

The first *Reference Services' Review* issue of a new decade opens with “Navigating the Campus Past: College Yearbook Controversies,” a timely piece from Oliver Batchelor discussing concerns facing many academic institutions as they consider how to best preserve and share these glimpses at student times gone-by. The rest of Volume 48 Issue 1 is dedicated to another special issue – this time focused on academic libraries and the 45th President. We begin this editorial with reflections on what we have loosely called “special issue return-on-investment.” Why create special issues? What are the benefits for authors and for the guest editors? This editorial concludes with reflections of a different kind – in particular, why were we drawn to the proposal for this special issue? How does this special issue align with the journal’s aims and scope?

## Special issue return-on-investment

Special issues provide an opportunity for us – your editors, to demonstrate that we are responsive to our readers. They provide an opportunity for practitioners, scholars and researchers alike to approach and develop the special issue from their own perspective, to consider, for example, how the special issue relates to existing practice and/or research and the aims and scope of the journal, and the ways it seeks to expand critical scholarly research on the topic. Special issues provide contributors with the opportunity to explore different types of submissions (research papers, viewpoints, technical papers, conceptual papers, case studies, literature reviews and general reviews) and to determine which best supports their work. Guest-edited special issues provide opportunities for our colleagues who wish to try their hand at shaping an issue – will this be an open-call for papers, invitation-only or some combination of both? How many papers do we anticipate publishing? Over what time will they be submitted (first submission when, last submission when)? What elements should the “call” contain? A well-crafted call can ignite the passions and creativity of perspective authors.

For our readers and authors, we are always looking for guest editors who wish to compile a special issue on a topic. The task of the guest editor(s) is generally to develop the “call” for proposals, to develop a rubric to assess these proposals, to solicit manuscripts from colleagues/experts concerning the selected topic, to make decisions (together with the editors) on article revisions and acceptance and to write an editorial for the special issue.

Previous guest editors from the past ten years include *Theresa S. Arndt, Anna Schnitzer, Tammy Ivins, Sylvia Tag, Louise Feldmann, Beth Kaylor, Anne C. Barnhart, Andrea Stanfield, Michelle Jacobs, and Brena Smith*. We suggest our guest editors would agree that this work provides numerous opportunities to:

- influence the thinking in our field, to rise to the intellectual challenge of thinking broadly and deeply about a topic;
- bridge traditional disciplines by bringing together a broad range of contributors across different practice areas;
- promote an emerging area of research and create a lasting resource for their field;
- facilitate the discussion of opposing ideas and different opinions;
- think creatively and take advantage of the different types of submissions supported by the journal;
- build a personal network with other practitioners, scholars and researchers;



- learn about research outside your immediate expertise; and
- gain editorial experience by developing a “call” for proposals, working alongside the peer review process and making decisions on manuscripts (all with the full support of our dedicated Editorial Advisory Board and Ad Hoc Reviewers).

*RSR* has been proud to host regular special issues since 2005, offering librarians opportunities to explore topics in-depth. A look at our special issues over the past five years reveals a wide variety of topics:

- (1) Library Services to People with Disabilities (46/3, 2018), [emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/46/iss/3](https://emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/46/iss/3)
- (2) Emergent Literacies in Academic Libraries (46/2, 2018), [emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/46/iss/2](https://emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/46/iss/2)
- (3) Transfer Students and Students in Transition (45/2 and 45/3, 2017) [emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/45/iss/2](https://emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/45/iss/2)
- (4) Health Information Literacy (44/2, 2016), [emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/44/iss/2](https://emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/44/iss/2)
- (5) Entrepreneurship (43/3, 2015), [emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/43/iss/3](https://emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/0090-7324/vol/43/iss/3)

### **Academic libraries and the 45th president**

*RSR*’s aim and scope states that “the journal raises questions, explores new frameworks for user services, advances fresh analyses and research and proposes solutions to diverse operational issues facing librarians and information professionals” ([emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=RSR](https://emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=RSR)). The proposal for this special issue caught our attention because it invited librarians to look pointedly outside of our own profession and explore how an outside phenomenon (in this case, the 45th presidency) impacts our work. Authors featured in this issue have analyzed and researched the current political climate, questioned its impact on academic library services, explored new frameworks for reference and instruction and proposed solutions.

Information is contextual in many ways. There is the context in which an idea is developed, the context in which the idea is explored and researched, the context in which it is written and finally the context in which it is shared and read. We would like to note for our readers that every step of these special issues has taken place in an evolving socio-political – a context that spans the past 18 months. The special issue was proposed by Mary Ellen Spencer (Director of Library Services, Pellissippi State Community College) in 2018, the call for proposals was released in mid-February 2019, and manuscripts were written over the course of the year. The shifting contextual sands have been a challenge for our authors and editorial team. There is also a challenge for you, the reader: this editorial is being written on December 2019, and you will not be reading this issue until January (electronic edition) or February (print edition) 2020. We cannot predict the socio-political context in which you will be reading the manuscripts in this special issue when it is published. We believe that, regardless of any changes in the coming months and years, the manuscripts presented here will serve to both facilitate ongoing conversations and record how our discipline responded to this era.

We wish to reiterate that the intent of this special issue is to be unbiased and without political agenda. We recognize that the political spectrum is itself inherently partisan, encompassing left-leaning, centrist and right-leaning perspectives. The theme is topical in

---

nature only, and submissions from all perspectives were welcome. If, while reading these manuscripts, you feel that a voice or perspective is absent, we encourage you to consider how you can participate in and broaden the scholarly conversation around these topical issues.

Finally, due to the large number of manuscripts for this theme, we note that not all could be included in this issue. Please watch volume 48, Issue 2 for a few more manuscripts related to this special issue.

Guest editorial

3

**Sarah Barbara Watstein**

*Lemieux Library and McGoldrick Learning Commons, Seattle University, Seattle,  
Washington, USA, and*

**Tammy Ivins**

*Randall Library, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, Wilmington, North  
Carolina, USA*