

**RUSA President's Annual Report to
ALA Council
June 2022
Christina Pryor, RUSA President 2021-2022**

RUSA had a busy and productive year in 21-22. 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. Also of priority was the continuing progress of our pivot strategy to bring financial sustainability to RUSA.

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 RUSA's first ever stand-alone education program, the RUSA Virtual Forum, an update to the definition of reference, presenting strong online/virtual continuing education offerings which include a very successful offering from RUSA Section BRASS titled BRASS Fall Thing, and the establishment of the RUSA Membership and Retention Task Force to lead strategy for member growth. Also, a highlight this year was RUSA's improved financial standing through year two of our three-year pivot strategy to achieve financial sustainability.

RUSA Virtual Forum

RUSA was excited to host its first-ever Virtual Forum on March 8 & 10, 2022. The Forum Theme was: **Reference and User Services Re-engaged** What have we learned? What ideas will we keep? How can we prepare for future disruptions? Which patrons did we serve well and where can we improve to serve all patrons?

The purpose of the Virtual Forum was to showcase the work of our sections and interest groups. The **Opening Keynote Session was "Using Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to provide Reference and User Services"**. ALA Executive Director Tracie Hall led a moderated Q&A with ALA leaders to discuss the role of EDI in their organizations. We heard directly from **Julius Jefferson Jr., Immediate Past President**, American Library Association and **Patty Wong, President**, American Library Association share their perspectives of EDI and how it applies to reference and user services.

The Closing Session was “Incorporating Race-Centered and Trauma-Informed Practices into the Reference Interview”. We heard directly from chapter authors, Emma Antobam-Ntekudzi and Nicole Williams, of the forthcoming ACRL Book *The Community College Library: Reference and Instruction*. The speakers showed the significance of raising race consciousness and integrating this awareness into everyday reference interactions with students in the library. Speakers also provided effective methods of engagement such as incorporating trauma-informed practices to create an inclusive and safe experience for students in the library.

Additional topics included: Public Libraries and Academic Libraries working together to transform Communities with business resources; Keepers from Covid: Assessing services for the long haul; Updating RUSA's Guidelines for Behavioral Performance of Reference and Information Services Providers; mPowerment through information: Building financial literacy confidence and expertise for library professionals; Health Reference: Introduction to Ethics and Best Practices; Establishing a Mentoring Program, and Through the Pandemic and Beyond: Still Reaching First-Year Students Wherever They Are

Definition of Reference

RUSA updated the “definition of reference” in 2021. It had last been updated in 2008. RUSA examined the current definition of reference, 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 included the extent to which our current definition was relevant to a 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 full update to the Definition of Reference, including context and work themes, and which was approved by RUSA Board in 2021, are available in the [final report](#).

BRASS Fall Thing

The first ever [BRASS Fall Thing](#), a new virtual event open to all was held October 19 - 21. The event hosted 99 attendees and generated over \$11,000 in revenue for RUSA. The theme was business information literacy and included a combination of live programming and access to vaulted programming. The 7 hours of live programming included workshops and lightning talks focused on business information literacy, the Framework, and teaching students how to find, use, and evaluate business resources and information.

RUSA Membership and Retention Task Force

The RUSA [membership and retention task force](#) was created to investigate the motivations and reasoning behind members joining or not joining RUSA. As RUSA's largest revenue stream, membership growth will be critical to the ongoing sustainability of RUSA. The task force recently [presented its work to date](#) at the Mach RUSA Virtual Forum. A final report of the Task Force will be presented at the June 2022 RUSA Board meeting.

Progress on pivot strategy for achieving financial sustainability

RUSA began a three-year pivot strategy in our budget planning last fiscal year, modeled on the ALA Pivot Strategy, to better align RUSA revenue with expenses, and to prioritize identifying and growing new revenue streams. As we project FY22 year end financials, it is expected RUSA will end the year with a positive variance. This will be the first time in over ten years that has been achieved for RUSA. Strategies to control expenses and grow revenue have been established as part of RUSA's pivot strategy and we anticipate future fiscal years to continue a positive trend.

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

Across the division, we recognized numerous division and section Achievement Awards winners ([view the full list of award winners](#)). A Virtual Award Ceremony will be held July 21st.

Book and Media Awards

Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction

The Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence in Fiction and Nonfiction, established in 2012, recognize the best fiction and nonfiction books for adult readers published in the U.S. in the previous year and serve as a guide to help adults select quality reading material. They are the first single-book awards for adult books given by the American Library Association and reflect the expert judgment and insight of library professionals who work closely with adult readers. The winners (one for fiction, one for nonfiction) are announced at an event at LibLearnX; winning authors receive a \$5,000 cash award. The [2022 Award Winners](#) were: Fiction – *The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu* by Tom Lin and Nonfiction – *A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance* by Hanif Abdurraqib.

Book and Media Awards Ceremony

The winners of our other Book and Media Awards – Notable Book List, Reading List, Listen List, CODES List, Outstanding Reference Sources selections, the Dartmouth Medal for Excellence in Reference, and the Sophie Brody Medal for Jewish literature, can be found on RUSA Update at <https://www.rusaupdate.org/category/awards/book-and-media/>. The year’s best in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, audiobook narration, reference materials and more, are hand-picked by selection committees that work closely with adult readers. Their efforts narrow down hundreds of finalists to curate the highly regarded “Best of” lists used by librarians, publishers and booksellers nationwide.

