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2017 ALA Annual Conference

Reference & User Services Association
President's Annual Report to ALA Council
June 2017
Alesia McManus, RUSA President 2016-2017

RUSA had a busy and productive year in 2016-17 in which we focused on restructuring the RUSA Board and Division-level committees to enable us to be more flexible and to strengthen member engagement. As RUSA President I would like to thank our now retired Executive Director Susan Hornung and the RUSA staff--Leighann Wood, Jennifer Cross, Melissa Tracy—and all RUSA volunteers for their efforts and dedication throughout the year.

Our Core Purpose, Organizational Values and Vision

The Reference & User Services Association (RUSA) is a member community engaged in advancing the practices of connecting people to resources, information services, and collections. Our organizational values include building relationships among members from all types of libraries; encouraging openness, innovation, and idea sharing; and promoting excellence in library services and resources. Our vision is to be an influential and authoritative organization, essential to the work of anyone engaged in the practices of connecting people to resources, information services, and collections.

ASCLA/RUSA Executive Director Search

Susan Hornung, our Executive Director retired in April 2017. The first search for a new ASCLA/Executive Director was not successful and the position is now re-advertised with a closing date of July 7. We are taking this opportunity to see how we can better align processes and procedures between ASCLA and RUSA and will have a joint meeting of both division boards at ALA Annual 2017.

Progress on the RUSA 2015-18 Strategic Plan

The first of two broad goals in RUSA's strategic plan is to *create an organization with greater flexibility in structure, enabling members to pursue their areas of interest in a variety of ways with minimal barriers to involvement*. After implementing interest groups last year, this year we focused on a restructuring of RUSA Board and Division-level committees. The most recent version of our [restructuring document](#) is available via Google docs.

Here are some highlights of the reorganization:

1. The RUSA membership voted to approve a Bylaws change that will reduce the size of the RUSA Board in the future. The new Board will be comprised of the RUSA elected officers (President, Vice President, Past President, Secretary and Councilor), a representative from each Section (to be determined by each Section), and the *RUSQ* Editor. As the current Directors at Large complete their terms, they will not be replaced. The RUSA Budget & Finance (B&F) Committee will become a subcommittee of the Board. The Vice-President of RUSA will continue to be the Chair of B&F and will be joined by the President, Past-President, three Section representatives (Sections will alternate their representation each year), and the *RUSQ* Editor. The Board will be advised by the newly created RUSA Leadership Council which will include Division Committee Chairs, Section Chairs, Interest Group Chairs, active Task Force chairs, the Vendor Relations Liaison, the *RUSQ* and RUSA Quarterly Update editors, and the RUSA office staff.
2. The RUSA Board continues to discuss the recommendations related to RUSA committees but the Membership Committee will sunset to be replaced by two committees: Member Engagement and Volunteer Development. The Member Engagement Committee will work with the RUSA Office and RUSA Board on membership recruitment, public relations, member communication, as well as provide input for professional development activities. While the committee will foster quality engagement of all RUSA members, the committee will focus on the attraction and engagement of new members. The Volunteer Development Committee will coordinate volunteer development working with the RUSA Office and Board on leadership training and documentation, volunteer onboarding, leadership orientation and ongoing volunteer development opportunities.
3. The Awards Coordinating Committee (ACC) will continue their work for at least another year and will review the number and desirability of individual awards, evaluate award processes, help implement alternative means of recognizing achievement award winners, complete policies currently in progress, and finish organizing awards manuals. ACC will coordinate with the RUSA Senior Program Officer to devise a governance structure that meets the needs of both the Association and the RUSA Office, facilitating deserved recognition in a more manageable way.
4. The Organization and Planning Committee will also sunset. Chris LeBeau will be appointing a RUSA restructuring task force that will help us finalize charges for the new committees, review and revise our policies and procedures, and develop a model for annual division review.
5. In June 2017, the RUSA Board will vote on the remaining recommendations. One recommendation is to expand the charge of the Professional Development Committee to develop online learning content in addition to webinars. Another is to reconstitute the Standards and Guidelines Committee into a more broadly defined Professional Resources Committee that in addition to overseeing standards and guidelines will oversee any future publications of an educational or professional development nature. The committee's charge would be to support and coordinate the development and maintenance of professional resources generated by RUSA such as guidelines, tool kits, best practice documents and other similar resources. As a result, the Publications and Communications Committee would sunset.

