Connecting People to What They Need to Know

M. Kathleen Kern

M. Kathleen Kern is the new editor of RUSQ, 2018–2021.

Correspondence concerning this column should be addressed to M. Kathleen Kern, Director, Miller Learning Center Library Commons, University of Georgia; email: rusqeditor@gmail.com.

The title of this column comes from Dr. Carla Hayden’s interview at the RUSA President’s Program at ALA Annual 2018. In the words of the Librarian of Congress, “Reference is, of course, facts. But it is also connecting people to what they need to know, when they need to know it.” Her statement was not just about reference, but about the core purpose of what we do in our libraries—all types of libraries—every day.

Listening to the conversation between past ALA President Courtney Young and Dr. Hayden, I was inspired by the themes that cut across library types and connected with the mission of RUSQ. RUSQ is focused on the work that we do, rather than where we perform that work. Place and community are immensely important but our fundamental professional value lies in how we connect with those communities.

RUSQ’s columns, research articles, and reviews focus on our shared goals and work so that we can grow professionally through reading a broad range of perspectives, ideas, and research. This quarter’s issue exemplifies this model, presenting content from public and academic librarians on topics ranging from reading to reference to career changes.

Dr. Hayden was prescient of this issue of RUSQ when she said, “You can learn a subject. Don’t close yourself off to opportunities. Think about how your experiences can be transferred. The subject matter might change, but the doing reference, giving service, it’s the same.” She spoke from experience: she started as a children’s services librarian and became the Librarian of Congress (making some unusual career moves along the way). This issue introduces a new column called Career Conversations, edited by Elizabeth Leonard. The column’s format brings together stories from the field, research, and Elizabeth’s own voice to provide practical suggestions for facing career challenges that are common across all libraries. This quarter’s column focuses on making changes across types of organizations. Moving forward, Elizabeth welcomes your ideas for future topics, so email her at RUSQCareerConvo@gmail.com.

Marianne Ryan and Sarah Dreyfuss provide twenty tips for aspiring researchers, many of which are applicable to other types of professional writing. As the editor of RUSQ, I endorse their advice! Researchers and authors should also know that I am open discussing articles that are in development. The RUSQ review process is blind, but I can discuss questions you have during your research and writing process to help improve your methods and manuscript.

The From the Committees of RUSA section contains the newly adopted RUSA Statement on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). This statement frames RUSA’s values...
It is customary for the new editor to open with a little about herself and to thank the outgoing editors. I was too excited about the content of this issue and Dr. Hayden’s inspiration to start in the conventional way, and I’ll save talking about myself for another time. I do want to thank the RUSQ editors who preceded me for creating such a great journal over the years and the Editorial Board for trusting me with such a large responsibility. Over a decade ago, RUSQ editor Diane Zabel invited me to create and edit the Accidental Technologist column and asked me to peer-review manuscripts. I learned a lot from her that will help me over the next three years as editor. As the most recent editor, Barry Trott handed me a process that is well organized and a journal that is well respected and now open access. He has made taking over the helm as easy as it could possibly be. I greatly look forward to working with the new RUSA Executive Director, Jessica Hughes, the other new members of the RUSA office, and Ann Brown, the new RUSA President. We will support each other in our new roles and in making the best possible organization and journal for librarians and staff working in public services.

As the new editor, I have chosen to keep a lot the same, at least for now, because RUSQ has a format that I believe works for our readers. RUSQ will continue to be a mix of columns, scholarly articles, and book reviews with occasional content from the committees of RUSA. The Career Conversations column is new and fulfills one of the goals that I set out when I applied for the editorship, so I hope you find it as engaging as I do. RUSQ will continue to provide quality content authored by a broad range of librarians to support the shared work that is important throughout our libraries. Every article and column in an issue might not speak to you immediately or directly, but I encourage you to peek in to read something that you might see as “outside” of your area. What are you waiting for—jump in! You might make some unexpected connections.