

EDITORIAL

Cruel to Be Kind

Reviewing for Library Resources & Technical Services

Michael Fernandez and Rachel E. Scott

A recent call for volunteer peer reviewers for American Library Association Core division journals was incredibly successful—more than 170 answered the call and expressed their willingness to review. As we prepare to onboard and train the volunteers, we thought to share some of the highlights with you. As suggested by countless Reviewer 2 memes, peer review has been the scene of many battles—intellectual, petty, and anywhere in between. A peer reviewer once described a certain *LRTS* editor’s writing as “gauche” and “undisciplined,” to cite one painful example. On another occasion, peer reviewers failed to draw attention to an omission that continues to haunt this particular editor. But we digress: in most cases, peer reviewers are constructive, helpful, and insightful. Even though it may not feel like it, the point of peer review isn’t to traumatize but rather to improve and strengthen manuscripts. It is in this spirit of constructive criticism that the *LRTS* editorial team onboards reviewers.

Working with the ALA Core division journal editorial team, we devised a shared [review template](#). We ask all reviewers to consider these questions and provide feedback to the editors based on these considerations. The template addresses several broad questions dealing with the relevance to the readership; novelty of contribution to the literature; adherence to conventions of academic writing; whether the literature review places the study in perspective and builds on existing research; the clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the methods; and the implications of the findings for scholarship or practice.

At the head of the reviewer template, there is a link to the [Use of Generative AI by Authors and Reviewers Policy](#). The Core journal editors agree that peer review is uniquely valuable because it is a human process that leverages the reviewer’s expertise and experience. Accordingly, reviewers may not use generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to assist with any aspect of their review. Other ethical considerations include the responsibility of reviewers to disclose a potential conflict of interest to the editors. The journals use a double-anonymous review process to minimize bias. We ask reviewers to decline review invitations when they suspect that they may know the authors.

Throughout the training, we emphasize the importance of communication. If reviewers have any questions or concerns, they should reach out to the editors. In the course of reviewing an article, a reviewer may have reason to suspect undeclared AI use, knowledge of the authors’ identities, or inconsistencies in reporting. There is no disadvantage to reaching out.

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After the editors receive the reviewer reports, we reconcile what is sometimes contradictory information with our own understanding and assessment. In preparing editorial decisions, we work hard to make sure the reviews are presented in a constructive manner. Reviewers have the opportunity to present certain information to the editors only and some information to both the authors and the editors. We share the information intended for authors with authors—unless it is unprofessional, unproductive, or unkind. In the very rare occasions reviewers include such feedback, the editors are well within their rights to excise it.

By providing guidelines for peer reviews, the Core journal editors establish clear expectations for the review process. Editorial decisions, informed by review reports, enable authors to refine and enrich their work with expert insight. The peer-review process is not unlike the iterative optimization inherent to technical services work. This issue of *LRTS* contains case studies and research articles that demonstrate the value of the systematic assessment and appraisal our peer reviewers lend to the work.

Communications on Practice

In “Making Hidden Collections Visible: A Case Study of Human–AI Collaboration in Archival Metadata Generation,” Jeehyun Davis, Alayne Mundt, and Leslie Nellis document work evaluating JSTOR Seeklight, an AI-assisted tool designed to generate descriptive metadata and transcription for digitized archival materials. Five archival collections at American University Library were tested to assess the tool’s ability to produce titles, descriptions, subject headings, named entities, and creator fields across a range of formats. The authors found that Seeklight was most successful in generating baseline titles and descriptions for visual materials with textual context and least successful in generating authority-controlled fields. They recommend AI-assisted metadata generation as a workflow enhancement that complements rather than replaces professional expertise.

Features

Christopher A. Palazzolo, William Jacobs, and Matthew J. Jabaily report on a survey of academic and research librarians’ experiences with ebook evidence-based acquisition (EBA) models in “A Comparative Study of the Implementation, Management, and Evaluation of Evidence-Based Acquisition Ebook Plans in Academic and Research Libraries.” EBA models have emerged as an opportunity to balance broad access to ebook content with librarian autonomy and agency. The results explore librarians’ engagement with and management of EBA models and document a variety of motivations for EBA adoption, as well as challenges and preferences related to EBA budgeting, management, and title and program selection.

In “‘Unbury’ the Book Chapter?: An Investigation of Library and Information Science Book Chapters from Edited Collections in Scholarly Indexes,” Juleah Swanson examines the truth of the perception that by publishing a book chapter in an edited collection, the author has “buried” it. Swanson evaluates the discovery of library and information science book chapters in Google Scholar, Web of Science

Book Citation Index, and Dimensions and finds inconsistent indexing across all three indices. Although Swanson confirms concerns about the discovery of book chapters, she helpfully outlines avenues to exhumate them by improving discoverability.

Notes on Operations

Jennifer A. Mezick, Louis T. Becker, and Kat Brooks outline a case study on approval plan assessment undertaken at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in “Measure, Change, Measure: Assessing Changes to a Traditional Approval Plan.” Having updated approval plan parameters considerably between 2019 and 2023, the authors review the purchase and usage data from these periods to investigate the performance of the plan. They find that using this data to update approval plans positively impacts the quantity and usage of approval plans titles.

In “Ebook Call Number Project: Automating Library of Congress Classification Numbers to Ebooks for Reporting,” Bonita Pollock, Zhao Liu, Amanda Yesilbas, Laura Pascual, and Skyler Schultz outline their automated process for adding Library of Congress Classification numbers into Alma (Library Management System) call number fields to enhance ebook metadata. The authors developed a Python-based automation tool using OCLC’s Connexion API and implemented a workflow within the Ex Libris Alma Library Management System that leveraged existing metadata. This project has significantly improved the accuracy of discipline-specific collection assessment and reporting. The authors offer alternative workflows for librarians who have limited programming expertise or support.

Book Reviews

Reviewed in this issue is *Collection Management Basics*, Eighth Edition, by Margaret Zarnosky Saponaro, John Novak, and G. Edward Evans.