

Two Decades of Readers' Advisory in *RUSQ*

A Content Analysis of the Readers' Advisory Column Published in *Reference & User Services Quarterly* from 2000 to 2019

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Abstract

This paper presents a content analysis of all the 63 articles published under the Readers' Advisory (RA) column of the journal *Reference & User Services Quarterly (RUSQ)*. The analysis aimed to study the topics discussed in the articles; learn the trends by analyzing the article-related statistics such as themes, types, and length; and find the patterns by analyzing the author-related statistics such as collaboration, geographic base, affiliation, and frequency (multiple contributions to the column). Findings showed that the RA column published fairly regularly (81.9%). Thematically, maximum articles centered on depicting the variety of RA practices (31.7%); and guidance about numerous RA tools available in print and online (15.9%) for all types of librarians to help provide better RA service. Most articles were sole-authored (88.9%), maximum authors were from the United States (81%), and most were affiliated with the public library sector (47.6%). The column editors were actively involved in the column. This paper is the first to attempt the content analysis of the complete RA column since its commencement. This in-depth analysis shows the journey of RA service during the first two decades of the 21st century by denoting the common themes as well as unique topics discussed in the column.

1. Introduction

Librarianship is a service profession that stands on four pillars—collections, readers, staff, and services. It is the fourth aspect, i.e., the various services, that ties together the first three, with staff as the giver of a service, reader as the receiver of it, and the collection as a tool used for service provision. Readers' Advisory (RA) is an essential library service where readers receive recommendations of material suitable to their reading interests. Joyce Saricks, in her groundbreaking work *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* defines RA this way: "A successful readers' advisory service is one in which knowledgeable, nonjudgmental staff help fiction and nonfiction readers with their leisure-reading needs."¹ As the first part of this definition points out, a library professional has to have knowledge of a variety of sources and be open to all kinds of genres. The latter denotes the understanding of readers' needs. To find out what the individual reader

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enjoys reading, RA interviews are conducted by librarians. These interviews help the advisors gauge the readers' likes and dislikes by locating the specific "appeal factors" in their descriptions, factors such as, pacing, characterization, storyline, frame, tone, and style.² With the advent of technology, RA is no longer limited to print books; it also includes providing recommendations on other formats like e-books and audiobooks. Libraries conduct a variety of innovative RA practices, both direct and indirect, to effectively fulfill the reading demands with the help of specialized RA tools. All these and many more facets of RA have been discussed in the articles published in *RUSQ*'s RA column.

Content analysis is an empirical research method used especially to identify research trends. As Klaus Krippendorff defines it, "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use."³ To carry out this method, various analysis categories or criteria are identified and the content of the selected material is examined according to the decided criteria. The results are then quantified and interpreted to ascertain the trends. Content analysis method has been regularly applied in the LIS field. This research is the first to conduct a content analysis of the complete RA column run by *RUSQ*, spanning 20 years.

1.1. About RUSQ

Understanding the importance of RA as an integral library service, the American Library Association (ALA) established a readers' advisory committee in the Collection Development Section (CODES) of the Reference and User Services Association (RUSA). RUSA has been instrumental in enhancing awareness of RA. *Reference & User Services Quarterly* (now titled *RUSQ: A Journal of Reference and User Experience*) is the official journal of RUSA. It is a peer-reviewed, open access, quarterly journal. Instead of numbers, the four issues per year of *RUSQ* are named by the seasons in which they publish; the first issue as "Autumn," the second as "Winter," the third as "Spring," and the fourth as "Summer." Published first in 1960, it was originally titled *RQ*. The name was changed to *Reference & User Services Quarterly* (or *RUSQ*) from 1997. Major changes were brought forth in 2006. A new website for the journal was launched to provide open access to the online version of *RUSQ* with multiple retrieval options. In a press release by ALA on October 12, 2006, Diane Zabel (then-editor of the journal) announced, "Guided by the philosophy of the open access movement, the online companion is [now] open to all users, not just RUSA or ALA members."⁴ *RUSQ* was also redesigned to include other changes like the page layout of two textual columns per page instead of three. Stated on the journal's website, the purpose of *RUSQ* is to disseminate information of interest to librarians in areas such as reference services, collection development, RA, resource sharing, technology for reference and user services, and other aspects of user services.⁵ As noted here, RA has always been one of the focal coverage areas for this journal.

RUSA also formed the Readers' Advisory Research Trends Committee under its Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES). One of the main functions of this committee is "to consider issues, concerns, and trends relative to the development of readers' advisory services in all types of libraries."⁶ The members of the committee have contributed to two articles published in *RUSQ* on library education for RA, and recommended RA tools.

1.2. About the Readers' Advisory Column

RUSQ is the first and the only journal to publish a separate column on RA. The first article in the column was published in the winter issue of 2000 (*RUSQ* 40, no. 2). As Connie Van Fleet noted, "Duncan Smith contributed . . . the first offering in the Readers' Advisory column which Danny P. Wallace and I created when we assumed the editorship of *RUSQ*."⁷ The latest article published under

the column was in the winter issue of 2019 (*RUSQ* 59, no. 2). It has had four different column editors so far—Mary K. Chelton, Barry Trott, Laurel Tarulli, and coeditors Laurel Tarulli and Neal Wyatt (editor's note, the readers' advisory column continues in this issues under the editorship of Craig Clark). The column editor has the final decision on column choices.

The RA column was published consistently in 63 out of 77 issues of *RUSQ* (81.9%). Of these 63 columns, 49 (77.8%) were written by guest columnists; while 14 (22.2%) were contributed by the current column-editors. *RUSQ* is the only journal known to have a dedicated RA column ongoing for decades. Jessica Moyer highlighted the uniqueness of this column remarking, "While many other journals publish articles on readers' advisory services, none with the exception of *Reference & User Services Quarterly* currently have a regular column or feature."⁸

2. Literature Review

Apart from the 63 articles reviewed as a part of the content analysis, the other referred literature included a few studies on content analysis research in the LIS field. Järvelin and Vakkari conducted an exhaustive content analysis of 950 research articles published during 1965–1995 in core LIS journals to analyze the topics, approaches, and methods of investigation.⁹ This was a pioneering work in LIS content analysis and was referred by many later researchers for the thematic classification. Maxine Rochester performed content analysis of all the research articles published in the *Australian Library Journal* and *Australian Academic and Research Libraries* during 1985–1994. The criteria for analysis were similar to Järvelin and Vakkari, and gave an insight into the LIS research scene in Australia.¹⁰ Yontar and Yalvaç administered a similar analysis of 644 research articles published in *Turkish Librarianship* journal between 1952 and 1994. The main criteria of analysis were topic, type of article, research strategies, and data collection methods.¹¹ Blessinger and Hrycaj identified 32 highly cited articles that were influential to scholarly communication in LIS and analyzed them as per journal impact factor, subject themes, and authorship characteristics.¹² Julien, Pecoskie and Reed carried out an analysis of 749 articles published and indexed under "information needs" and "information uses" in Library Literature and Information Science Full-text database. Authorship, article type, research methods, journal type, and user groups considered were some of the analyzing variables.¹³ Noa Aharony conducted a statistical descriptive analysis of authorship patterns and subject themes by analyzing the keywords and abstracts extracted from top 10 LIS journals published in 2007–2008.¹⁴ Finally, Vera Armann-Keowna and Liane Patterson studied the usage of content analysis in LIS and its trends through time.¹⁵ A review of all these studies provided many useful pointers for the analysis carried out here.

