
Change Must Be Served

Barry Trott

Correspondence concerning this column should be addressed to Barry Trott, RUSQ Editor, 7770 Croaker Rd., Williamsburg, VA, 23188; email: btrott@wrl.org.

As I write this column in April, it is National Poetry Month, and I have been reading a lot of poems, old and new. I came across Ruth Lechlitner's 1938 poem "Change Must Be Served," in which she says, "They who fear change nest in the now-moment."¹ There is a lot of change going on in our world, in our communities, and in our libraries, and it becomes very easy to do just what Lechlitner describes. We often find it easier to turn away from the relentless and difficult questions that these changes raise than to reflect on what they mean for us as librarians and as members of a community.

Over the past several years, Joe Thompson, Anne Houston, and Alesia McManus, our three most recent RUSA presidents, have written thoughtful pieces for RUSQ about changes being considered in the organization. They and many others have covered everything from considering name changes to reflections on the nature of what we do as reference librarians. For some members, changing an organization that has been a home for them and for their work is a hard thing to contemplate. And considering all of these changes to a profession that we value and love can be difficult. Rethinking your work and your role in your institution is a scary thing. What if it means that you find that you no longer have a role? What if your long-held career plans are no longer viable because the work you wanted to do is not the work that needs to be done? It can be tempting to "nest in the now-moment" and pretend that things are not changing.

So, how do we make peace with the idea that, as Ruth Lechlitner said in 1938, "Change must be served?" Looking back after twenty years of work in reference librarianship, the common trait among the people I know who have been not only successful at their jobs but also happy in their work has been a willingness to find joy in learning new things. When I was fairly new to the profession, I used to worry that I did not have big plans for where I wanted to be five years down the road (that common interview question). I just do not really think that way, but I felt that I should, as it seemed to be expected.

I was fortunate enough to attend Snowbird Library Leadership Institute early on in my career, and there I heard George Needham talk about this concept. Needham said that rather than planning where he wanted to be in five years, he simply did the best job he could in his current position, tried to learn as much as he could about the institution and its users, and said "yes" when asked to do things. Then, when a new opportunity, a change, arose, he would be prepared to take it.

This was an epiphany; it has shaped my professional life.

Perhaps, then, it is best to look at change, in our profession, in our library, in our professional organization, not as something to fear and to hide from, but as a chance to learn something new about that profession, that library, or RUSA. I think that taking this approach makes the idea of change seem less overwhelming. It becomes instead an occasion to become a better librarian and to prepare yourself for the next opportunity that comes along.

With that in mind, I wanted to alert you all to some upcoming changes at *RUSQ*. I have had the pleasure and challenge of serving as editor of the journal for the past five years. But the editorial position is limited to two three-year terms, and so we will be looking for a new editor to take over

the journal, becoming editor-designate on February 1, 2018, and assuming the position of editor following the 2018 ALA Annual Conference. In late summer or early fall of this year, we will send out a call for applications for the editor position, and I encourage anyone with a background in scholarly publication to consider applying. I would be happy to answer any questions about the position, so feel free to contact me at btrott@wrl.org or 757-259-7747.

Reference

1. Ruth Lechlitner, "Three Poems," *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* 51, no. 6 (March 1938): 295, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?volume=51&issue=6&page=1>.