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Guest Editorial

eLRTS: An Old Friend In New Dress

Norm Medeiros

Norm Medeiros is ALCTS President-Elect and before his election, served a three-year term as the *LRTS* Book Review Editor. I have asked Norm to write a guest editorial for what will be the last volume of *LRTS* issued in print. Volume 59 of *LRTS* will be the first volume issued as e-only. I also welcome Elyssa Sanner as the new Book Review Editor and the new members of the *LRTS* editorial board.

I am honored that Mary Beth invited me to write this editorial, the last to appear in print. Beginning with the next issue, *Library Resources and Technical Services* will be available exclusively as a digital journal. Although I fully endorse this move, I will not be around to christen the inaugural e-only issue. Having been recently elected as ALCTS president for the 2015–16 term, I am stepping down from the editorial board and book review duties to focus on my new role. I am excited for the challenge, but I cannot tell a lie: I will miss the work of producing *LRTS*.

When *LRTS* debuted in 1957, Esther Piercy in her first editorial, described how the journal came into being, the offspring of two previous publications: *Serials Slants* and the *Journal of Cataloging and Classification*. She described *LRTS* as “an old friend in new dress”—a fitting phrase for this moment, as *LRTS* transitions to a purely electronic publication. The quality of *LRTS*, or *eLRTS* as some have come to call it, will be unaffected by this shift. Our journal will remain among the most read, cited, and respected in the library field.

Unlike many long-term relationships, the one I have had with *LRTS* has been consistently enjoyable. My first encounter with the journal was in library school, when I hunted down bound volumes in the stacks at the University of Rhode Island. I certainly had not heard of ALCTS back then, and would not until I started my second professional position—a scenario all too common, but one the ALCTS Board of Directors hopes to address soon with help from the Membership Committee and the New Members Interest Group (NMIG). After joining ALCTS, I enjoyed reading the outstanding work of *LRTS* contributors, many of whom I would come to know in the years to follow. Once active in the division, I pursued publication work. From 2003 to 2007, I had the privilege of serving as the Cataloging and Classification Section (now Cataloging and Metadata Management Section, or CaMMS) representative to the *LRTS* editorial board. Peggy Johnson was editor during this period, and watching her conduct a board meeting influenced the way I subsequently convened groups, both within and outside ALCTS. Peggy taught me, among other valuable things, the coercive power of chocolate—not that such savory treats were needed to motivate the editorial board. To the contrary, the engagement of board members was consistently strong, where it has remained under Mary Beth’s leadership. There is a seriousness of purpose that accompanies one’s editorial board duties; it is meaningful work with lasting impact.

As I completed my service as CCS representative, the editorial board discussed the prospect of digitizing and making publicly available the backfile of *LRTS*. I was delighted that my library provided this digitization on ALCTS’ behalf. The backfile has been available for several years, and is a terrific source of professional and association history. Browse this collection and you will find that the

challenges and concerns of prior generations are not all that different from today.

Following the untimely passing of longtime *LRTS* book review editor Edward Swanson in 2010, Peggy asked me to assume responsibility for the column. Although I was uneasy of the time commitment involved, the lure of once again serving on the editorial board was too much to refuse. I have thoroughly enjoyed this role, and have tried to perform it at a high level—the hallmark of Edward's work—while at the same time providing opportunities to individuals new to publishing. I have come to know many ALCTS colleagues as a result of this editorship, among them Elyssa Sanner, to whom I am passing the reins. Elyssa is a talented writer, with the kind of boundless energy I vaguely remember possessing. I am excited that Elyssa will not be encumbered by page limits as she exercises her own vision for the *LRTS* book review column of the future.

The transition to an e-only journal comes at a time when ALCTS is recommitting *LRTS* as a “green” open access journal, which means authors who publish in *LRTS* can deposit the published PDF of their article in an institutional or disciplinary archive. Although we are not yet prepared to shift *LRTS* to “gold” open access—that is a freely available publication—the editorial board will not lose sight of this ideal, as it is an important principal for many ALCTS members. Meanwhile we hope authors will take advantage of ALCTS' liberal copyright policy to widely distribute their scholarship through self-deposit.

To say I have the benefit of following strong presidents is an understatement. There is hardly sufficient space within this column (there are those pesky page constraints again) to elaborate on the leadership of those presidents under whom I have served: Pamela Bluh, Dina Giambi, Mary Case, Cynthia Whitacre, Betsy Simpson, Carolynne Myall, Genevieve Owens, and our current president, Mary Page. Each has a unique leadership style. I have studied them, making mental notes about a characteristic or approach I would like to embody. I will be downloading this mental index in the months to come, and applying its rich contents during my presidential year.

One vital resource common to the aforementioned presidents has been Charles Wilt. Charles, ALCTS Executive Director since 2001, will be retiring in February 2015. As of this writing (June 2014) the early stages of a search for his successor are underway. Brian Schottlaender, 2003–4 ALCTS president and recent ALCTS division councilor, is leading this important process. Needless to say, we are in excellent hands. Although I know ALCTS will hire a very talented executive director, it is hard to imagine ALCTS without Charles. Equal parts good judgment and good cheer, Charles has helped guide the association in numerous and valuable ways. I sincerely hope he enjoys his retirement, and remembers that red wine, in moderation, is health promoting.

As I close, I want to recall the slogan Bruce Johnson adopted during his presidential year of 2006–7: “We are ALCTS.” This simple phrase resonates with me because it reinforces the power we have to direct the future of ALCTS. It is our association, and it will succeed or fail because of us. The decision to move *LRTS* to e-only involved risk, particularly the prospect that some ALCTS members would cancel their memberships by virtue of no longer receiving the print quarterly. Yet I believe the vast majority of ALCTS members choose to belong to our association for reasons that transcend material benefit. I think it is particularly important to understand the value that ALCTS provides to the majority of members who do not regularly participate in committees or interest groups, or attend ALA conferences. I am excited that the ALCTS-sponsored emerging leaders are working on a strategy for improving ALCTS' social media utilization. I think this avenue will be profitable in gathering the input needed to ensure we are serving all members well. Moreover, applying social media to reach prospective members, especially library school students and new library workers, is critical for the well-being of the Association.

I hope you enjoy reading this final print issue of *LRTS*. This occasion, while notable, marks neither an end nor beginning, but rather a continuation of excellence for our official journal.