3. Research Design

3.1. Objectives

1. To study the topics discussed in the RA column published in *RUSQ*
2. To examine trends in the RA column by analyzing the article-related statistics such as themes, types, and length of the articles
3. To find patterns in the RA column by analyzing the author-related statistics such as collaboration, geographical distribution, professional affiliation, and frequency

3.2. Scope

Since its commencement in the winter issue of 2000 (*RUSQ* 40, no. 2), the RA column has been a part of 63 issues. The scope of this research was limited to all 63 articles published till 2020 under the Readers' Advisory column in the journal *Reference & User Services Quarterly*. Any other type of article (feature, other columns, etc.), though published on the topic of RA in *RUSQ*, was outside the purview of this study.

3.3. Methodology

A qualitative content analysis of these 63 articles was conducted by preparing their abstracts. The content was further analyzed quantitatively using eight criteria: theme of the articles; type of the articles; length of the articles; column editor-wise frequency of the column; collaboration in authorship; authors' geographical distribution; authors' professional affiliation; and authors' frequency (contributing more than once to the column).

Under "author," this research has considered the person(s) who has written the article, often noted in the RA column as "guest columnist(s)." Statistics provided against each point of comparison are rounded off to one digit after the decimal point.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Themes of the Articles

Barry Trott remarked in an introduction to one of the RA columns, "Most frequently, this column looks at potential new directions in readers' advisory theory and practice, offering tools that readers' advisors can use in their day to day work as well as expanding the theoretical foundations of that practice."¹⁶ To conduct qualitative content analysis, the abstracts of all the 63 articles published under the RA column were prepared and segregated into the eight themes identified as a part of this research. Table 1 presents the number and percentage of the articles under each theme.

Table 1. Themes of the Articles

Sr. No.	Themes	No. of Articles	%
1	RA practices	22	34.9
2	RA tools	10	15.9
3	Genres	8	12.7
4	Specialized RA (for different types of readers, for different formats)	7	11.1
5	RA theory	6	9.5
6	RA education and training	6	9.5
7	RA in academic libraries	3	4.8
8	About the column	1	1.6
	Total	63	

4.1.1. RA Practices

More than a third of the total articles (34.9%) in the RA column are dedicated to the theme of "RA practices." Many of the authors discussed a variety of creative and innovative practices for providing RA put into action in their libraries. From unique displays to booktalking, from genre

keywords in catalogs to online chat-based recommendations, the practices mentioned in the RA column run the gamut of service types. With six articles focusing on it, book clubs or book discussion groups appear to be a most popular practice. A separate subsection is formed here to highlight it.

4.1.1.1. Book Discussion Groups as an RA Practice

Book clubs hold an important place in RA. Literary discussions are born out of, and further develop, a love for reading and a desire to share thoughts about what one has read. Oprah's Book Club (1996–2010) has highly influenced the reading culture and brought popularity to book discussion groups. In one column, Kaite Mediatore presented an overview of in-person versus virtual book clubs, comparing strengths and weaknesses of both. She also provided a list of selected websites for online book clubs and additional print resources for book groups.¹⁷ Barbara Fister discussed the case study of "For Mystery Addicts" (4MA), an online book discussion group founded in 1999. As the name suggests, it is an online forum specifically developed for mystery genre fans to share their reading experiences and provide/receive reading recommendations. Fister underlined the importance of such online book discussion groups in providing RA in a fun way by listing various activities of 4MA, like sharing reading lists and ad hoc reviews.¹⁸ Martin Goldberg outlined the history of book clubs and their increased popularity after Oprah's Book Club. He then narrated his experience of forming a book club. Goldberg also cited a few pointers and tools to keep the book clubs organized and sustained, with the examples of book club activities of some of the universities.¹⁹

Joan Bessman Taylor elaborated on the "discussability" of the books as an important criterion of selection by the book clubs. She gave various references, listing the selection criteria of a "good book" for discussion groups. Citing her doctoral research on book discussion groups, Taylor observed that better discussions took place when some of the group members disliked the selected book, bringing to notice new aspects of appeal and widening the thinking of the reader.²⁰ Virginia Hermes, Mary Anne Hile, and Johnetta L. Frisbie presented the case study of Johnson County (Kansas) Library. They introduced the innovative idea of creating a Book Club To Go Kit (BCTGK) that contained 10 paperback copies of thematically selected "discussable" books (that include discussion prompts/questions) to assist book clubs' activities. The alternate formats of these titles, like audiobook or large print copy, were also made available, if required. They also developed a Find a Good Book page on the library's website to promote the library's RA services. Authors noted that BCTGKs were getting popular among the community and helped form many new book clubs.²¹

In 2008, the RUSA CODES Readers' Advisory Committee surveyed book group participants across the United States. The results showed a common set of problems that book groups faced. Megan McArdle examined these issues and explored possible solutions. The survey respondents noted a few complaints, such as the group spent too little time talking about the book and too much time on other things; only some members dominated the discussion; group membership was not diverse enough with respect to race, age, and gender; and books selected were not enjoyed by all the members. McArdle suggested that these issues could be resolved by first assessing one's expectations from a book group and then finding a compatible group. Honest sharing of opinions about the issues or adding an external facilitator could also be a solution. Advertising about the group at various venues might bring in a more diverse membership. She also provided a list of books approved by surveyed groups.²²

4.1.1.2. Other RA Practices

It is befitting that Duncan Smith, the creator of the premier RA tool NoveList, was the first guest columnist in the new RA column in *RUSQ*. Smith described the training manual "Talking with Readers" that he developed for RA librarians. He listed the competencies required for provision of quality RA, such as comprehension of appeals in fiction as well as nonfiction and "understanding people as readers and readers as people."²³

Lynn Welch offered a step-by-step procedure of providing RA service for the beginners. She recounted her own experience in the field and emphasized the importance of getting familiarized with the library's collection, forming alliance with other libraries, regularly monitoring current awareness websites, and soliciting feedback from the readers for effective RA.²⁴ Janet Nottingham relayed the case study of how she developed a complete RA program for a newly opened public library. It began with hiring staff who were good readers, nonjudgmental about patrons' variety of reading interests, and helpful. Next, the collection was shelved genre-wise, with special shelves for fast reads, Oprah recommendations, bestsellers, etc. Short, catchy, hand-written recommendations by staff were placed in books. Bestselling authors were asked to email the congratulatory messages on the opening of that branch. Received emails were displayed next to the books by those authors at the time of grand opening.²⁵

In a pioneering essay, Neil Hollands introduced the concept of form-based RA as a new model for RA service. In it, the information about patrons' reading preferences was collected using forms. It enabled the advisor to collect detailed information about reading habits without discomfort to patrons or time pressure. Based on the assessment of the collected information by the expert advisor, recommendations could be furnished using various tools. Most importantly, documentation and follow-up became much easier with the form-based method. Hollands also supplied detailed tips about creating such an RA form.²⁶

