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2011 ALA Annual Conference

### RUSA President's Report 2010-11

As in any member-driven organization, difficult economic times offer both challenges and opportunities. Overall, the decline in RUSA membership has slowed from the past year. From November 2008 to November 2009 membership declined 9.22%. For the current fiscal year to date, membership only saw a 2.28% decline. The most substantial decline was in organizational memberships as libraries responded to budget cuts by cutting back on professional organization memberships. A particularly positive note was that new memberships are up by 9.38%, reflecting in part the strong work done by the RUSA Membership Committee and the RUSA office in promoting the value of membership. Several new initiatives have been implemented to promote member retention. Monthly messages are sent to RUSA's new, renewing, reinstated and dropped members, resulting in an increase (79.49%) in reinstatements over that time period, as well as a decrease (22.96%) in drops. We also hosted a well-attended member social at Midwinter.

As RUSA begins looking at developing its next three year plan, RUSA office staff put out a member satisfaction survey to look at a variety of issues and concerns raised by members. Although the survey is still being analyzed, initial figures are positive, with member satisfaction showed an overall satisfaction rate of 7.18 out of 10. We will be using the survey to continue to try to shape participation in RUSA in ways that support the needs and interests of RUSA members. Another piece of the planning process has been the establishment of a taskforce to look at RUSA structures and organization. This group will make recommendations to the RUSA Board at the Midwinter 2012 meeting that will be used in the development of the next RUSA three year plan.

Over the course of the year, RUSA has made a strong effort to reach out to members in new ways. For the past two years, RUSA has hosted a Town Hall meeting at ALA Midwinter, giving members the opportunity to talk to the RUSA Board, raise questions and share concerns. At Midwinter 2011, the RUSA Town Hall meeting offered electronic participation, and had a dozen participants who attended the meeting virtually. We used chat software provided by ALA, and the chats were monitored by RUSA Board members who kept the online participants informed of the discussion topics and relayed questions and answers. This was a pilot project, but one that we feel was successful and should be continued in coming years.

Virtual participation is on the mind of all of ALA, and RUSA is no different. The RUSA Board has encouraged the sections to experiment with mechanisms for electronic participation, and there has been active and positive response from the sections. The lessons learned in the sections will prove useful to the entire division as RUSA looks to implement broader virtual participation. This spring, the Board also participated in the first online board meeting, to begin the planning

process. We have set up a schedule of online board meetings to complement the face to face meetings at Annual and Midwinter.

A major change in RUSA in the coming year will be the move of the flagship journal, *RUSQ* to a completely digital format. At the 2011 Midwinter meeting RUSA Board voted unanimously to approve the move of the division's professional journal *RUSQ* to a solely online publication beginning in 2011. In 2010, *RUSQ* celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> year of publication. Over that time, the journal's blend of theory and practice has been a model for the profession, and a valued tool for librarians. The move to an all online publication will allow RUSA to sustain that model in the coming years as well as to expand the role of *RUSQ* in the future. One of the concerns of any professional organization is maintaining the fiscal health of the organization. The move from print to online is a major step in this direction for RUSA. The savings that we realize from the move will allow RUSA to balance our budget without spending our endowment funds. As we begin a new round of strategic planning in 2011-12, these additional funds will allow RUSA more flexibility in pursuing member-driven initiatives.

RUSA awards continue to be an important asset to the division and to ALA in terms of marketing librarians and what they do as well as getting attention in the book and media community. RUSA staff have been working with ALA staff to market the divisions literary awards. A press release went out in early December encouraging shoppers to use the Notable Books list, Reading List and Sophie Brody Medal selections as a guide to their book gifts for the holidays. RUSA staff are also working with ALA's @your library team to put information about these lists for their website to share these lists with the library-using public.

One of RUSA's strengths is as a source of professional development for its members and the broader library community. This year, RUSA has continued that tradition in a variety of ways. Programming from the RUSA sections has always been an important part of the division's professional development work. RUSA is well-represented in the programming at ALA 2011 Annual Conference. There are four preconferences sponsored by RUSA sections—BRASS, MARS, RSS, and History. CODES is putting on its annual Literary Tastes Breakfast. There is the RUSA Awards program where we recognize outstanding practitioners in our division. RUSA sections are also putting on an additional thirteen programs covering topics from marketing reference to Ill to readers' advisory to developing information services. The program choices reflect not only the needs of the profession but also the wide range of interests and knowledge that RUSA members can share with our colleagues. In addition, RUSA has been expanding its lineup of online continuing education courses. Genealogy, Business Reference, the Reference Interview, and Marketing Basics are among the RUSA online classes. RUSA is also expanding to offer webinars on topics of interest to members. This year, RUSA staff also began to explore opportunities to work with other ALA divisions on leadership development, and we will continue to do that in the coming year.

RUSA is the administrator for the FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority) Investor Education Foundation's program *Smart investing @ your library*®. The program offers grants to libraries that are developing creative and practical programs and services to educate user groups about wise investing and financial decision-making. Through the FINRA Foundation, part of the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, the grants fund "public library efforts to provide library patrons with access to effective, unbiased financial education resources." This year there were twenty grant recipients, sixteen new grantees and four continuing projects. Since 2007, sixty-four libraries have received grants through the *Smart investing @ your library*® program. Libraries have developed programs aimed at single-mothers, military spouses, and low income families. A key component of many of the programs is collaboration, and grantee libraries have developed some excellent models for partnerships in their communities. Partners have included local government agencies, colleges and universities, and state CPA organizations whose expertise has expanded the reach of the library projects. I was excited to see the ideas that librarians were coming up with to reach out to new segments of their communities. At the RUSA Board meeting at Midwinter, the Board approved continuing the relationship between RUSA and the *Smart investing @ your library*® program.

An ongoing concern for the RUSA membership has been the RUSA website. This year, RUSA staff worked to make improvements in the areas that would help member volunteers, especially in the areas of awards, program planning, volunteer leaders and orientation pages. This work will continue in the coming year, and should improve member access to RUSA resources.

This year, we also made a major shift in the RUSA planning schedule to make better use of president's year. In past years, RUSA planning for the fiscal year was begun following Annual, and was not completed until the Fall leadership meetings in October. As a result, the year was already one quarter through before the RUSA Board was approving the president's annual strategic plan. At Midwinter, the Board approved a shift in planning to the spring online Board meeting prior to annual. Following that meeting, the RUSA Executive Board will complete the draft annual plan and bring it to the Board for approval at Annual, allowing the incoming president to have a plan in place from day one.

The work of any member organization like RUSA is dependent on two groups—the volunteer members and the professional staff. I would like to thank RUSA Past-President, Susan Beck, RUSA Vice-President/President Elect, Gary White, RUSA Councilor, Kathleen Kern, and RUSA Secretary, Theresa Mudrock for their support and their excellent work on the RUSA Executive Committee. I would also like to thank all the members of the RUSA Board whose commitment to making RUSA work for its members is evident in all that they do. I would add my thanks to the RUSA committee chairs, and the RUSA section boards for supporting RUSA members needs. And a thanks as well to all RUSA members for their passionate interest in user services. Finally, RUSA would not be able to function without the work done by our Executive Director, Susan Hornung, and the RUSA staff, Marketing Specialist, Liz Markel and Web Services Manager, Andrea Hill. I am grateful to all three for their work behind the scenes to keep RUSA running smoothly. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve as RUSA President, and I thank all of you for the opportunity.

Barry Trott

RUSA President 2010-11

[btrott@wrl.org](mailto:btrott@wrl.org)