The second of our two goals is to *offer services, programs and products that maximize the value of membership, making RUSA a good return on investment for its members and encouraging member engagement, recruitment, and retention.* While we envision that restructuring will enable us to better support our work towards this goal, we continue to think about how best to serve RUSA members. For example, the Task Force for the Professional

Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians has issued a final draft for comment by the RUSA membership. This is the first revision of the competencies since they were created in 2003.

The RUSA Name Change Task Force, after surveying the RUSA membership, found that there wasn't a strong desire to change the association name at present. We will however be revising our [definition of reference](#), which was last revised in 2008. The task force report revealed ambivalence about the continued use of the term "reference" in our name, but it is time to rethink what reference means, given the changes in how we do our work.

Leadership and volunteer development are valued by RUSA members so we are again sponsoring an Emerging Leader, Stacy Gilbert, Media, Communications, and Information Librarian at the University of Colorado Boulder. We also created a new listserv for RUSA leadership to facilitate information sharing, discussion and conversation.

The Membership Committee organized another successful RUSA Social at ALA Midwinter, offered four online RUSA 101 sessions (approximately eighty attendees), and is offering a conference preview webinar for ALA Annual 2017.

Leighann Wood, RUSA's Senior Program Officer, has offered innovative ideas for improving RUSA processes and provides an enormous amount of support for our awards program.

Awards

RUSA's Book and Media Awards ceremony at ALA Midwinter was a great success with over 175 attendees, thanks to the efforts of the RUSA staff and volunteers. We announced the winners of the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction at Midwinter alongside our annual "best of" book and media lists. This year's Carnegie winners are Matthew Demond's *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* for nonfiction and Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* for fiction. We are looking forward to hearing from both winning authors at our Carnegie event at the Annual Conference in Chicago, which will be held Saturday, June 26. The winners of our other BMAs (Notable Books List, Reading List, Listen List and Outstanding Reference Sources selections, the Dartmouth Medal for excellence in reference, the Sophie Brody Medal for Jewish literature, the Zora Neale Hurston Award for achievement in promoting African-American literature and the Louis Shores Award for book reviewing) can be found on RUSA Update at <https://www.rusaupdate.org/category/awards/book-and-media/> We thank our award committees for their dedication and tireless work. RUSA will also present numerous division and section achievement awards at our awards reception at Annual Conference. For a list of award winners, see <https://www.rusaupdate.org/category/awards/achievement/>

Publications

RUSA continues to publish [Reference & User Services Quarterly](#) under the editorship of Barry Trott. *RUSQ* is a major journal in the field which delivers quality research articles, columns and reviews. We plan to make a decision regarding making it open access permanently and officially for FY18.

In addition to *RUSQ*, we publish [RUSA News](#) regularly on www.rusaupdate.org, send weekly email news updates to members, and the member-edited [Quarterly Update](#) online newsletter. Jennifer Cross, RUSA's web services manager, envisioned and then subsequently led the launch of the new RUSA Update site featuring member news

and division activities. Jennifer is currently working to transition the existing RUSA website to the new ALA web platform and also coordinates online learning.

Melissa Tracy, Marketing & Programs Specialist, has reorganized our marketing program to be more effective and responsive based on data and member/customer feedback. She provides frequent communication about RUSA activities and initiatives in support of our member engagement efforts.

Notable RUSA section and Interest Group activities

RUSA has six robust sections: the Emerging Technologies Section (ETS), Reference Services Section (RSS), Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS), History Section (HS), Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES), and Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS). The sections do excellent work throughout the year. Here are a few of their notable accomplishments from the past year as provided to me by the individual section chairs.

BRASS

- Awarded five achievement awards and awardees will be recognized at Annual Conference.
- Planned for two forums and one program at Annual this year: Public Libraries Forum: “The Many Paths to Empowering Your Business Community”; Publishers Forum: “The ABC’s of Private Equity & Venture Capital Data and Information”; Program: “Demystifying the Federal Reserve”.
- Works closely with vendor sponsors who provide financial support for our awards and also sponsor BRASS events at Annual. This support includes Emerald sponsoring a pre-conference, Reference USA sponsoring our membership reception, Mintel sponsoring coffee during our BRASS discussion as well as a tour of their Chicago, and Standard & Poor’s Global Market Intelligence sponsoring our Program breakfast.