Booktalking (i.e., talking about books) is no longer the domain of only children's librarians. Jennifer Baker, working as adult services librarian, furnished adult booktalking guidelines for the beginners. According to these pointers, booktalkers should choose books that they themselves have read and enjoyed, matched the audience's reading interest, and contained a variety of appeal factors. The selected titles should be put in an order that would help the flow of the booktalk. The elements of each title then should be presented in ways that "capture the readers' attention and make them want to read the book."²⁷

Working as communications coordinator at Dalhousie University Libraries, Marlo MacKay relayed her experiences regarding "Dal Reads." It started in the summer of July 2009 as a unity reading (or community reading) initiative with the basic concept to provide a book club type experience to a very large group. Encouraging reading for pleasure and making reading a more social activity (as opposed to a solitary one) were some of its objectives. MacKay noted that despite their best efforts, student participation was still low.²⁸

In 2004, the Public Library Association Conference held a Talk Table titled "On a Shoestring: Readers' Advisory in the Small and Medium-Sized Public Library." The host of this event, Kaite Mediatore Stover, enumerated the various ideas and practices that were discussed on how librarians in small libraries could maximize their resources for providing high-quality RA. The suggestions included passively promoting RA through the use of in-library publications, displays, and other low maintenance promotions; incorporating RA training for staff in daily activities; the staff maintaining a reading log with a few notes about the books read; and discussing them within staff members as well as patrons.²⁹

In his first article as the new RA column editor, Barry Trott discussed the expansion of reading resources on the internet and thereby the increasing variety of internet-based reading recommendation services. Trott noted that libraries were providing passive RA on their websites like displaying themed reading lists, genre-wise new arrivals lists, book reviews by staff and patrons, and information on local reading groups. However, more efforts were required toward provision of active RA, like dispensing online live chat-based or email-based book recommendations.³⁰

Weeding the library collection, especially fiction books, is a challenging task for librarians. Merle Jacob discussed a step-by-step plan of action for weeding the fiction collection. She noted the important points to be considered to form a weeding policy, such as the library's mission, collection development policy, profile of community, usage statistics, prescribed book-list, shelf examination, and interlibrary loan titles. Jacob also listed some questions that a librarian should find answers to before weeding any fiction book.³¹

Separately shelving the fiction collection classified by genre has been a regular practice in a number of libraries. However, there are many library professionals who think genre separation to be hindering, instead of helping. This unique article contained arguments from both sides. First, Barry Trott expressed his concerns about genre separation by discussing the challenges posed by it, such as defining the genre (especially in case of titles that fit within multiple genres); stigmatization of genres; lack of time and space; and diminished role of the readers' advisor. In the latter part of the article, Vicki Novak pointed out the benefits of genre sections, such as easier access to readers and preserving patrons' independence by allowing them to explore on their own. To overcome the time and space constraints, practices like using spine label genre stickers, offering paper and online reading lists, rotating genre book displays, using shelf-talker signs to direct patrons to similar authors, etc., were suggested.³²

Laurel Tarulli reflected upon the ways to overcome the high level of stress caused due to the challenges faced by solo librarians in small libraries. She studied mindfulness and started implementing those practices into her work. It resulted in overall betterment in her professional attitude and thereby the output. Based on her experiences, Tarulli gave pointers, such as librarians should connect with fellow professionals and information sources, keep themselves updated using networks built across geographical boundaries, and talk more with their users as these conversations become the building blocks of a new user-centered library.³³ Duncan Smith relayed an interesting case study he conducted by recording one particular reader's reading experiences over 18 years. He observed that the reader, at times, read selectively by editing out the parts of the book that did not speak to her. Also, that the books that had plots or incidents parallel to the reader's life had higher appeal for the reader.³⁴

In another column, Laurel Tarulli delved into the bias found in RA. She reflected that RA, by nature, was selective rather than subjective; and hence, inherently biased with the personal experiences of the readers' adviser. Advisor's knowledge of genres, preferences when suggesting books, opinions on what readers were currently reading, adviser's body language, inflection and tone, vocabulary, facial expressions during RA interview, etc., could influence the reader's perception of the suggested title. Even the subject/genre headings provided as access points could often shape the readers' opinion of a book before it is read. So care has to be taken to keep the recommendations clear of bias as much as possible.³⁵

Barry Trott recounted how 25 years before, in the 1980s, the "RA renaissance" was shaped by three events—the publication of the first edition of *Genreflecting* under the editorship of Betty Rosenberg (1982); the establishment of the Chicago-area Adult Reading Round Table (ARRT) (1984); and the

publication of the first edition of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* by Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown (1989). He further enumerated potential challenges and opportunities existing for readers' advisors in all types of libraries, like the blending of genres, RA in academic libraries, RA for non-English speakers, and quantification of the RA practice. Working on them would build a foundation for the next 25 years of RA.³⁶

Neal Wyatt conducted and compiled the interviews of six RA experts: "two at the start of their careers, two helping to define the field, and two who have led the way for librarians, for a combined eight decades." The discussion mainly centered around four key topics: "RA education, common challenges, building reader-useful displays, and the importance of RA in libraries and our reading lives." The experts discussed all these points and, in the end, each shared their favorite book.³⁷

4.1.2. RA Tools

The tools, print as well as web-based, carry a lot of importance in providing a good RA service. In fact, as observed by Barry Trott in his editorial remarks to an article, RA is a "2.0" library service that is "using technology to build a more user-focused library."³⁹

2014 marked the 25th anniversary of the book *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library* written by Joyce Saricks and Nancy Brown, published originally in 1989. This book served as the flag-bearer of renaissance in RA and an indispensable RA tool with indelible impact on librarianship. Neal Wyatt conducted interviews of both Saricks and Brown to narrate the history of how the thought of this book came into existence, and how they came up with concept of "appeal."³⁹ Roberta Johnson, the founder of the electronic mailing lists database Fiction_L, relayed its origin story, while Natalya Fishman added her take as the current manager of Fiction_L. It began in 1995, at a meeting of Chicago-based RA managers, while discussing "treasure hunts" (patron requests for books with some specific details like, "suspense novel, set in the wilds of Montana, with a red cover"). In an effort to provide a quick access to the in-depth fiction knowledge acquired by each of them, an idea to create electronic mailing list for RA staff came up.⁴⁰

Kaite Mediatore Stover indicated the role of the top three book-related social networking sites—LibraryThing, Shelfari, and Goodreads—in providing RA. She observed that reading was a social activity and readers enjoyed sharing on various platforms their impressions about the books they had read, were reading, and would like to read. Stover further noted how libraries could utilize the various features of these sites like themed lists, readers' tags and reviews, related statistics, author connect, and quick links for purchasing the books.⁴¹ Yesha Naik assessed how the bibliosocial networking site Goodreads could help libraries improve the RA service. She randomly selected five books from Goodreads best books lists given under "Listopia." The first thirty reviews and comments for these books were read and analyzed to reveal that many readers unknowingly used the precise terms defining the appeal factors and sometimes negative appeal or "repel terms." The reviews influenced those who read them, and many times readers recommended books back to the reviewers. Naik suggested that librarians could create library profile on Goodreads, teach patrons how to use it, and design "read-alike" lists similar to Goodreads.⁴²

