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2013 ALA Annual Conference

RUSA President's Report 2012-2013

It has been my great pleasure to work with RUSA (Reference and User Services Association) leaders, members and staff to provide services to the division's members this year. Themes that have guided the work of the RUSA leadership this year have been focused on helping RUSA to better meet the needs of members as identified in several recent reports including a membership survey and the report of the RUSA Structures Task Force.

This report highlights the activities of the staff and leadership focused on several related areas. These areas are a continuation of strategic planning efforts, efforts to review the mission and activities of the Association so that it can provide additional and coordinated services to members, the development of support for virtual membership and increased emphasis on web-based continuing education, increasing RUSA's strengths in developing financial literacy programs for all types of libraries, and leadership in developing guidelines and policy statements to serve the profession.

Strategic Planning Initiatives and Leadership Development

RUSA prepares a 3-year strategic plan and reviews it annually. 2012-2013 was the first year of the current plan. This year, the RUSA Board and Executive Committee spent time looking at ways to implement several new goals. The 3rd Annual membership Town Hall meeting was held at Midwinter in Seattle, with both in-person and virtual participants, to identify issues important to members. The Big Think that followed focused on brainstorming about new initiatives to engage members. Several of the ideas developed at Midwinter are being incorporated into the RUSA Strategic Plan as we begin our second year under the current plan.

Maureen Sullivan, ALA President 2012-2013, has made leadership development one of the hallmarks of her presidential year. RUSA's strategic plan supports development of leadership skills in RUSA member leaders as well. This year, RUSA implemented a pilot project to send RUSA officers, standing committee chairs, and section leaders to a leadership preconference at the ALA Annual Conference in Chicago sponsored by our sister division, ASCLA. The preconference is entitled "Servant Leadership in Your Library." Those who participate will become a core group to help create a broader RUSA leadership program.

Initiation of Review Processes

To assist RUSA leaders in creating a more responsive organization that will meet the needs of members now, we have embarked on the first-ever RUSA divisional Review. A committee of

members from all sections, led by co-chairs Chris LeBeau and Diane Zabel, will review RUSA, its component structures, its organization and its member services and answer the question: What does it take to make and keep active members? The review is expected to be completed soon after Midwinter in 2014.

Because continuing education, conference programs, publications, and the RUSA web site all provide important information to members, it is important to make sure these activities are synchronized so as to make the best use of our members' time. A new Task Force, the Learning Opportunities and Knowledge Coordination Task Force, will soon begin work to define options for professional education, programming, and publications, to create a vision for a coordinated approach to all of these initiatives, and to formulate goals, learning outcomes and assessment methods, paying special attention to virtual programming.

Virtual Participation

An important strategic priority for RUSA, growing from the recommendations of the RUSA Structure Task Force in 2011, is development of improved mechanisms for better virtual participation as well as more virtual continuing education activity. In early 2012, a task force on web conferencing recommended acquisition of a subscription to the Blackboard Collaborate software to provide a mechanism for such participation. Members, led by Liane Taylor, developed training for officers, committee chairs, and committee members. During the current year, many meetings and open discussions were conducted via conference calls and through the Collaborate software; this greatly increased participation. Now that ALA itself has acquired a subscription to Adobe Connect, RUSA will move to this platform.

Adobe Connect training for RUSA member leaders began in May 2013 and will continue over the coming months. RUSA has selected two member Connect Support Specialists to provide training, support and assistance to RUSA committees to meet this ongoing need.

Increases in Web-Based Continuing Education

As noted, an important goal in RUSA's strategic plan is to provide continuing education options to members even if they cannot attend conferences in person. In addition to a number of interesting fee-based webinars on such topics as apps for readers' advisory and workshop planning, the RUSA Board approved a plan earlier this year to provide a group of seven high-quality webinars, one sponsored by each of the six RUSA sections and one sponsored by the Just Ask Team, free to RUSA members over the next eight months. Subjects for these webinars include such topics as genealogy and history resources, online reference resources, reference tracking and data collection, industry research, sharing resources worldwide, and creating an "elevator speech" to tell non-librarians about reference services. We are very excited about these new free webinars each of which can be presented to up to 100 participants.