CODES

- Events at the ALA Annual Conference in Orlando included the Readers’ Advisory Forum “Harnessing Research and Data to Advance Readers’ Advisory Services,” as well as the Literary Tastes breakfast, featuring authors including recent winners of RUSA and CODES awards. The high point of the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Atlanta was of course the Book and Media Awards. One of the primary focuses of CODES continues to be its five awards for outstanding books and reference works (Notable Books for Adults, Outstanding Reference Sources, the Reading List, the Sophie Brody Medal, and the Dartmouth Medal); as well as its two achievement awards (the Zora Neale Hurston Award and the Louis Shores Award).
- The CODES Executive Board voted on implementing a number of action items based on recommendations from RUSA’s CODES Section Review. In addition, several awards committees reviewed their policies, guidelines, and criteria in order to update their manuals. One goal that CODES plans to work towards in the future is to foster increased opportunities for members to learn about and participate in management and assessment of library collections.

ETS

- The ETS Best Free Websites committee has released their 18th Annual Best Free Reference Websites list; the list was published in the Fall 2016 issue of *RUSQ* and is also available via the [RUSA Update](#).
- Programming and discussion groups offered at Midwinter Meeting and planned for Annual Conference have covered topics of current interest to library professionals in a wide array of roles, such as: change management, First Year Experience, Video & Virtual Technologies for reference services, user experience, design thinking, and more.

HISTORY

- Held a number of successful events this year including two discussion groups at Midwinter focused on current issues affecting librarians from digital history projects to better undergraduate information literacy to new technology in family research. We were particularly excited to welcome graduate history students from Emory University who offered insightful perspectives about ways in which librarians can better support the needs of our patrons.
- Hosted a successful genealogical preconference sponsored by ProQuest which gave attendees (many of whom came from local and regional libraries) the opportunity to learn about the role of DNA in family origins, American Indian research from the field, and ways to utilize college and university collections to help African American patrons with their family history. Thanks to sponsorship by ProQuest and the generous support of the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library System the event was held free of charge at the Auburn Avenue Research Library, the first public library in the Southeast to offer specialized reference and archival collections dedicated to the study of African American history and culture.
- Working to find more meaningful ways to connect with members outside of conferences through virtual sharing of engaging material and utilizing LibGuides (thanks to a sponsorship from Springshare) as a way to continue being the best resource for history work.

RSS

- Created a Communication committee to coordinate our outreach and communications. (Social media, website). One of their major tasks was an administrative one, but one that's really important- updating the RSS webpage.
- The Health and Medical Reference Committee created a webinar.
- Continued to discuss ways to make committees more efficient and eliminate overlap with ETS. This has yielded a few changes for next year (one committee merging to ETS, and one committee moving to RSS, where we had committees doing similar work). We continue discussions on these types of issues throughout the year.

STARS

- The STARS Standards and Guidelines Committee revised the “Guidelines for Resource Sharing Response to Natural and Man-made Disasters” and anticipates voting to approve the revisions at ALA Annual 2017.
- The STARS Legislation and Licensing Committee drafted an ILL-friendly model license language clause that will soon be out for comment. The committee hopes to have the draft language approved by STARS Board in fall of 2017, and by RUSA Board or RUSA Standards and Guidelines at ALA Midwinter, 2018.

This past year RUSA also started four Interest Groups: Copyright, Financial Literacy, First Year Experience (FYE), and Shared Collections.

- The FYE Interest Group met for the first time at Annual Conference 2016 in Orlando with 25 people in attendance. The group will meet again at Annual Conference 2017.

