

Richard Saunders

Editor's Note

Life, both professional and personal, is built upon change. Though it sounds trite, it is still largely a truism that the only difference between tragedy and opportunity is perspective. The pop psychology of positive thinking really is trite, because sometimes growth opportunities hurt deeply or because we carom in directions we may not have foreseen and for which we feel unprepared. Following an opportunity always requires a change of perspective.

Each of the three articles in this issue is about opportunity. Whether by reflection or practice, each one invites a reader to think about an aspect of their own professional practice that may be out of their ordinary. Where can I improve? How might I think differently about what we've always done? What backing or approval will I need to implement a change?

Institutions are marvelously rigid. That is how they last; Silicon Valley proves the rule. Don't give up, because tradition- or standards-bound institutions can be surprisingly flexible and resilient as well. Notice that each of the articles here reaches beyond the immediate walls of the department or office to involve folks from other locations.

Every new idea brings with it a need for resources at various levels: permission, involvement and participation, money, space (whether measured in volume or squares or lines), time, acknowledgement or credit, equipment or tools or graphic outputs. Every professional discovers at some point in their career that resources and resource allocation are matters of politics rather than of budget. Resources can usually be found to back a solid idea that has been pitched well and has garnered broad support.

I am impressed that none of the authors make the mistake of asserting that their answers are *the* answers, even to the specific challenges they identify facing special collections and archives. Remember that a journal is merely a venue for discussion. Each of these must be teased apart and the various elements considered further before being reassembled into "my" idea and applied within any other setting. That's great—that is how opportunities become experiments and eventually new practices.

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As I write this comment about change, opportunity, and the journal, I direct readers' attention to the call for submissions appearing in this issue. As editor, I have set for *RBM* an editorial goal to produce a thematic issue around the challenges and opportunity of appropriately integrating or curating materials that document underserved and poorly documented communities. That would include the activities and challenges of special collections librarianship at institutions like tribal colleges or historically black colleges and universities. There is remarkably little in our professional literature addressing these topics. Just as a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, a profession of cultural curacy is no more solid or stable than its contributions of its newest participant, least well-funded institution, or cooperative agreement. The journal and its readers appreciate how you may have faced or thought about cultural inclusivity within your institution. If you are looking for writing ideas, here are a few that occur to me:

- A discussion or collection of comments interpreting special collections librarianship from practitioners who are something besides female (our statistical majority) and white and who work with collections in other than large or fairly large institutions.
- The challenges and opportunities of equitably documenting and representing local cultural minorities within an otherwise mainstream institutional collection.
- The difficulties of documenting non-English linguistic populations.
- Dealing with culturally sensitive artifacts within collections.
- Identifying, documenting, and interpreting forgeries and counterhistories or narratives.
- The intricacies of handling materials that challenge cultural memory when the latter does not square with documentary records.

As editor, I encourage you to think and write about building collections about people and experiences beyond the institutional mainstream, reaching beyond the sort of face that looks back at you in the mirror.

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