RUSA has also offered web-based multiple-session courses over the last several years. This trend continued in 2012-2013 with strong attendance at several courses, including Spatial Literacy and Online Mapping and Health Information 101. New this year is Interlibrary Loan 101. More details are available at <http://www.ala.org/rusa/development/onlinece>.

One of the goals of the revamped RUSA President's Program for 2013, is experimentation with live streaming of the program. We hope that this can become a regular feature of RUSA programs.

RUSA Statement on Access

The RUSA Board approved the *RUSA Statement on Access* at its May meeting. This important statement, written by the RUSA Access to Information Committee under the leadership of Rosanne Cordell and Marilyn Ochoa, identifies RUSA's values related to access to information and lays out areas of priority for RUSA support, including improved copyright laws, equitable access to information, robust preservation and access programs for print and electronic information, and facilitation of digital and information literacy. RUSA plans to publicize this statement widely using both traditional and social media outlets.

Financial Literacy – A Growing Investment

Since 2007, RUSA has served as the administrator for the FINRA (Financial Industry Regulator Authority) Investor Education Foundation's program, Smart Investing @ Your Library (<http://www.finrafoundation.org/grants/library/> and <http://smartinvesting.ala.org/>). The program funds public library and community college efforts to provide library patrons with workable and unbiased financial education resources. This year, RUSA, through enthusiastic support from the BRASS section, has also begun work to formulate new financial literacy resources, including guidelines and best practices/competencies in financial literacy education for all types of libraries. A first step in this new process has been the submission of a grant proposal to fund work on the guidelines.

Getting the Word Out about Reference and User Services in Libraries

The Just Ask Team is charged to produce a plan to celebrate the reference services of libraries and to raise awareness of library information services. As a first step, the group sponsored a well-attended discussion at the 2013 Midwinter meeting in Seattle focusing on three areas: review of the current RUSA definition of reference services, discussion of the changing roles of reference librarians, and generation of ideas for advocacy tools to be used by reference librarians to promote their services. A free webinar to help librarians create "elevator speeches" to talk with non-librarians about what reference services are will be presented later in 2013.

One of RUSA's major contributions to the library profession is the development of guidelines to assist in the provision of user services. This has been an active year in the development and approval of new guidelines. The *Information Literacy Guidelines and Competencies for Undergraduate History Students* and the *Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Service*

Providers were both approved this year. In addition, the RUSA Board agreed in May to appoint a task force to revise the *RUSA Professional Competencies for Reference and User Services Librarians*, last updated in 2003.

Other Important Activities

- *Awards*

In 2011-2012, RUSA and *Booklist* partnered to create and present the first Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction. The awards generated a buzz and we will announce the 2013 winners in Chicago. The finalists for this year's award are listed at: <http://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/carnegieadult/short-lists>. RUSA also provides many other media awards at its Midwinter Book and Media Awards including the Dartmouth Medal for an outstanding reference work, the Sophie Brody medal for notable Jewish literature, Notable Books, The Reading List and The Listen List, and many others. A full list of the awards and their winners can be found at <http://www.ala.org/rusa/awards/media>.

At the Chicago conference, the annual RUSA Awards Reception will honor winners of such achievement awards as the Gale Cengage Learning Award for Excellence in Reference and Adult Services and the Isadore Gilber Mudge Award. A full list of awards can be found at: <http://www.ala.org/rusa/awards/achievement>

Both types of awards would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and the untiring work of the committees that select the winners.

- *RUSQ (Reference and User Services Quarterly)*

RUSA has completed the first year of providing members with *RUSQ* as an online-only publication. Under the leadership of editor Barry Trott, the journal continues to publish peer-reviewed articles and columns in all areas of user services. New initiatives have been developed this year to immediately alert all RUSA members to the publication of new issues.

- *Emerging Leaders and Spectrum Scholar Interns*

RUSA has been very lucky to have two outstanding members working with us this year. Emily Kornak, Adult Services Librarian at Barrington Public Library in Barrington, IL, is completing her term as RUSA's Spectrum Scholar intern. Alicia Finley, Library Service Specialist II (Children's Services) at the Charlotte (N.C.) Mecklenburg Library, is a member of the ALA 2013 class of Emerging Leaders and is sponsored by RUSA.

