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Editorial for New Review of Academic Librarianship (1) 2021

Time to hand over

Graham Walton, Editor-in-Chief, *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, England, United Kingdom

This is my last Editorial for the *New Review of Academic Librarianship (NRAL)* as I have decided to move on from being Editor-in-Chief at the end of 2020. In 2009, I took on this role and I am delighted to announce that Dr Leo Appleton will take over from myself from the beginning of 2021. I took on this role in 2009 with a sense of both uncertainty but also anticipation. It provided a chance for me to increase practitioners' opportunities to publish evidence-based practice that others could apply to improve services. At the same time, it was not clear to me about both the journals' strategic direction and also *NRAL's* position amongst the panoply of academic librarianship journals. I had previously published in *NRAL* (Walton, 2006) and also its predecessor, the *British Journal of Academy Librarianship*, (Walton and Nettleton, 1992) so there was already a connection.

When I look back to when I took on the role, the world was very different to the one we live in now. The following taking place in 2009:

- Barack Obama became the 44th President of the United States of America.
- National Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked by terrorists.
- Same-sex marriage was legalised in Sweden.
- 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck near L'Aquila, Italy, killing nearly 300
- The first Mandela Day was organised on Nelson Mandela's 91st Birthday

- Sony sold 12 million floppy disks in 2009...then stopped selling them altogether in 2010
- The International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity

In 2020, the world is dominated in determining how we deal with COVID-19, global warming, extremism and technological changes (amongst others). Academic libraries are also in a different place compared to 2009 through changes in scholarly communication, increase in digital information, 24/7 culture and challenges to the library being at the centre of the university. The cumulative effect of all these changes and trends leads to a sense of heightened uncertainty about where *NRAL* will go. O'Connor (2020) has captured the monumental times and challenges currently being faced by university libraries.

A priority in my time as Editor in Chief has been to set up core values that would support *NRAL* to move forward both whilst I had that role and also after my departure.

These are:

- Partnership: much effort has been invested into working with the publisher, Taylor & Francis, to share decision making and to introduce new initiatives. At the same time, the journal's Editorial Board has been developed so it can have more influential and participative roles
- Internationalisation: *NRAL* has sought to engage with countries from across the world by publishing papers from different countries. At the same time, the Editorial Board has become more international with members being recruited from many different countries including Australia, Canada, India, Japan, Norway, South Africa

- Diversification: since being Editor-in-Chief I have sought to have a wider diversity of representation on the Editorial Board in respect of ethnicity and nationality.. At the same time, librarians have been brought in who are experienced academic library directors as well as those who are at the start of their professional careers.

The indicators are that these principles have been successful, for example the number of downloads increasing from 3200 in 2008 to 46329 downloads from *NRAL* in 2019. The journal has also doubled its size in the time I have been Editor-in-Chief. I am convinced that these values and outcomes have positioned *NRAL* to cope well with the uncertainty ahead but I realise that from 2021, the new Editor-in-Chief will have to decide for himself if this is the case. I am sure he has the same sense of anticipation as he takes *NRAL* forward. Thank you to everybody who I have worked with as Editor-in-Chief and I look forward to the journal moving forward.

2021 and Beyond

Leo Appleton, Incoming Editor-in-Chief, *New Review of Academic Librarianship*,
England, United Kingdom

In his editorial above, Graham mentions how one of his objectives, when he took over as editor-in-chief of *NRAL* in 2009, was for him to increase the opportunities for academic library practitioners to publish evidence-based practice. This approach and mission of the journal has sustained over the last decade and indeed, it was Graham, as editor of *NRAL* who encouraged me to continue to publish during my academic library career, both in *NRAL* and in other journals. *NRAL* has proved to be a valuable platform for practitioner oriented scholarship and plays an important role in this respect, encouraging practice-based, as well as theory-based research and publication. The continued increase in popularity and international focus of the

journal also add to the appeal of *NRAL* for academics and practitioners alike, with regard to having a platform for up-to-date discussion and debate about the challenges, opportunities, innovations and sector trends in academic librarianship all over the world.

As Graham 'hands over the baton' to me for 2021, I look forward to continuing to lead the mission and values that have been instilled in the journal. We will continue to enjoy our relationship with Taylor and Francis, and ensure that the collaboration continues to provide opportunities to take the journal forwards. Similarly, the editorial board and the editorial team will work towards maintaining the values of *NRAL*, whilst continuing to strategically develop the journal and ensure that it is relevant and current in providing discussion for the sector and for the *NRAL* readership.

Probably the most important value, which we need to consider as we look to the future, is that of diversity. *NRAL* has always prided itself in being a richly diverse journal, in that it is a scholarly platform for many different international voices in academic librarianship, and I expect us to not only sustain this, but to ensure that we continue to play to this strength and diversify our authorship and readership even further.

I am very pleased to be taking over as editor-in-chief of *NRAL* from 2021. It is an exciting time for the journal and for academic librarianship in general. 2020 certainly proved to be a challenging year, in that academic library practitioners all over the world were challenged to respond to and deal with the various crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These included issues and challenges around leadership and management, operational and strategic planning and service delivery. Invariably such challenges can present opportunities, and my observations lead me to believe

that this is certainly the case in academic librarianship where the leadership, innovation and delivery of services has continued to develop, and I hope to see the subsequent scholarship and debate on the pages of *NRAL* over the years to come.

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