Publications

RUSA’s quarterly journal *RUSQ* had not published in over a year and a half. This lack of keeping to a publishing schedule for the journal was not anticipated or planned but were brought on by unexpected circumstances related to volunteer capacity. A former *RUSQ* Editor has recently stepped in to work through the backlog of submissions for the journal and a ‘catch-up’ issue was published in December 2021. Going forward, [RUSA’s Publications Task Force](#) will continue to evaluate the journal to determine whether RUSA may be able to continue to publish it in the future.

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.

Just a few section highlights include:

BRASS

- BRASS committees put forth an impressive array of engaging, high-quality, well-attended virtual programs and discussions throughout the year, including the BRASS Fall and Spring Symposia, Fall and Spring Publisher’s Forums, BRASS Discussions, New Business Librarians Group Discussions, RUSA Virtual Forum presentation and the first-ever BRASS Fall Thing, a multi-day online conference.

ETS

- ETS selected Eric Schares, Engineering & Collection Analysis Librarian, Iowa State University and Kelvin Watson, Executive Director, Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, to receive Best Emerging Technology Application Awards for 2022. These awards are sponsored by ChatStaff and LibraryH3lp.
- Sarah Hartman-Caverly and Alexandria Chisholm from Penn State Berks, Berks Thun Library, presented the *Digital Shred Workshop* on February 16, 2022. This crash course in privacy literacy taught participants how to apply a decision-based framework to privacy literacy instruction.
- The ETS Hot Topics Committee collaborated with the RSS Virtual Reference Services Committee to put on a successful eForum entitled *Back to Basics: Crowdsourcing a Virtual Reference Praxis* on April 12 and 13, 2022.
- The ETS Managing Emerging Technology developed a list of *Tech Tools for 2022* to increase productivity, get organized, and boost engagement in the classroom.
- ETS provided a panel to the RUSA Virtual Forum on March 8, 2022 entitled “Keepers from COVID: Assessing Services for the Long Haul.” The panelists were: Carmen Cole, Information Sciences and Business Librarian, Penn State University Libraries, Jenn Washburn, Student Engagement Librarian, University of North Texas Libraries, and Alex Garcia-Bernal, Education and Events Manager, Garfield County Public Library District

History

- The RUSA HS Genealogy Committee presented, "Discovering Family History in Library Collections: A Three-Part Webcast Series" in July and August 2021.
- The RUSA HS Programming committee developed a [webinar](#) on “Decolonizing the Catalog: Anti-Racist Description Practices from Authority Records to Discovery Layers” which was presented in July 2021. This was the most popular webinar that either the History Section or RUSA has ever put on, with over 300 registrants and over 1000 live attendees. The webinar was even featured in the November 2021 issue of American Libraries magazine (<https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2021/11/01/decolonizing-the-catalog/>).
- The RUSA HS Academic Librarians Committee's Mentoring Sub-Committee presented on the success of the Mentoring Program at the RUSA Virtual Forum in March 2022.
- The RUSA HS Historical Materials Committee selected the titles for the [2021 List of Best Historical Materials](#).

STARS

- Started a new discussion group: Access to Resources.
- Distributed Resource Sharing talking points to ALA President candidates.
- Had programming for RUSA Virtual, “Reference and User Services Reimagined” by Heather Hannan.

Interest Groups (IG)

RUSA has five highly active Interest Groups: Federal and Armed Forces Libraries (FAFLIG), Financial Literacy (FLIG), First Year Experience (FYE), Physical Deliver Interest Group 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 20 programs at the upcoming ALA Annual Conference ([view the complete list of conference programs with dates and times](#)):

- The RUSA President’s Program, *Wellness culture: Start with staff, extend to your community*

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	Participants
<i>Creating Inclusive and Engaging Online Library Instruction</i>	9/13	14
<i>Design and Marketing for Libraries</i>	9/20	19
<i>Artificial Intelligence in the Library: It’s Application in Reference and User Services</i>	10/11	13
<i>Inside Interlibrary Loan: Basics for a New Millennium-Fall 2021</i>	10/25	24

<i>Reference Interview 101</i>	11/8	26
<i>Business Reference</i>	1/10	52
<i>Assessment of Online Library Instruction</i>	2/7	22
<i>Reference Interview 101"</i>	2/14	13
<i>Inside Interlibrary Loan: Basics for a New Millennium-Spring 2022</i>	4/4	41

Webinars	Date	Participants
<i>Building Your UX Toolkit</i>	9/15	15
<i>Realizing the Untapped Potential of VR/AR for Libraries</i>	9/22	33
<i>BRASS Fall program</i>	10/19-21	99
<i>Virtual Reference: An Expert's Guide to Refining Your Services</i>	10/20	43
<i>Policies and Procedures: Letting Them Work for You and Your Patrons</i>	11/3	18
<i>Leading with Confidence: Building skill and leadership styles that helps everyone thrive</i>	3/23	63
<i>Tools for Locating Primary Sources in Archives and Online</i>	4/6	28

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

Christina Pryor, RUSA President 2021-22