel Symphony Room with a chance to brainstorm about our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and even threats. This meeting is also a great opportunity to visit with various MARS committees. We hope many of you will consider volunteering for service on a MARS committee; you can contact me at the e-mail address below to express your interest in advance of the meeting. We would especially like to hear from public librarians who work with electronic resources for reference. Don't forget that virtual membership is always a possibility.

We look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia! For more details about many of the topics mentioned here, please read the rest of the newsletter below.

All the best,

Mary Mintz  
[mmintz@american.edu](mailto:mmintz@american.edu)  
MARS Chair 2007-2008

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## **General MARS News**

### **Call for Nominations**

MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate a.k.a My Favorite Martian Award

Do you know someone who has always gone the extra mile for MARS? What about someone who is an indispensable member of your committee or someone who has served as your mentor?

The MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate is given annually to recognize excellence in service to MARS. This award, presented at the annual MARS Chair's Program, is given to an individual who is a current member of MARS, and has been an active member for the past two years.

The recipient must have made either (1) sustained contributions toward attaining the goals of MARS, or (2) a single, significant contribution that has resulted in a positive impact upon the work of the section.

Please send nominations to Kelley Lawton at [kelly.lawton@duke.edu](mailto:kelly.lawton@duke.edu) by Wednesday, January 9, 2008.

Help us celebrate the individual accomplishments of our MARS members.

Kelley Lawton  
[kelly.lawton@duke.edu](mailto:kelly.lawton@duke.edu)  
Chair, MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate Committee

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### **YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

The 2008 Nominating Committee (LeiLani Freund, Linda Keiter, and Mary Popp) is pleased to announce that we have a marvelous slate of candidates for MARS offices in the 2008 election. Be sure to watch your email this spring for information about voting online.

Our candidates are (listed in order by lot):

Vice-chair/Chair Elect

Alesia McManus  
Carolyn Larson

Secretary

James Langan  
Marilyn Ochoa

Member at Large

Charles Cobine  
Valerie Boulos  
Scott Garton  
Kim Vassiliadis

I hope you join us in thanking them for being willing to be a candidate.

As the tag line for this report notes, your vote does indeed count. Be sure to take the time to read your colleagues' statements of concern and to learn about their accomplishments when the ballots are published.

Mary Pagliero Popp

[popp@indiana.edu](mailto:popp@indiana.edu)

Chair, 2008 MARS Nominating Committee

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### **Management of Electronic Resources and Services (MERS) Committee**

Members of MERS announce our second annual Virtual Poster Session. This year's topic is, "Using Evaluation Data to Change & Improve Virtual Reference." We invite proposals from all Martians!

How does your library (or consortium) use the results of evaluation to change and improve your Virtual Reference (VR) service? Have you used data, statistics, opinions, or other feedback to persuade administrators, librarians and staff, or your patron body? To plan budgets, hours, or training? To test anecdotal assumptions? To offer a new service? Are changes driven by evaluation significantly different from those driven by technological advancement or new VR products?

Share your successes and challenges via a Virtual Poster Session sponsored by the MARS [Management of Electronic Resources and Services \(MERS\)](#) Committee.

We seek virtual posters which describe how libraries use evaluation to change and improve their Virtual Reference services.

Virtual Reference can include reference assistance provided via chat, IM, e-mail, videoconferencing, or other means. Evaluation methods can include statistical analysis, patron surveys, transcript analysis, use of standards and guidelines, interface usability testing, or any other method or combination of methods that the library uses to evaluate its service.

Virtual posters can be submitted as Web pages, PowerPoint presentations, or other formats which can be mounted on the Web.

Accepted posters will be mounted on the ALA Web site before the ALA 2008 Annual Conference and will be announced at the conference. Presenters will be asked to participate in on-line discussions of their posters through the RUSA blog.

To apply, please use the form at <http://www.ala.org/ala/rusa/rusaourassoc/rusasections/mars/marssection/marscomm/mersvps2007.htm>. Proposals will be accepted through 5 p.m. Eastern, Thursday, January 3, 2008. Authors of selected proposals will be contacted via e-mail by January 18, 2008. Completed virtual posters must be submitted to the committee by April 1, 2008. The committee will review the posters and work with the creators on any suggested edits needed for clarity and to comply with ALA and other guidelines.

We will meet at the All-Committee Meeting at Midwinter. Guests are welcome!

[Kathryn Courtland Millis](mailto:millisk@depauw.edu)  
[millisk@depauw.edu](mailto:millisk@depauw.edu)

Chair, MARS Management of Electronic Resources and Services Committee

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### **MARS/RSS Preconference on Digital Reference**

MARS and RSS are offering Reinvented Reference 4: Emerging Technologies for Reference Services at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, CA. Tentatively, we are planning to have speakers address virtual reference, instant messaging, texting, and the use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. More information will be forthcoming.