Ricki Nordmeyer, the creator and owner of Read-a-Likes Bookmarks and Bibliographies (www.readalikes.com), presented a study of library RA webpages carried out by 24 RA managers. The common good points in all these RA webpages were visibility, clear purpose, logical organization, a clean layout and loading speed, good content and links, relevance to the community, visual appeal, expertise and support, and promotion. Considering these criteria, a set of guidelines for a good RA website was provided.⁴³ Rebecca Anwyll and Brenda Chowner wrote

a two-part article. The first part presented the results of a 2011 small-scale survey examining the use of social media for RA in New Zealand public libraries, based on interviews with 15 librarians. Findings showed that the current usage of social media mainly centered on individual staff interest, attending conferences and forums, and monitoring trends. However, the librarians agreed that it should be chiefly used for regularly contacting the library patrons, promoting books and other materials, and engaging with the library users via social media.⁴⁴ In the second part, Anwyll and Chowner recounted their research project assessing "the potential of social media tools such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to extend the scope of RA services to the digital environment." Qualitative analysis of the interviews of public library staff in New Zealand showed that Facebook was most commonly used; "however, none of these had an explicit RA objective of promoting new materials or discussing book titles." Authors noted that though the recommendations on social media had a high impact on the titles' popularity among readers, libraries might suffer technological or organizational constraints when trying to implement such services.⁴⁵

The library catalog is an important tool for library users to connect to the library, especially under remote access. Laurel Tarulli proposed that "fostering a stronger relationship between catalogers and readers' advisors [can] enhance readers' services." She highlighted that as the creators of the content, catalogers' knowledge of the features and appeal factors of each book that was added to the collection could be quite useful in providing reading recommendations. Tarulli also predicted the rising necessity for mobile applications of the library catalogs.⁴⁶ Louise F. Spiteri and Jen Pecoskie recounted two research studies conducted to examine whether the user-generated content in public library catalogs such as tags and reviews could be useful for describing the fiction titles. The studies analyzed the bibliographic records of 22 unique adult fiction titles available on the 43 social discovery platforms of Canadian public library catalogs. Findings showed that user tags emphasized subject content of the books and gave a rich variety of effective access points with specifics of emotions and tones of the books, which in turn served as better RA access points.⁴⁷

David Wright wrote an article in the form of a mystery story wherein a librarian conducted a rigorous search for a book about which hardly any details were given by the patron. Searching for this elusive book, the librarian used various RA tools, such as databases like NoveList, online pre-publication alert sites, booksellers' websites, and electronic discussion lists. In a light-hearted way, Wright provided a good list of RA tools and how-to steps helpful for RA librarians.⁴⁸ In spring 2009, NoveList formed a team to develop a strategy to add appeal factors to book records. Victoria A. Caplinger served as the head of that team and expounded on the project. RA stalwarts Joyce Saricks and Neal Wyatt provided their advice and guidance to this project, especially for appeal factor categories. These appeal terms were designed to have flexibility that comes with tagging but with the standardization that arises from a controlled vocabulary, making it possible for the users to conduct appeal-based searches.⁴⁹

4.1.3. Genres

Study of literary genres and exploring various genres in fiction and nonfiction has been imperative to any readers' advisor in order to provide a better RA service. The column has published eight articles dedicated to various genres. These articles explored fiction genres like romance, science fiction, and fantasy, and nonfiction genres like travel, cooking, and narrative nonfiction.

Mary K. Chelton analyzed in detail the reasons for the popularity of the romance subgenre "military romances." The character of "alpha male action hero" who is "attracted to, protective of, and supportive but not controlling of, smart women heroines" is very appealing to romance readers.

According to Chelton, such a "warrior archetype," with added prestige of the armed services, the characters' loyalty to the team, code of honor, and the willingness to make extreme sacrifices were some of the craved traits.⁵⁰ Laurel Tarulli explored another popular subgenre, "bad boy romances," that consisted of biker gang or mafia romances. She opined that this subgenre might be appealing because these romances dealt with real-life issues like domestic violence, gangs, trust, respect, and honor. Also, "while there is often a happy ending, it is not always without some personal loss, death, or shift in a character's development." Tarulli observed that the readers who enjoyed this subgenre might also like recommendations from romance, suspense, and narrative nonfiction genres.⁵¹

Recommending books from genres like science fiction or fantasy can be difficult due to their many variants and combinations. David Hartwell, with his extensive experience as senior editor at Tor Books specializing in fantasy and science fiction, gave insights regarding how to recommend books from these genres, especially to young readers. He also provided three lists containing latest works by important newer writers in fantasy, science fiction, and horror.⁵² Gillian Speace noted the recurring themes or "tropes" in science fiction genre, such as late capitalism (cyberpunk, megacorporations, and mass surveillance); aliens (first contact and invasion); the posthuman future (uplift, AI, and cyborgs); the end times (climate change and the dying Earth); time travel; and a brighter future. Enriched by her experience as RA Librarian at NoveList, Speace discussed these themes in detail with suggested "pairing" titles in each of them for better recommendations.⁵³

Cult fiction is ground-breaking cross-genre or genre-bender writing that receives a cult following of readers. Though cult fiction titles are often controversial and even banned at the time, they stand the test of time with their indelible impact on the readers. Kelly Fann elaborated on the four key literary elements of cult fiction—alienation, ego-reinforcement, behavior modification, and vulnerability—and provided a list of cult titles in various genres, especially for teen readers.⁵⁴

Though RA was traditionally focused only on fiction titles, it has expanded to include nonfiction as well. Acknowledging this shift in the third edition of *Readers' Advisory Service in the Public Library*, Joyce Saricks broadened her original definition of RA to include materials for leisure readers of fiction and nonfiction.⁵⁵ Narrative nonfiction is not a genre itself; rather, it is a style that encompasses any nonfiction genre or topic that emphasizes story, including biography, memoir, and essays. Abby Alpert discussed in detail the constituents of narrative nonfiction, its history, genres and subgenres, specialized appeal factors, and dedicated tools.⁵⁶

Literature on food and travel attracts a wide and general readership since these topics stimulate sensory pleasure. Brad Hooper noticed the close affinity between the two and advocated an innovative approach of providing combined RA for these genres. He suggested that one book from each genre should be recommended in tandem based on linking criteria (e.g., by geographical region and regional cuisine or by theme). Hooper also narrated a few descriptive examples of this combination.⁵⁷ Siobhan Wiggins, an MLIS student, described how her liking for food developed her liking for cookbooks. Being an avid reader of cooking books or blogs for mainly knowledge, pleasure, escape, and relaxation, she created an RA resource on the genre "cookbooks." Wiggins proposed that author personality, healthy eating, culinary travel, food science, and food memoirs could be the reading appeals for this genre. She also listed the RA interview questions that could help in giving a good suggestion to readers.⁵⁸

