

Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures

Christopher Cronin

I am so pleased to be able to welcome all *ITAL* subscribers to Core: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures! This issue marks the first of *ITAL* since the election of Core's inaugural leadership. A merger of what was formerly three separate ALA divisions—the Association of Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS), Library & Information Technology Association (LITA), and the Library Leadership & Management Association (LLAMA)—Core is an experiment of sorts. It is, in fact, multiple experiments in unification, in collaboration, in compromise, in survival. While initially born out of a sheer fight or flight response to financial imperatives and the need for organizational effectiveness, developing Core as a concept and as a model for an enduring professional association very quickly became the real motivation for those of us deeply embedded in its planning.

Core is very deliberately not an all-caps acronym representing a single subset of practitioner within the library profession. It is instead an assertion of our collective position at the center of our profession. It is a place where all those working in libraries, archives, museums, historical societies—information and cultural heritage broadly—will find reward and value in membership and a professional home. All organizations need effective leaders, strong infrastructure, and a vision for the future. And that is what Core strives to build with and for its members.

While I welcome *ITAL*'s readers into Core, I also welcome Core's membership into *ITAL*. No longer publications of their former divisions, all three journals within Core have an opportunity to reconsider their mandates. As with all things, audience matters. *ITAL*'s readership has now expanded dramatically, and those new readers must be invited into *ITAL*'s world just as much as *ITAL* has been invited into theirs. As we embark on this first year of the new division, we do so with a sense of altogether newness more than of a mere refresh, and a sense of still becoming more than a sense of having always been. And who doesn't want to reinvent themselves every once in a while? Start over. Move away from the bits that aren't working so well, prop up those other bits that we know deserve more, and venture into some previously uncharted territory. How will being part of this effort, and of an expanded division, reframe *ITAL*'s mandate?

The importance of information technology has never been more apparent. It is not lost on me that we do this work in Core during a year of unprecedented tumult. In 2020, a murderous global pandemic was met with unrelenting political strife, pervasive distribution of misinformation and untruths, devastating weather disasters, record-setting unemployment, heightened attention on an array of omnipresent social justice issues, and a racial reckoning that demands we look both inward and outward for real change. Individually and collectively, we grieve so many losses—loss of life, loss of income, loss of savings, loss of homes, loss of dignity, loss of certainty, loss of control, loss of physical contact. And throughout all of these challenges, what have we relied on more this year than technology? Technology kept us productive and engaged. It provided a focal point for communication and connection. It provided venues for advocacy, expression, inspiration, and, as a

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counterpoint to that pervasive distribution of misinformation, it provided mechanisms to amplify the voices of the oppressed and marginalized.

For some, but unfortunately not all, technology also kept us employed. And as the physical doors of our organizations closed, technology provided us with new ways to invite our users in, to continue to meet their information needs, and to exceed all of our expectations for what was possible even with closed physical doors. And yet our reliance on and celebration of technology in this moment has also placed another critical spotlight on the devastating impact of digital poverty on those who continue to lack access, and by extension also a spotlight on our privilege.

In her parting [words to you](#) in the final issue of *ITAL* as a LITA journal, Evviva Weinraub Lajoie, the last President of LITA, wrote:

We may have always known that inequities existed, that the system was structured to make sure that some folks were never able to get access to the better goods and services, but for many, this pandemic is the first time we have had those systemic inequities held up to our noses and been asked, “what are you going to do to change this?” Balancing those priorities will require us to lean on our professional networks and organizations to be more and to do more. I believe that together, we can make Core stand up to that challenge.

I believe we will do this, too, and with a spirit of reinvention that is guided by principles and values that don’t just inspire membership but also improve our professional lives and experience in tangible ways. It was a privilege to have served as the final President of ALCTS and such a humbling and daunting responsibility to now transition into serving as Core’s first. It is a responsibility I do not take lightly, particularly in this moment when so much is demanded of us. As we strive for equity and inclusion, we do so knowing that we are only as strong as every member’s ability to bring their whole selves to this work. We must work together to make our professional home everything we need it to be and to help those who need us. It is yours, it is theirs, it is ours.