Conference programs

At the Annual Conference in Chicago we will be sponsoring the RUSA President's Program on Saturday, June 24 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. with keynote speaker David Lankes, an award-winning library educator and writer. RUSA sections will also offer a number of programs, discussions and preconferences at conference, including:

- Genealogy Preconference Librarianship Symposium (HS/ProQuest)
- The ABC's of PE & VC data and information (BRASS)
- Demystifying the federal reserve (BRASS)
- Chicago as a model for public history: initiatives and collaborations (HS)
- How to put your family history on the map: georeferencing and geocoding historical information (HS with MAGIRT)
- Mapping the generations: visualizing family history with maps (HS with MAGIRT)
- Fake news, alternative facts, and clickbait: fighting for truth in a world of misinformation (ETS Hot Topics)
- Technologies that enhance the first-year experience (ETS)
- The intentional library: creating a better user experience with service design and design thinking (ETS)
- New discoveries in reference; the 23rd Annual Reference Research Forum (RSS)
- Forget the future, our time is now (RUSA President's Program)
- Crisis communication: who speaks for your library? (RUSA with United for Libraries)
- I am not a lawyer: providing copyright services in libraries (STARS)
- Building Stronger Libraries through Collective Action (AFL-CIO/ALA Labor Committee)
- Growing readership through diversity

On Sunday, June 25 from 8-10 a.m. we will offer the annual Literary Tastes program, where attendees get to hear from some of the year's best authors and enjoy light refreshments. Also on Sunday from 5-6:30 p.m. we will celebrate RUSA award winners at our RUSA Achievement Awards Ceremony. Attendees will be able to share in the celebration and join RUSA colleagues as we recognize this year's outstanding achievement award winners.

We also co-sponsor the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction Announcement and Reception on Saturday, June 24 from 8-10 p.m.

A complete list of conference programs with dates and times is available [here](#).

Online Courses and Webinars

Total attendance for RUSA Online Learning as of June 1, 2017 is: 368 individual, and 63 group registrations. Eight online courses have met the minimum registration requirements and have run, and at least two more will be offered this fiscal year. Twelve webinars have run as of June 1, 2017, four more will be offered this summer, and our very successful *Data in Libraries* series is currently being rebooked for a second run this fall.

RUSA Webinars

Title	Date	Individual Reg	Group Reg
Data in Libraries: Data Basics and the Reference Interview	1/12/2017	17	14
Trends in Business Education and their Impacts on Business Reference and Services	2/9/2017	22	4
Show me the money: Growing grants-related services in the library	2/23/2017	9	2
Is there an app for that? Finding primary sources in an app environment.	3/7/2017	9	1
Resources for Finding Jobs and Strategies for Landing on Librarianship Career	3/9/2017	7	
Data in Libraries: Open Data	3/16/2017	19	12
Paging a Librarian: Eliminating the staffed reference desk	3/22/2017	13	5
The Library within a Library: The Makerspace Service Point	4/4/2017	7	1
Situated Learning in the Library: Using Reference Services to Extend Teaching and Learning	4/25/2017	16	7
Beyond Ancestry: Genealogical Resources All Researchers Need to Know	4/27/2017	8	2
Data in Libraries: Data Processing and Visualization	5/4/2017	21	14
Targeted Beta Testing of Non-traditional Partnerships: Supporting Student Academic Success Alaska-Style	5/23/2017	4	1
Totals:		152	63

RUSA Courses

Title	Date	Registration
Interlibrary Loan	9/30/2016	17
Introduction to Instructional Design	10/3/16 - 11/14/16	44
Write, Speak, Design		19
Business Reference 101	10/28/2016	35
Genealogy 101	11/8/2016	10
Reference Interview	11/8/2016	30

Xtreme Bibliographic Searching for Interlibrary Loan & Reference	2/6/17 - 3/3/17	40
Learning Design Essentials for Librarians	5/29/17 - 6/23/17	21
Totals:		216

Membership

Monthly statistics show a -3.57% decline in overall RUSA membership in April 2017 (3,214) compared to April 2016 (3,333). This rate of decline is slightly less than the -4 % decline last year.

RUSA Sections: Section	April 2017, Monthly	April 2016, Monthly	Change
BRASS	780	799	-2.38%
CODES	1,169	1,188	-1.6%
HS	724	722	+2.8%
ETS	1,260	1,247	+9.8%
RSS	1,445	1,416	-2.05%
STARS	772	748	+3.21%

It has been my honor to serve as RUSA President this year.

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