4.1.4. Specialized RA (for different formats, for different types of readers)

It is imperative for a readers' advisor to no longer limit the concept of reading only to books and be open about the new forms and formats of reading, such as e-books, audiobooks, magazines, blogs, and comic books. Many peculiar facets need to be contemplated when RA is provided for materials other than print books. Kaite Mediatore discussed additional appeal factors when RA is provided for audiobooks. She also noted how regular appeal factors could be blended with it, like did the pace of narration match the pace of story? Who were the audio book narrators? Did narrator distinguish between characters (female/male, accents, voice tones, pitches)? Was the structure of the story suitable for audio format? Was the frame enhanced with background music, sound effects, or other additional material that would not be available with the print version?⁵⁹ E-books have become equally, if not more, popular than print books. Katie Dunneback listed the issues that libraries might face concerning technology, collection development, and circulation of e-books and providing advisory services for e-books in libraries. Technical knowledge about the format is necessary along with the content to help patrons get the best possible reading experience. Dunneback concluded with two important questions regarding RA of e-books: "How do we serve our patrons on the 'wrong' side of the digital divide if the midlist goes digital and copyright/DRM does not change?" and "What are the implications of recommending titles we cannot provide as an institution?"⁶⁰ Tara Bannon Williamson discussed the different ways providing RA for nonprint materials such as films, music, and audiobooks. She coined the term "materials matchmaking" to encompass recommendation skills that were universally effective for multiple formats. Elaborating on the ways of applying appeal factors to audiovisual material, she also provided a descriptive list of tools, print and online, useful for such RA.⁶¹

Providing RA to different types of readers, based on age, gender, or race, involves many specific deliberations as well. Alicia Ahlvers relayed her experiences in recommending reading to senior citizens. She listed different generational profiles with their common behavioral traits to build awareness for better service provision. Special measures like multiple in-depth RA interviews to understand the reading preferences, large-print or spoken-word books (audiobooks) for the visually challenged, home delivery of books to the homebound patrons, etc. were deemed helpful.⁶² As a school librarian, Laurel Tarulli observed, "Children and teenagers who come into our libraries are exploring what gender, sexuality, and identity mean to them personally, to their social groups, and to society at large." To assist in their understanding, Tarulli and her staff started to build a "gender and identity" collection to include the books that were accessible, readable, and appealing to teens and young adults. As an appendix, she provided some "sure bet" titles to help the librarians develop such a collection from scratch.⁶³ Beth M. Brendler expounded on how reading choices differed with the reader's gender. More likely, the girls would enjoy relationship-based realistic fiction, while boys would choose to read fiction with action or humor. The author, however, noticed that societal changes have nearly equalized these gender distinctions in reading. The literature now combined what were considered as "boy genres" and "girl genres." With special reference to the young-adult (YA) literature, Brendler gave numerous examples of reading material to underline this change.⁶⁴ Monique Woroniak relayed her experiences during installation of Walking With Our Sisters initiative that honors the missing or murdered women from Indigenous communities (original nations and cultures found in North America). With respect to providing RA to the Indigenous readers, the author noted that the good recommendations especially depended on learning about their individual stories. These communities were made up of individuals with diverse interests, literacy levels, and life circumstances, and should receive RA with a collaborative community development approach.⁶⁵

4.1.5. RA Theory

The RA column has been an important platform to deliberate over innovative approaches to the theory of RA. Appeal factors given by Joyce Saricks form a very important part of the theory of RA. Joan Bessman Taylor proposed the concept of "non-appeal" factors in the same format of "pacing, characterization, storyline, frame, tone, and style." According to her, "When approached for a 'good' book, it would befit us to ask, 'Good for what?' or 'In what way?'" Taylor also listed the ways for the advisors to recommend a book that they themselves disliked or had not read, such as noting the aspects of the book that brought disinterest, using various tools like NoveList to find read-alikes in unexplored or disliked genres, inviting help from other avid readers, and getting feedback from the patrons who read it.⁶⁶

Laurel Tarulli shared her conversations with readers about how they started to like reading and became a reader. She noted that, for a readers' advisor, such conversations could help trace the reading patterns, favorite authors, and appeals. She also gave reference of the book *The Pleasure of Reading: 43 Writers on the Discovery of Reading and the Books that Inspired Them* to help understand the reading experiences better.⁶⁷ In another article, Tarulli examined various definitions of "reader" and "pleasure reading" with brief analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of present RA tools in addressing different forms of pleasure reading. With reference to Duncan Smith, she underlined the importance of RA interview conducted with keen listening skills and "deeper understanding of user's psyche" to better serve the reading needs of the patrons.⁶⁸ David Beard and Kate Vo-Thi Beard opined, "The emphasis on the description of the book is a weakness in the current model of readers' advisory." They felt that the prescribed method of division of the books by genres was not always easy and at times obstructed the process of connecting readers to books. The authors recommended the rethinking of the RA interaction by focusing on "why people read, what practices they enact as part of reading activity, and what effect reading has on the construction of [reader's] identity."⁶⁹

Dilevko and Magowan in their book *Readers' Advisory Service in North American Public Libraries, 1870–2005* proposed that the correct way to provide RA was as practiced before the revolutionary changes brought on by Joyce Saricks and others from the late 1960s.⁷⁰ Neil Hollands assessed their controversial opinions and counter-argued that we should appreciate the contemporary RA practices as they can be basis for evolving high-quality service.⁷¹

Barry Trott discussed the important contribution of Helen E. Haines to the library profession. Haines worked with library giants like Melvil Dewey and Charles Cutter while functioning as managing editor of one of the oldest and most prominent professional periodicals, *Library Journal*, and also served in various capacities at ALA. She later taught LIS courses and wrote *Living With Books: The Art of Book Selection*, which became a standard text on collection development. A supporter of freedom to read, Haines was one of the pioneers in LIS field.⁷²

4.1.6. RA Education and Training

For the emergence of new generations of competent readers' advisors, RA needs to be a part of library education programs. Connie Van Fleet was the co-editor of *RUSQ* who took the initiative of starting the RA column. She explored the issues faced in teaching and practice of RA as a part of LIS education, with special attention to challenges confronted by LIS faculty who are instructors of RA course.⁷³

Bill Crowley wrote an article about devaluation of RA and advisors.⁷⁴ As a response to that article, Duncan Smith considered each point that Crowley wrote and put forth his counter arguments for

them. Smith pointed out the results of a national survey conducted by *Library Journal* in 2013, which showed that 42% of respondents received no instruction in RA service as part of their library school coursework and only 9% of libraries had full-time RA staff. The survey also showed that only 25% of the librarians sought to determine why readers liked a particular book.⁷⁵ As a reflection on Smith's article and as an expansion to his own previous article, Bill Crowley discussed the reasons for "the lack of endorsement of contemporary readers' advisory by library managers and public officials" and provided an alternative RA model named Reformed Readers' Advisory to overcome the lacunae.⁷⁶ To highlight the predicament of RA education, Stephanie H. Anderson also gave reference to the 2013 survey by *Library Journal*. Its results showed that 42% respondents took no RA coursework in their MLIS programs, and 23% reported no RA education opportunities at their library. She further assessed the current trends in RA education like emerging RA softwares and lending of e-books in the library, and the future directions such as emphasis on role of the readers' advisor, and best practices for RA.⁷⁷

