

**RUSA President's Annual Report to  
ALA Council  
June 2020  
Elizabeth German, RUSA President 2019-2020**

RUSA had a busy and productive year in 19-20. Our major focus was on engaging members over the breadth of the association and promoting the important and excellent work that was being generated in our committees, task forces and overall membership.

### **Our Mission**

The Reference and User Services Association is a network to educate, empower, and inspire its members to advance the evolution of the profession and better serve users in a continuously changing information society.

### **Highlights**

Highlights included work on updating the definition of reference, establishing a RUSA Futures Task Force to help determine the appropriate path forward for the work and identity of RUSA to continue on for years to come, on-line education offerings and specifically an extremely popular series on data-in-libraries, and a re-engaged membership committee which brought forward many successful member strategies and initiatives.

### *Definition of Reference*

The Reference and User Services Association is examining the current definition, how it compares to the current practice of reference, and what would be needed for a reaffirmation or redefinition of reference. Question raised and addressed in this examination have included, the extent to which our current definition is relevant to your library, what role might the definition of reference play in how we talk about reference, and how might the definition contribute to RUSA's aim to "advance the evolution of the profession and better serve users in a continuously changing information society". The Reference Service Section (RSS) of RUSA will lead a division wide task force charged with bringing forth a recommendation to the Board regarding the definition of reference.

### *RUSA Futures Task Force*

The RUSA Board of Directors recently approved the formation of the RUSA Futures Task Force. The task force will make a preliminary report to RUSA Board in July.

The RUSA Futures Task Force, reporting to the RUSA Board, is charged to investigate and recommend a course of action for the transition or dissolution of RUSA. Priority will be given to preserving and continuing key activities, publications, and member benefits as well as advocating for reference and user services as a key element of our profession. The term of this task force is May 2020 through June 2021.

The task force shall be comprised of a representative of each section and chaired by the RUSA Vice-President/President Elect. The RUSA Executive Director shall be an ex officio member.

In taking the difficult action of creating this task force, the primary concern of the RUSA Executive Leadership and Board of Directors was the members. RUSA's highest priority is to continue to support our members work as reference and user services professionals, and our focus remains on our mission "to educate, empower, and inspire [our] members to advance the evolution of the profession and better serve users in a continuously changing information society." This, as ever, serves as our guiding principle.

### *Data in Library on-line education series*

RUSA sponsored a very successful Data in Libraries webinar series as part of our on-line education offerings. This series exceeded revenue and registration expectations and will allow RUSA to surpass its on-line education revenue budget goals for the year. Facilitators of the series were: Bobray Bordelon, Jennifer Boettcher, Ryan Womack and Jeremy Darrington. Overall, RUSA's on-line education in 2019-20 was very strong both in registration and revenue, and quality of programs. RUSA is looking for ways to expand upon this year's success and continue with strong on-line educational programming in the upcoming year.

### *Membership Initiative*

After a year of being relatively dormant, RUSA's Member Engagement Committee was active in moving a number of member initiatives forward.

Updated communication pieces were sent to new and renewing members seeking feedback on areas of interest and sharing an overview of the range of resources available through RUSA. These communication pieces were acknowledged by ALA and other Divisions as models for them to craft their own member communication.

A very successful Membership Social was held at the Mid-Winter program in Philadelphia. The social allowed both new and long-time members to interact and share feedback on their experiences as RUSA members.

Also launched this year by the member engagement committee was a gallery offering of RUSA members on the RUSA website. This gallery included photos of RUSA members with their responses to questions of what is special about RUSA to them. The gallery continues to be populated with new RUSA members each month.

## Other Highlights for the Year

### Awards

RUSA would like to thank all our award committees for their dedicated and tireless work overseeing the many selections that comprise both the Achievement and Book and Media Awards.

#### *Achievement Awards*

RUSA recently announced numerous division and section Achievement Awards winners. A list of the award winners can be viewed [here](#).

