

Richard Saunders

Editor's Note (to Future Readers— Especially You Newer Ones)

Moments of change provide opportunities for reflection. I am fairly sure that function is part of what makes us human. When I assumed the editor's chair for *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage*, I knew that I would eventually turn over that chair to a successor. Such is the lot of we mortals; nothing lasts forever. Even so, in turning over my last issue to you, dear Reader, I conclude my editorial forum with a few musings and admonitions from an old guy with more experience than wisdom, begging your indulgence in this final and somewhat more personal editorial comment.

A suite of acknowledgements should always lead an essay like this. That list includes my predecessor, Dr. Jennifer Sheehan, who took a blind chance on an unknown quantity. Jen telephoned one afternoon with an invitation to consider applying for an appointment that had never crossed my mind. Her trust persuaded me. Amy Cary, Jen Sheehan, and Dr. John Henry Adams served as the journal's review editors during my editorial tenure. I fretted over articles but never worried about reviews. Jen did much of the practical work launching and populating the review portal on the *RBM* site, and John Henry keeps that portal filled between issues with comments on professional works both valuable and interesting. The RBMS members who have served on the *RBM* editorial board during my tenure, a list too long to recall easily, have been a joy to work with, in and occasionally beyond biennial board meetings. My deepest gratitude is owed the ACRL staff contacts, who have been long-suffering with my faults and foibles. As the journal's production editor, Dawn Mueller has made whatever I've given her into something that looks very good. The remarkably competent David Free has been my functional memory, conscience, and on occasion, my rod of correction. They are the firm foundation for the work of the editor across a dozen issues of this professional publication. With this issue "in the can" I turn *RBM* over to an editorial successor, Diane Dias De Fazio. I met Diane over lunch at the 2017 RBMS conference in Iowa. She comes to the journal with professional experience from public and academic libraries, fine arts museums, and even a zoo. Each editor brings their stamp of personality and their views and visions to its pages.

Meanwhile, as Diane settles into what Bernard DeVoto once called the editor's "uneasy chair," I am rather stunned that there is suddenly someone very like an

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old man in my mirror (I had no hair for much longer than that, so that detail isn't an issue). Not only am I turning over the journal to a new generation of professionals, but retirement is looming ever larger across my range of vision. I suddenly find myself waxing very nostalgic over the challenges and successes of the past six years and, beyond editorial tenure, over past decades. This year passes my thirtieth season as a credentialled archivist and professional academic librarian but also, I am somewhat shocked to discover, my fortieth season as an academic library employee. With the benefit of hindsight and wishing that I had done some things differently in my career, I am writing to you, personally, Reader.

Volunteer. This means you. There are not nearly enough opportunities for everyone to serve in this particular entity for long periods, but there are many options in any community. Choose one. A professional organization such as ALA/ACRL/RBMS operates by aggregating the work of scores of volunteers. Your views matter. The ideal applicant qualification is willingness. Get into the reviews pool. Offer yourself as a double-blind peer reviewer. Write an article. Offer your time on the editorial board. You are not working in an institution too small to matter (we need more people from those). During my tenure the list of volunteers has never included an individual from an HBCU or tribal college, and only two from a religiously affiliated institution. Neither has a first-language Spanish or French speaker yet volunteered. No matter your skill or experience level, in your volunteerism be eager and willing rather than ambitious or driving, leaving plenty of room around you for the contributions of others, even if the outcome isn't as good as yours.

Attend conferences. When you do, introduce yourself to three or four people standing close to you and invite them to lunch, then take time to find out about their professional work and interests. They may appreciate it and won't think you are weird (probably), and you'll foster connections with some great colleagues. Skip chatty groups; choose those who don't look or sound like you, and make sure one of those is someone standing or sitting alone. Diane was one of those standing reasonably close by on a warm June afternoon after a session.

Stretch your mind. Read widely in the profession and more widely outside of it. Make *yes* your default answer, even when you are out of your element, but make *no* your default response when another person you know would profit more from the opportunity than you, when you are already committed, or when your family or mental health is at risk.

Be kind. Push through disappointments with generosity. Stand firmly against abuses and abusers. Think outside your experience emotionally as well as rationally. Avoid the trap of *what do I get from it* and prefer *is this the right thing for those it*

most affects? Keep confidences. Be curious. Give credit where it is due, and do it generously. Write thank-you notes—by hand. Work hard and long and take time off to renew and regenerate. Be diplomatic. Avoid retaliating. In institutions, politics are inevitable, but play them with ideas, not people. Be welcoming. Be a mentor because you can be, not because you are perfect, and be a friend and colleague to anyone else in the field. In short, as someone much more qualified than I once said, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Thank you for reading *RBM*. Keep it up.

Volunteer for the *RBM* Board of Editors

The *RBM* editorial board invites applications for three-year terms of voluntary service on the editorial board. Individuals of all levels of professional and publication experience, including early career professionals, are welcome, but having some prior experience in writing and publishing will be useful. In keeping with ACRL's priority for its publication boards to represent the membership more equitably, applicants from underrepresented groups that have been historically marginalized or excluded due to race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, economic background, age, and/or ability are particularly welcome.

RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage is the Association of College and Research Libraries' open access journal covering issues pertaining to special collections libraries and cultural heritage institutions. Conversations around how we cope with emerging technologies, new economic models for collecting, the creation of strategic partnerships, and how people experience the "authentic" are themes found within the pages of *RBM*.

Those writing for *RBM* or interested in volunteering for the editorial board may include special collections librarians, archivists, preservation officers and conservators, artists, museum professionals, collectors, dealers, filmmakers, performance artists, faculty, students, researchers, and anyone interested in and working to preserve cultural heritage. Interested readers will find up-to-date information on the *RBM* website at <http://rbm.acrl.org>.

Applicants may expect:

- Along with two external reviewers, one or more board members review each submission as part of the peer-review process.
- Participate in biennial board meetings (typically by video conference)
- Promote the journal with personal professional networks
- May submit articles and review publications for the journal while serving, if desired

Volunteers must be an ALA/ACRL member at the time of application and appointment. Applications are filed by submitting the annual ACRL volunteer form. The next call for volunteers should be issued in late 2023 or early 2024. Potential applicants are welcome to contact a sitting board member or the editor with questions ahead of formally volunteering; contact information is available on the *RBM* website and on the editorial page of the print journal.