Well-known for his work with adult book discussion groups, Ted Balcom was also active in the creation of the Adult Reading Round Table (ARRT). Tracing the history of ARRT since its inception in 1984, Balcom highlighted its founding objectives—helping library professionals develop RA skills and promoting reading for pleasure. ARRT has continued to achieve these objectives through regularly organizing various training programs and workshops on themes like genre or literature studies, group discussions about books and authors, and "nuts and bolts" in RA librarianship.⁷⁸ Lucy M. Lockley focused on how to train all library staff in giving at least basic RA. For the staff to develop reading interests and RA skills, she emphasized the importance of in-depth book discussions that should include identifying the appeal factors of a book, briefly describing the plot to someone else, suggesting possible read-alike titles, and defining what type of reader might be interested in the book.⁷⁹

4.1.7. RA in Academic Libraries

RA began as a service specialty of public libraries and continues predominantly to be a part of that sector. However, academic libraries are also taking initiatives to add RA to their service repertoire, though they are facing challenges. Lynda Fuller Clendenning wrote about the innovative book exhibit they developed at University of Virginia titled Rave Reviews: Bestselling Fiction in America. It contained various themes under three main categories: Making Bestseller Lists, Types of Bestsellers, and Bestsellers: Beyond the Book. The history of bestseller lists was traced from the year 1895. In the Beyond the Book category, the multimedia versions like movies based on popular fiction were displayed.⁸⁰

Julie Elliot, a librarian at Indiana University, provided an in-depth exploration of recreational reading promotion in US academic libraries. In addition to challenges like dearth of budget, staff, and space, she also touched upon academic librarians' elitist attitude toward leisure reading and a possible hint of censorship in book selection.⁸¹ In a follow-up column, Elliot conducted a survey of academic libraries with no activities to promote extracurricular reading among the students. The results of the survey showed the main barriers to be insufficient budget and staff, and apparent disinterest from students due to busy schedules. Elliot suggested many zero- and low-cost methods to overcome these obstacles, such as promoting the leisure titles already in the collection that also support the curriculum, innovative displaying of popular YA titles, and collaborating with the local public libraries to provide better extracurricular reading service. She also provided the survey questionnaire as appendix.⁸²

4.1.8. About the Column

"You Say Goodbye, I Say Hello" is a unique article in which two column editors cogitate about the RA column. In the first half of it, Barry Trott, handing over the reins of column editorship to Laurel Tarulli, summarized his experience of editing the column and took stock of how this column played a role in the development of RA. In the latter half of the article, Tarulli, the new column editor, relayed her beginning with RA work and discussed her plans for the column to include more variety of themes, international case studies, and column readers' feedbacks.⁸³

In 2019's "Past is Prologue: Science Fiction and Ways of Working," the column co-editors Laurel Tarulli and Neal Wyatt noted a specific thematic direction the column will take, stating, "We introduce an occasional series exploring genre and format."⁸⁴

After the qualitative exploration of themes of the articles, the quantitative content analysis using the various criteria—like article type, article length, author collaboration, author affiliation, author frequency, etc.—is conducted in the following part.

4.2. Type of the Articles

Considering their development base, the articles contributed to the column were found to be of three main types—theoretical/conceptual, practice-based, and historical. Its quantitative analysis is presented in chart 1.

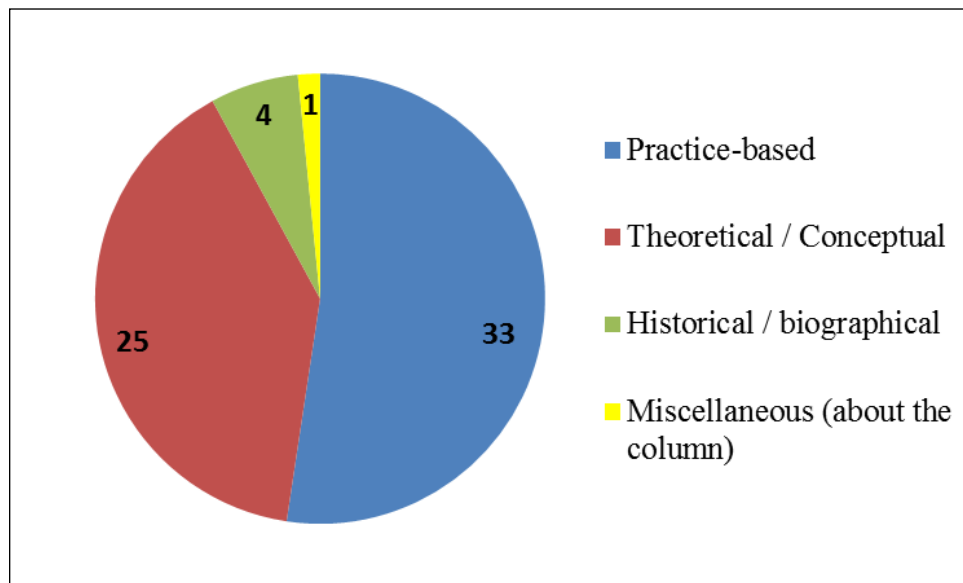


Chart 1. Type of Articles

As seen in chart 1, the majority of pieces (33; 52.4%) in the column were practice-based in nature. Out of these 33 practice-based articles, 13 were case studies. These case studies mostly covered the various unique RA practices carried out by the authors at their own libraries. This is an encouraging trend showing that the library professionals are practicing RA and publishing those practices as case studies. Next, 25 (39.7%) articles were of theoretical or conceptual type. These mainly included articles exploring various genres, new approaches to RA theory, and RA in LIS education. Since RA is still at a developing stage, there was more practice-based research than the theoretical. This large amount of utilizable, practical work in the field of RA is certainly providing a robust foundation for further practice and research. Out of the rest, four (6.3%) articles were

historical reviews, which consisted of how two particular RA tools and one RA convention (ARRT) evolved; the remaining piece was a biographical sketch of an RA expert. The one miscellaneous article was about the RA column and is discussed in 4.1.8.

4.3. Length of the Articles

As seen in chart 2, 20 articles (31.7%) were of four pages, followed by 16 articles of five pages (25.4%); while only one article was of 10 pages. As mentioned in the author guidelines displayed on the *RUSQ* website, "articles of four thousand to seven thousand words are preferred." Adhering to this, most articles in the RA column (76.1%) were noted to be ranging from four to six pages (approximately three to five thousand words excluding the list of references). The shorter word count made for more concise articles that were easily read.

