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Editorial

Peggy Johnson



Writing a timely editorial or one that will seem pertinent (or, with luck, entertaining) four months after I put fingers to the keyboard is always a challenge. We have snow on the ground in Minnesota and spring will have arrived by the time this issue reaches your mail boxes. The ALA Midwinter Meeting will be over and people will be getting ready for Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

That observation gives me the starting point for this editorial. The Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) will be a major player at the 2007 Annual Conference as we celebrate fifty years as an association serving the profession. The week of programming and events begins with a one-and-a-half-day conference (June 20–21), “Interactive Futures: A National Conference on the Transformation of Library Collections & Technical Services.” Featured speakers are Richard A. Lanham and Stephen Abrams. Lanham is an author, lecturer, and UCLA English professor emeritus, whose works include *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Art* (Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1993) and *The Economics of Attention* (Univ. of Chicago Pr., 2006). Abram is vice president of innovation, Sirsi Corporation, and a leading international librarian and provocative thinker in the North American library community. The conference features plenary and breakout sessions. It concludes with the ALCTS 50th anniversary gala dinner cruise on the Potomac River. This is a conference not to be missed!

ALCTS also will be offering five preconferences, two of which are two-day events, one is a single day, and two are half days. They are:

- Comprehensive Series Training
- Basic Library of Congress Classification
- What They Don't Teach in Library School: Competencies, Education, and Employer Expectations for a Career in Cataloging
- Managing the Multigenerational Workplace: Practical Techniques
- Workflow Analysis, Redesign, and Implementation: Integrating Electronic Resources

With such a variety of topics and options for length of time involved, attendees are sure to find something that meets their needs and interests.

In addition, ALCTS is sponsoring fourteen programs during the conference. All look splendid. The ALCTS President's Program, “Libraries and Findability: Elegant Hacks for Our Future,” deserves special mention. Peter Merville is the keynote speaker and described as a passionate advocate of the role that “findability” plays in defining the user experience. Merville is the author of *Ambient Findability* (O'Reilly, 2005) and coauthor of *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web: Designing Large-Scale Web Sites*, 2nd ed. (O'Reilly, 2002). He is the president and founder of Semantic Studios, an information architecture, user experience, and findability consultancy. He is a graduate of University of Michigan's School of Information, where he is an adjunct faculty member. The President's Program will be Monday, June 25, 10:30 a.m., and is the final event in the ALCTS 50th Anniversary Celebration.

I encourage you to join the celebration. Detailed information is available at the ALCTS anniversary Web site (www.ala.org/alcts50). Be sure to visit the section “Looking Back,” which has a list of past presidents, photos, trivia, and more.

As I look toward the fiftieth anniversary festivities, I also ponder the future of ALCTS and *LRTS*. Both depend on you—being engaged in ALCTS activities, volunteering for service, and writing for publication. To that end, I am suggesting topics that would make excellent themes for papers to be submitted to *LRTS*. These topics could be the starting point for research projects or a catalyst for essays that thoughtfully consider one or more perspectives on a particular topic. *LRTS* also publishes papers in a section called “Notes on Operations,” which report practical applications and problems solutions that have implications beyond the library in which they occur.

We have had few papers in the area of acquisitions recently, yet I think this is one of the exciting, fast-moving areas in technical services. What new services are foreign vendors offering and how do they compare with those provided by U.S. vendors? How do these changing services from both foreign and domestic vendors affect workflow, allocation of staff time, and level of staff (type or classification) doing the work? Is anyone thinking about a standard elements for an acquisitions record? What about a historical review of the changes undergone and undertaken by monograph vendors to meet libraries’ changing expectations? Related to this topic—are libraries changing practices to mesh with changing services, or are libraries driving the changes in services that vendors supply? Does anyone have experience with the new WorldCat Selection service, based on the Integrated Tool for Selection and Ordering at Cornell University Library (ITSO CUL)? Perhaps someone in a library implementing this service could collect data pre- and post-implementation and prepare an analysis for *LRTS*.

The future of the catalog is the topic du jour and probably de dix ans. Next generation catalogs and various initiatives underway (such as PennTags, WorldCat Identities, and University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana Libraries’ Buy a Book service) to enhance current catalogs and services are fascinating. What do librarians at Endeca-using institutions have to tell us? Those that are looking to implement the Ex Libris Primo should be thinking now about how they can share their experiences and the results with colleagues.

