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# RUSQ Moves to Full Open Access

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**A**t their July meeting, the board of directors of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) approved a proposal from the *RUSQ* editor and board to make the journal fully open access, beginning with volume 57 no. 1, Fall 2017.

The *RUSQ* board based its proposal on several arguments:

1. Making sure that our professional standards are supported by our professional journal
  - a. As the open access movement is strongly supported by librarians, it makes sense that the flagship journal of the reference profession, *RUSQ* should support that model. Our sister organizations, LITA and ACRL, both offer their professional journals in fully open access models, starting in 2012 and 2011 respectively. It makes sense for *RUSQ* to join this effort. As the ACRL board noted in their statement on open access, "Scholarship by academic librarians advances the fields of library and information science, influences practices of aligned professions, and informs effective advocacy. In support of broad and timely dissemination of library and information science scholarship, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) encourages academic librarians to publish in open access journals."<sup>1</sup>
2. Ensuring a continued pool of strong authors and articles
  - a. As noted in the ACRL statement above, more and more librarians are seeking to publish only in open access journals. *RUSQ* has had at least one instance of an author withdrawing an article due to the lack of full open access. We have also had column editors who were unable to publish a particular piece because the author will only publish in open access publications. This will become an increasing issue for future editors. Move to a fully open access model will ensure that the journal continues to draw from a strong pool of authors for feature articles and columns.
3. Easing access for current RUSA members
  - a. Moving to full open access will eliminate the need to RUSA members to login to read *RUSQ*. The primary complaint that readers have had about the journal during my tenure as editor is the challenge of easily accessing current articles. The move to full open access ensures that all readers will be able to easily read journal content.

4. Increasing attention to RUSA
  - a. By moving to a full open access model, more readers worldwide will be able to connect with RUSA through the journal. Increasing ease of access for librarians, especially those in organizations that do not provide institutional access to *RUSQ* (public librarians in particular) should increase the reach of RUSA into new areas of potential recruitment. As increasing RUSA membership is a key to the survival of the association, the move to full open access can be a part of this strategy.
5. Broader worldwide access
  - a. *RUSQ* board members noted that in many countries worldwide, the cost of professional journal subscriptions is extremely prohibitive. Delayed access to these publications handicaps researchers who could benefit greatly from timely access to important publications, such as *RUSQ* articles and columns. Again, increasing the profile of the journal and of RUSA will be a benefit to the organization.

As part of the consideration of the cost of moving to full open access, I will be working with staff at ALA Publishing

to explore possible cost savings in the production and other lines for the journal, including moving the journal to a more web-based format. If there are savings here, they would also contribute to making up the deficit that the move to full open access would entail.

While the move to a fully open access model will result in additional costs for RUSA in terms of lost subscription fees, the *RUSQ* board and I feel that there are significant benefits in terms of reach, access, and living up to our professional standards that warrant those costs. It is essential for our organization to clearly live the values that we espouse as professionals; the move to open access is an important step in that direction.

### Reference

1. "Policy Statement on Open Access to Scholarship by Academic Librarians," Association of College and Research Libraries, press release, July 11, 2016, <http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2016/07/acrl-issues-policy-statement-open-access-scholarship-academic-librarians>.