We also are excited to welcome our new Spectrum Scholar, Kirk MacLeod, an MLS candidate at the University of Alberta, Canada, who is beginning his work with us at the Annual Conference in Chicago.

- *President's Program and Other Top Picks.*

For the last two years RUSA experimented with using one of the section programs as the RUSA President's signature program. These programs, sponsored by the Reference Services Section (RSS) and MARS: Emerging Technologies in Reference Section respectively, were marvelous programs and it was a great investment. This year, in an effort to build RUSA's image and to recruit additional RUSA members, we are again sponsoring a separate President's Program.

The planning committee experimented this year with a two-part program. In the President's Program, **The Myth and the Reality of the Evolving Patron**, scheduled for Saturday, June 29 at 4:00 pm Lee Rainie, of the Pew Internet & American Life Project will speak about the results of Pew's recent research on library and information use and about the impact on libraries and librarians. In addition, a discussion forum with Mr. Rainie and several panel respondents to further discuss the issues raised in the research will take place at 10:30 am on Sunday, June 30. The panelists for the discussion will be: Emily Ford, David Lankes, Marie Radford, and Joyce Kasman Valenza. This discussion has been selected by *Library Journal* as a top conference pick.

We are excited that several other RUSA programs have been designated *Library Journal* top conference picks as well. They include the RUSA **Literary Tastes** program on Sunday June 30 at 8:00 am, the CODES Readers Advisory Forum entitled: **Beyond Genre: Exploring the Perception, Uses, and Misuses of Genre by Readers, Writers, and Librarians**, on Saturday, June 29 at 10:30 am, the MARS Program on **Usability, the User Experience & Interface Design: The Role of Reference** scheduled for Sunday June 30 at 1:00 pm, and the RSS Discussion about **The New Reference Services: A Refdesk-Shattering Discussion**, on Sunday June 30 at 8:30 am.

- *Resource Development Committee*

A new RUSA committee was appointed this year to encourage and make the most effective use of donations to RUSA. The group is crafting a development plan that can be revised yearly with specific fund-raising targets.

Next Steps—The Future is Bright

The coming year will find RUSA taking important steps to reach multiple goals, all of which are intended to better engage members and to serve their needs in the current environment. The Budget & Finance Committee and the section leadership are working to creatively use RUSA's base and reserve budgets to meet these goals and to branch out into new initiatives that will move reference and user services forward.

Next year's leaders, Kathleen Kern, who will assume the RUSA Presidency after the Annual Conference, and recently-elected Vice-President/President-Elect Joseph Thompson are well-positioned to lead RUSA in important new directions as the results of the various reviews are presented and discussed over the coming year. I congratulate all of the other newly elected RUSA and Section leaders and I look forward to their new plans and ideas. The vision of our excellent RUSA staff that supports the work of the Association with enthusiasm, hard work, creative ideas, and expert guidance will help RUSA to achieve its goals as well.

The Last Word(s)

It has been a great joy to serve RUSA and its members as President. I have been grateful for the help and support of my predecessor, Gary White, RUSA Past President, who has provided wise guidance. The other members of the 2012-2013 RUSA Executive Committee, Jennifer Boettcher, RUSA Councilor, Kathleen Kern, Vice-President/President-Elect, and Carolyn Larson, RUSA Secretary, have also been marvelous, supportive partners and have served the Association very well; it has been a pleasure to work with all of them. I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to Susan Hornung (Executive Director), Andrea Hill, Liz Markel, and Leighann Wood of the RUSA office for all of their hard work on behalf of RUSA and its members this year (and every year)

My warm thanks also go to all of the members of the RUSA Board, the leadership of the RUSA sections, and all committee chairs and members. As a member-driven organization, RUSA's progress and success are dependent on the many volunteers who give their time and effort to making RUSA the outstanding organization that it is. It is because of all of them that RUSA can offer a variety of services to members. I very much appreciate the opportunity to get to know so many wonderful RUSA members and I am grateful for their trust and support.

I can't wait to see what will happen next!

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