Preservation of digital content and traditional formats remains a critical topic. I would welcome exploration of solutions to digital archiving—helping readers understand LOCKSS, PORTICO, dark archives, semi-dark archives, light archives, perpetual archives, and where librarians and libraries have responsibilities. Do microforms still have a role in library collections? Are they being replaced by

digitized content? If so, what are the responses from and consequences to users?

The landscape for licensing digital content and access to digital content is changing rapidly. Perhaps now is the time for a paper that considers the Google project, the Open Content Alliance, and in-house projects—and how they are, together, building a new universe for information seekers. How do these new types of collections fit with traditional collection, use, and user assessment? Are libraries employing statistical measures of usage for Web-based information resources? Have the guidelines for these measures promoted by the International Coalition of Library Consortia affected the practices of content providers? I’ve heard talk about a universal license. What has been the result of national e-content licenses in other countries? Licensors and licensees both have perspectives that can be explored and shared.

I am especially interested in trends in the organization of technical services, the changing skill sets expected of professional librarians, and the expanding role of non-MLIS professionals. What defines original cataloging or, more to the point, what is the role of MLIS professionals in technical services?

Anyone who is considering writing a paper for *LRTS* should review the “Instructions for Authors” and “Author FAQ” sections on the *LRTS* Web site (www.ala.org/alcts/lrts). The *LRTS* Editorial Board provides mentors to potential authors, who are interested in this service. I conclude with my now familiar advice for aspiring authors.

- Do not write a simple how-we-did-it good paper. Successful projects can be the basis of good papers, but they need to be placed in a larger context. Why should readers care? Have others tackled the problems or written about it? What can readers learn from the project being reported?
- Be attentive to grammar and spelling. Proofread and proofread again.
- Check citations for accuracy.
- Do not overshadow prose with illustrative matter. Most papers need no more than six to eight (at most) figures and tables. The data represented in illustrative matter and their significance should be explained in the prose. Illustrative matter is not required; some papers do not need tables reporting quantitative and statistical findings or figures demonstrating topics addressed.
- Be sure that your paper fits within the scope of *LRTS*.
- Browse through recent issues of *LRTS* to get a sense of style, length, and tone. Read the papers that received the Best of *LRTS* award. I commend to you:

- Jennifer Bowen, “FRBR: Coming Soon to Your Library,” 49, no. 3 (July 2005): 175–188.
- Kristin Antelman, “Identifying the Serial Work as a Bibliographic Entity,” 48, no. 4 (Oct. 2004): 238–55.
- Amy Weiss, “Proliferating Guidelines: A History and Analysis of the Cataloging of Electronic Resources,” 47, no. 4 (Oct. 2003): 171–187.

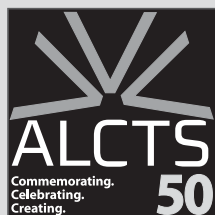
- *LRTS* is a scholarly journal. Your paper should reflect this while being readable. Ponderous prose is deadly.

Finally, do not hesitate to contact a member of the Editorial Board or me if you wish to discuss a potential paper.

ALCTS, *LRTS* 50th Anniversaries

The stellar lineup of events highlighting the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) 50th anniversary celebration, “Commemorating our Past, Celebrating our Present, Creating our Future,” will begin at Midwinter Meeting’s Anniversary Year Kickoff Reception and will include the ALCTS National Conference, a gala dinner cruise, and the annual President’s Program featuring Peter Morville, author of *Ambient Findability* and president of Semantic Studios.

ALCTS members and *Library Resources & Technical Services* (*LRTS*) subscribers will also enjoy anniversary articles, a complimentary copy of the fifty-year cumulative index to *LRTS* and the reissue of *LRTS* volume 1, number 1. A 50th anniversary commemorative publication will be available for purchase through the ALA Online Store in late 2007.



Web Site Explains, Entertains

The ALCTS anniversary Web site (www.ala.org/alcts50) provides information on all anniversary events, links to registration forms and information, and serves up photos, trivia, and other surprises.

Contribute Your Thoughts, Photos

A special 50th anniversary survey is being conducted to be an informal (and, we hope, fun) exercise for those who have chosen library careers to reflect on their time in the profession and size up their expectations for the future. Take the survey now by visiting the 50th anniversary Web site (www.ala.org/alcts50) and clicking on the “Survey” link.

Everyone is invited to contribute photos (candid or professional) to the ALCTS photo gallery on the Web site. Photos can range from shots of ALCTS events to family photos from trips to Seattle and Washington, D.C. Submission instructions are on the 50th anniversary Web site.