#### *Book and Media Awards*

##### *Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction*

RUSA announced the winners of the Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction at Midwinter 2020. “Lost Children Archive” by Valeria Luiselli, published by Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Penguin Random House LLC, was the winner of the 2020 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction, and “Midnight in Chernobyl: The Untold Story of the World’s Greatest Nuclear Disaster” by Adam Higginbotham, published by Simon & Schuster, was the winner of the 2020 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction. The virtual award ceremony will be held July 9, 2020 at 3:00 pm CT. The event is supported by RUSA, Booklist, and the ALA Development Office.

##### *Book and Media Awards Ceremony*

RUSA’s Book and Media Awards were announced at Midwinter and awards were presented at a very well attended ceremony with over 200 attendees.

The winners of our other Book and Media Awards – Notable Book List, Reading List, Listen List and Outstanding Reference Sources selections, the Dartmouth Medal for Excellence in Reference, the Sophie Brody Medal for Jewish literature, the Zora Neale Hurston Award for Achievement in Promoting African-American Literature and the Louis Shores Award for Book Reviewing – can be found on RUSA Update at <https://www.rusaupdate.org/category/awards/book-and-media/>.

### Publications

RUSA’s notable open access journal, *Reference & User Services Quarterly (RUSQ)* delivers quality research articles, columns, and reviews. Kathleen Kern serves as RUSQ editor.

In addition to RUSQ, RUSA publishes *RUSA News* regularly on [RUSA Update](#), sends monthly email news updates to members, and issues a member-edited *Quarterly Update* online newsletter with section news.

## RUSA Sections and Interest Groups

RUSA has six sections reflecting a diversity of professional interests: Business Reference and Services Section (BRASS), Collection Development and Evaluation Section (CODES), Emerging Technologies Section (ETS), History Section (HS), Reference Services Section (RSS), and Sharing and Transforming Access to Resources Section (STARS). The sections contribute in their unique ways to making for a vibrant association.

### *Interest Groups (IG)*

RUSA now has three highly active Interest Groups: Financial Literacy (FLIG), First Year Experience (FYE), and Shared Collections Interest Group. Each interest group is active in providing education and enhanced member experiences for their members.

## Conference Programs

RUSA will be sponsoring two programs at the upcoming ALA Virtual Event. Those programs are: “[New Discoveries in Reference: The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Reference Research Forum](#)”, and “[Suggesting Own Voices to All Readers: EDI and RA Service.](#)”

A complete list of conference programs with dates and times is available [here](#).

## Online Courses and Webinars

RUSA Online Learning continues to be a very popular resource with total overall registrations comparing favorably to the strong registration numbers that were posted last year. Completed webinars and courses are the following:

Courses	Date	Participant s
<i>Reference Interview 101</i>	9/16	43
<i>Business Reference 101</i>	10/28	32
<i>Inside Inter-library Loan: Basics for a New Millennium</i>	11/4	51
<i>Reference Interview 101</i>	1/13	43

<i>Successful Outreach and Marketing for any Library</i>	2/3	40
<i>Addressing Challenging and Disruptive Patron Behaviors</i>	4/13	62
<i>Business Reference 101</i>	5/4	39
<i>Inside Interlibrary Loan: Basics for a New Millennium</i>	5/11	43

<b>Webinars</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Participant s</b>
<i>Online Learning Resources: Creating Instructional Object</i>	11/5	56
<i>Demystifying Resource Sharing: ILL Basics for Non-Resource Sharing Staff &amp; Librarians</i>	11/13	33
<i>Transforming Organizational Culture Using UX Strategies</i>	12/11	46
<i>Data in Libraries: Data Basics and The Reference Interview</i>	3/4	7
<i>Data in Libraries: Open Data</i>	3/18	3
<i>Data in Libraries: Data Processing and Visualization</i>	3/25	10
<i>Data in Libraries: Understanding and Working with APIs</i>	4/15	8

<i>Unlocking the Library of Congress: Enhancing your OER Initiatives via the Library's Collections</i>	4/21	39
<i>Exploring Discovery Services: ETS Discovery Webinar Series Part 1</i>	5/28	Not yet recorded

It has been my honor to serve as RUSA President this year.

Elizabeth (Beth) German  
RUSA President 2019-2020