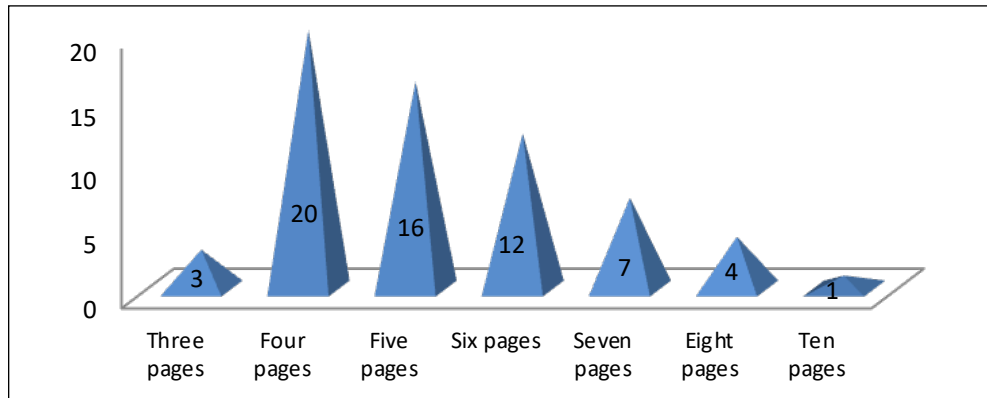


Chart 2. Length of the Articles

4.4. Column Editor-wise Frequency of the Articles

In *RUSQ*, the column editor holds complete authority over the column. To date, the RA column has had three column editors and two coeditors. Mary K. Chelton served as the column editor at its commencement from volume 40 to 42 (2000 to 2003). In succession, Barry Trott took over as the column editor from the latter half of volume 44 to 51 (2005 to 2012). Laurel Tarulli followed as the column editor from volume 52 to 58 (2012 to 2019). She was joined by Neal Wyatt from volume 59 onward. As seen in table 2, the RA column articles were published in the maximum number of *RUSQ* issues during the tenure of Barry Trott (96.7%); followed by Chelton (90%), and Tarulli (78.6%). The latest editors, Tarulli and Wyatt, were the first to coedit the RA column, and published the column articles in both the issues during their tenure so far.

Table 2. Column Editor-wise Frequency of the Articles

Sr. No.	Column Editor	Years	Issues	RA Columns	%
1	Mary K. Chelton	2000–2003	11	10	90.0
2	Barry Trott	2005–2012	30	29	96.7
3	Laurel Tarulli	2012–2019	28	22	78.6
4	Laurel Tarulli and Neal Wyatt	2019–	2	2	100.0
	Total			63	

4.4.1. Gaps in the Publication of the Column

The RA column was absent in 14 issues during its 20-year run. It was intermittently seen missing in *RUSQ* 40, no. 4; 49, no. 4; 56, no. 1 and 3; 57, no. 1; and 58, no. 1, 2, and 4. There was, however, a big gap of six consecutive issues (one and a half years), i.e., the whole of volume 43 and first half of volume 44. No mention was detected in the journal as to the reason for this temporary discontinuation of the otherwise regular RA column (a part of nine out of 10 issues till then). A change in the editorship of the column (from Mary K. Chelton to Barry Trott) occurred during this break as well. Chelton and Trott, as well as the latest column co-editor Tarulli were contacted by email regarding these missing columns. However, no apparent reason was found for any of the gaps. About RA column missing in six consecutive issues, Trott opined, "I would not attribute that gap to any lack of interest in RA services as the editors, Connie Van Fleet and Danny Wallace, were both very strong supporters of RA service and the column."⁸⁵ Unfortunately, both those former journal editors are now deceased and therefore unavailable to comment on the gap.

4.5 Collaboration in Authorship

It was seen that out of 63, most of the pieces in the RA column were authored by a single writer (55; 87.3%). Of the rest, seven (11.1%) were written by two authors; and one (1.6%) was by three authors. Collaboration in authorship, therefore, did not appear to be significant. One of the possible reasons for it could be that as noted in chart 1, most of the articles were of practice-based type and case studies. Unlike surveys, this type of research is mainly the result of a work experience-related studies of a single researcher rather than collaboration.

4.6 Authors' Geographical Distribution

It was observed that for the first 11 years—volume 40 to volume 51 (2000 to 2011)—the contributors to the column were only from the United States. The first author from a country other than the US to get published in the RA column was Laurel Tarulli from Canada, in the winter issue of volume 51. Later, in the fall and winter issues of volume 53, a two-part article was contributed by Rebecca Anwyll and Brenda Chawner from New Zealand. Thus, almost all (61; 96.8%) articles were by American and Canadian nationals, while only two (3.2%) were written by the authors from countries other than the US and Canada (namely, New Zealand). Geographical collaboration (i.e., authors from different countries contributing to one article) was also not an occurrence in the column. This lack of global representation in the authorship could be the reason why Tarulli noted her plans for the column to include more international case studies when she took over the RA column editorship (as mentioned in 4.1.8).

4.7 Authors' Professional Affiliation

The total number of authors contributed to the column was 72. As seen in chart 3, 69 out of the 72 authors were working professionals, with the largest number (44.4%) affiliated with the public library sector. This majority most likely reflects that RA originated as a public library service and is still practiced rigorously in public libraries. The next largest group of contributors was from the LIS education field with 16 articles (22.2%). These authors included 14 teachers, one doctoral research student, and one MLIS student. This trend is also encouraging, as it shows that the LIS educators are taking note of this development in practice, and they are responding to it by incorporating it in their curricula and discussing it in the form of column articles. Academic librarians contributed 12 articles (16.7%). This number is small but important, as it shows that the academic libraries too are responding positively to the leisure needs of academic readers. If this trend continues, it may serve

as a boost for RA in the academic libraries. There were seven (9.7%) articles from the corporate sector, five of which were by authors associated with the top RA tool NoveList in some capacity. Under the special library sector, two articles were by Rebecca Anwyll, the librarian of New Zealand Parliamentary Library. Ted Balcom and Virginia Hermes were the two authors who were retired at the time, and Jen Pecoskie was the independent researcher from Canada.

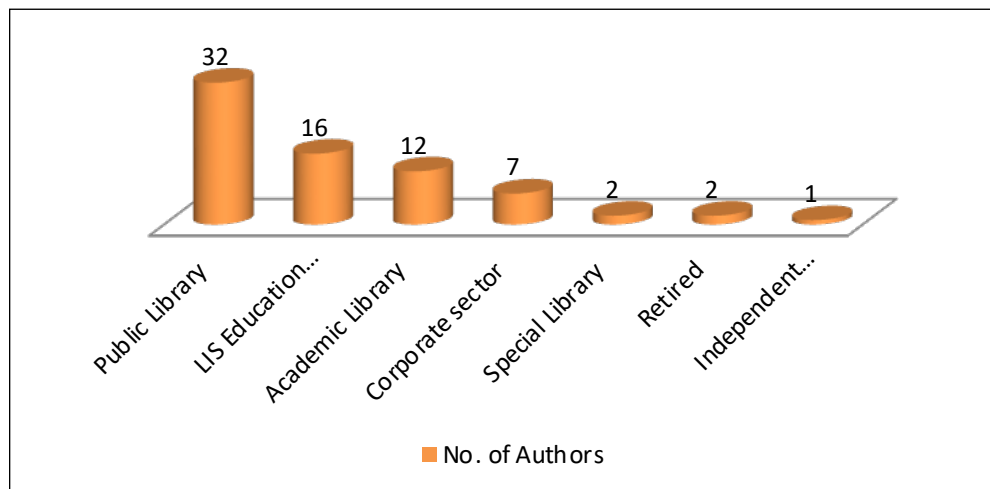


Chart 3. Authors' Professional Affiliation

4.8 Authors' Frequency (contributing more than once to the column)

Many of the experts contributed multiple times to the RA column. Out of the total 72 authors, 10 wrote more than once for the column. Laurel Tarulli penned eight articles, followed by Barry Trott (five), Kaite Mediatore Stover (four), and Duncan Smith (three). A list of other such authors can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Authors' Frequency (contributing more than once to the column)