Alesia McManus

[amcmanus@binghamton.edu](mailto:amcmanus@binghamton.edu)

Co-Chair, RSS/MARS Preconference Planning Committee

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### **MARS ALA Midwinter Discussion Forums and Meetings**

#### **Tag You're It! Midwinter Hot Topics Discussion Focuses on Web 2.0 Social Tagging Technologies to Increase Patron-Library Interaction.**

Jointly sponsored by MARS Products and Services and the Hot Topics Discussion Group, this Midwinter Hot Topics Discussion will bring three speakers to Philadelphia to discuss their libraries' experiences implementing Web 2.0 social software, which enables "tagging" to enhance patrons' interaction with the library and its resources. Jennifer Sweda, Cataloging Librarian for the University of Pennsylvania Libraries, will speak about the well-known PennTags project. Like del.icio.us, PennTags software allows readers to tag cataloged items and works as a social bookmarking tool for locating, organizing, and sharing favorite resources. Lauren Stokes, Virtual Library Manager at the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District will speak about how her library system is enabling the community to add reviews to resources in their catalog. Hot Topics' third speaker, Kate Sheehan, Coordinator of Library Automation at Danbury Public Library, will discuss how they have implemented LibraryThing and how it has increased patron interaction with the catalog.

Be sure to "tag" this event for your 2008 Midwinter conference calendar! This Hot Topics presentation and discussion, "Tag You're It: A revolution in patron-library interaction", will take place on Saturday, January 12th, from 10:30am-12pm in Philadelphia. See you there!

Nancy Cunningham  
[ncunning@lib.usf.edu](mailto:ncunning@lib.usf.edu)  
Chair, MARS Hot Topics Discussion Group

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**Roster of MARS Midwinter Meetings**

This is a preliminary schedule, and is subject to change. Please check the ALA and MARS Web sites for final times and locations of meetings.

**MARS Happy Hour**

Friday 1/11/2008                      05:30 pm - 07:30 pm      Off-Site

**Discussion Forum Sessions**

MARS Hot Topics Discussion  
Tag You're It: A revolution in patron-library interaction  
Saturday 1/12/2008                      10:30am – 12pm              PCC 201 B/C

Virtual Reference Discussion Group  
Where's Virtual Reference? Sharing Our Marketing Strategies  
Saturday 1/12/2008                      04:00 pm - 06:00 pm      PCC 103 B

**MARS Executive Committee Meetings**

Executive Committee I  
Saturday 1/12/2008                      08:00 am - 10:00 am      CROW Constitution

Executive Committee II  
Monday 1/14/2008                      08:00 am - 10:00 am      PCC 308

Executive Committee III  
Tuesday 1/15/2008 Tuesday      08:00 am - 10:00 am      PCC 308

**MARS All-Committee Meeting**

Sunday 1/13/2008                      8:00am – 10:30am          DOUB Symphony

The all-committee meeting will be preceded by a general SWOT session.

**Other Meetings**

2008 Program Planning  
Monday 1/14/2008                      01:30 pm - 03:30 pm      LOEWS Roberts Board Room

Continuing Education and Publications Task Force  
Saturday 1/12/2008                      04:00 pm - 06:00 pm      RITZ Mellon Room

Planning Committee

Monday 1/14/2008	Monday	01:30 pm - 03:30 pm	HIL Executive Board Room
Products and Services			
Saturday 1/12/2008		08:00 am - 10:00 am	CROW Executive Boardroom
RSS/MARS Preconference Planning			
Sunday 1/13/2008	Sunday	04:00 pm - 06:00 pm	PCC 101
User Access to Services Committee			
Saturday 1/12/2008	Saturday	10:30 am - 12:00 pm	RITZ Mellon Room
Virtual Reference Committee, Index Subcommittee			
Monday, 1/14/2008		08:00 am - 10:00 am	PCC 300
Virtual Reference Services (Part of All Com. Mtg.)			
Saturday 1/12/2008		08:00 am - 12:00 pm	SHER Freedom BR

Pennsylvania Convention Center – PCC  
 Courtyard Downtown – COURT  
 Crowne Plaza – CROW  
 Doubletree – DOUB  
 Embassy Suites City Center – EMB  
 Four Seasons Philadelphia – FOUR  
 Hampton Inn Center City – HAMP  
 Hilton Garden Inn City Center – HIL  
 Holiday Inn Express Midtown - HOL  
 \*Loews Philadelphia – LOEWS  
 \*Marriott Philadelphia – MAR  
 Radisson Plaza Warwick – RAD  
 Ritz Carlton Philadelphia – RITZ  
 Sheraton Philadelphia – SHER  
 Sofitel Philadelphia – SOFT  
 Westin Philadelphia - WEST

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