Sr. No.	Author name	No. of Articles written	%
1	Tarulli, Laurel	8	12.7
2	Trott, Barry	5	7.9
3	Stover, Kaite Mediatore	4	6.3
4	Smith, Duncan	3	4.8
5	Anwyll, Rebecca	2	3.2
6	Chawner, Brenda	2	3.2
7	Elliott, Julie	2	3.2
8	Hollands, Neil	2	3.2
9	Taylor, Joan Bessman	2	3.2
10	Wyatt, Neal	2	3.2

Subsequently, 51 (81%) articles out of the total 63 were written by guest columnists and 12 (19%) were the contributions of then-editors of the RA column themselves. During the tenure as the RA column editor, Laurel Tarulli wrote seven articles; Barry Trott, four articles; and Neal Wyatt, one

article so far. Analysis of table 3 almost endorses Lotka's Law, which states that the majority of articles in the given subject originate from a small number of authors.

5. Findings and Conclusion

5.1. Findings

Since its commencement in 2000, the Readers' Advisory column in *RUSQ* has published articles in 63 out of 77 (81.9%) issues of *RUSQ* in the last two decades, except for a long gap during 2003 and 2004. The content analysis of these 63 showed that most articles published in the RA column (34.9%) were dedicated to "RA practices," with book clubs or book discussion groups as the most common topic. The articles were mainly practice-based in nature (52.4%), and the highest number (76.1%) ranging from four to six pages, as per the author guidelines specified by the journal with respect to acceptable word-count. Collaboration of authors was rarely seen as most articles (87.3%) were written by single authors; with 10 authors contributing more than once to the column. Geographically, the most authors were from the United States and Canada (96.8%). RA still being mainly a public library service, the highest contribution (44.4%) was from working LIS professionals affiliated to the public library sector. The smaller number of theoretical pieces in the RA column can also be attributed to the fact that maximum contributions were from public library sector than the LIS academics where research mainly takes place. The column editors were actively involved in the development of this column, writing multiple articles for the column.

5.2. Conclusion

The Readers' Advisory column in *RUSQ* is a unique endeavor to highlight the vibrant nature of RA service. It has provided an assured platform to discuss various facets of RA. Many new and innovative concepts were first published in this column, like form-based RA by Neil Hollands, non-appeal factors by Joan Bessman Taylor, and reformed RA model by Bill Crowley.

Progressing ahead, the RA column should continue to explore latest developments in the field of RA. It can discuss important tools like books about books. "Books about books" is a genre that includes fiction or nonfiction books whose central narrative revolves around books, reading, bookstores, or libraries. It also consists of authors writing about their reading journey or the books that influenced their lives. As RA tools, books about books are invaluable. Since the core focus of such books is other books, each of them serves as a source of information for multiple titles. In addition, they give the author's impressions about the listed books. Many reading recommendations can be found in such books, resulting in creations of a variety of reading lists for further reading.

Varieties of new genres are emerging. Some of them are blends of the previously defined genres. For example, in Goodreads Choice Awards 2023, a new term "romantasy" was coined as a genre, which is the combination of romance and fantasy, and *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros was awarded the best book in this new genre. Some others are completely new genres, like game lit (stories set in a game's universe), new adult fiction (with protagonists between age 18 to 29), flash fiction (very short stories), slipstream (a blend of science fiction, fantasy, and literary fiction with unconventional narrative), metafiction (a self-reflective form of fiction where the characters involved are aware that they are in a fictional world), and magical realism/fabulation (fiction presenting a realistic view of the world with some magical element). Such genres, their subgenres, appeals, top authors, and reads to be recommended in them should all be reviewed in the RA column.

Quantification of RA service is another challenge faced by the library professionals. At present, it is difficult to assess a readers' advisor's expertise and efficacy of their recommendations. It will be highly appreciated if the RA column contributes articles enabling such an assessment.

Research enhances quality and facilitates innovation in the area of its application. Considering this, the RA column should encourage readers' advisors to conduct research on various topics like the role of RA in inculcating and sustaining reading habits, particularly among today's children; RA as true professional service (as "advice" or "prescription" is a prime trait of any profession); reader's psychology in seeking (or not seeking) advice; positive and negative effects of technology-based RA compared to the RA based on human expertise; and the possible reasons that deter many librarians from providing RA as a core service.

The findings also showed that the column had nearly no collaborations from various strata of librarianship. It would create contents valuable for the growth of RA if LIS academicians and practitioners come together to write about whether the RA portion in LIS syllabi is enough to prepare the librarians to become efficient readers' advisors; or, if not, what modifications could be done to make the RA in LIS education more relevant to its practical application in a library. Collaborations should also take place among public librarians and academic librarians to deliberate about how to develop core pleasure reading collections in academic libraries to fulfill the students' recreational reading needs.

New theories build and strengthen a discipline. For RA to expand, it needs more fresh theories exploring its new facets. One such area of RA that remains unexplored is applying RA to academics. The principles of RA used for suggesting pleasure reading like appeal factors and readalikes can be applied to academic documents as well. The subjects studied can be treated as parallel to genres and subgenres, with much of genre-blending (i.e., interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary) nature of the subjects. The main appeal factors for academic reading can be author, publisher, content, and layout. The appeals regarding authors can be their qualifications in the subject, affiliations to the field, research contributions, and other achievements (whether they have received any critical acclaims, accolades, felicitations, awards, etc.). Publisher-related appeals can be whether the publisher is local or international; whether they are reputed for publishing scholarly material; whether they have any specialty regarding subject or type of material; whether they have an active website that gives all the necessary information to the readers; and whether they provide open access content. The appeals for content can include consideration to accuracy (whether the content is authentic, peer-reviewed, supported by citations and statistics, etc.); currency (whether the content is up-to-date); relevance (whether the language used is simple or complex, etc.); coverage (whether the topic explanation is concise or in-depth, etc.); objectivity (whether the content is free of biases, stereotypes, one-sided opinions, etc.); and popularity (whether the content has multiple editions, formats, whether it has been issued from the library or downloaded from the website multiple times, etc.). Layout-related appeals can contain appropriate cover image, thoughtful reader-friendly design, various value-adding features, and innovative techniques used for attracting the reader to that document.

Finally, as of 2024, artificial intelligence (AI) is bringing drastic changes in every human aspect. AI applications like ChatGPT and Sudowrite are influencing creative writing. The present RA practitioners and academicians may conduct research enquiring the usefulness of AI in enhancing the quality of RA. Effects of AI in the field of RA should be extensively conferred about in the RA column.

To conclude, with its scholarly and thought-provoking articles, RA column has truly been a guiding beacon to all the LIS professionals who are or will be practicing RA service. As readers' advisors, we hope that this column continues to publish the illuminating and inspiring RA material for years to come.

Acknowledgment

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