

# Editorial: First Have Something to Say

John Webb

I think that writing editorials in my job as the new editor of *Information Technology and Libraries (ITAL)* is going to be a real piece of cake. All I have to do, dear readers, is to quote (with proper attribution) Walt Crawford, the title of whose book I repeat as the title of this, my inaugural editorial.<sup>1</sup> And then quote other sages of our profession, using only as many of their words as is fitting and proper to make my editorials relevant to the concerns of our membership and readers and as few of my own words as I can to repay the confidence that the Library Information and Technology Association (LITA) has placed in me—and to avoid muddling the ideas of those to whom I shall be indebted.

Those of you reading this will note that I have already fallen prey to the conceit of all scholarly journal editors: that their readers, of course, after surveying the tables of contents, dive wide-eyed first into the editorials. Of course.

To paraphrase a technologist of an earlier era, “When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for” a new editor to take on the responsibility for the stewardship of *ITAL*, “a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that” he “should declare the causes which impel” him to accept that responsibility and, further, to write editorials. I quote, of course, from the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the “thirteen united States of America” July 4, 1776.

In this, my first editorial, I, too, shall put forth for the examination of the members of LITA and the readers of *ITAL* my goals and hopes for the journal that I am now honored to lead. These goals and hopes are shared by the members of the *ITAL* editorial board, whose names appear in the masthead of this journal.

*ITAL* is a double-blind refereed journal that currently has a manuscript acceptance rate of 50 percent. It began in 1968 as the *Journal of Library Automation (JOLA)*, the journal of the Information Science and Automation Division (ISAD) of ALA, and its first editor was Fred Kilgour. In 1978 ISAD became LITA, and in 1982, the journal title was changed to reflect the expanding role of information technology in libraries, an expansion that continues to accelerate so that *ITAL* is no longer the only professional journal within ALA whose pages are now dominated by our accelerating use of information technologies as tools to manage the services we provide our users and as tools we use ourselves to accomplish our daily duties.

I write part of this editorial in the skies over the middle section of the United States as I return home from the seventh National LITA Forum held in St. Louis, October 7–10. At the Forum, I heard presentations, visited poster sessions, and talked with colleagues from forty-four states and six countries who had something to say and said it well. I hope that some of them may submit manuscripts to *ITAL* so that all the members of LITA and all the readers of the journal will profit as well from some of what the attendees of the Forum heard and saw. I

attended the Forum forewarned by previous *ITAL* editors to carry plenty of business cards, and I went armed with a pocketful. I think I distributed enough that, if pieced together, their blank sides would provide sufficient writing space for at least one manuscript!

In an attempt to fulfill the Jeffersonian promise above, I hereby list a few of my goals for the beginning of my term as editor. I must emphasize that these goals of mine supplement but *do not* supplant the purposes of the journal as stated on the first page and on the *ITAL* Web site ([www.ala.org/lita/litapublications/ital/italinformation.htm](http://www.ala.org/lita/litapublications/ital/italinformation.htm)); likewise, they do not supplant the goals of my predecessors.

In no particular order:

I hope to increase the number of manuscripts received from our library and information schools. Their faculty and doctoral students are some of the incubators of new and exciting information technologies that may bear fruit for future library users. However, not all research turns up maps on which “X marks the spot.” Exploration is interesting, even vital, for the journey, for the search itself, and our graduate faculties and students have something to say.

I hope to increase the submission of manuscripts that describe relevant sponsored research. In the earlier volumes, *JOLA* had an average of at least one article per issue, maybe more, describing the results of funded research. *ITAL* can and should be a source that information-technology researchers consider as a vehicle for the publication of their results. Two articles in this issue result from sponsored research.

In fact, I hope to increase the number of manuscripts that describe any relevant research or cutting-edge developments. Much of the exploration undertaken by librarians improving and strengthening their services involves research or problems solved on both small scales and large. Neither the officers of LITA, the referees, the readers, nor I are interested in very many “how I run my library good” articles. We all want to read a statement of the problem(s), the hypotheses developed to explore the issues surrounding the problem(s), the research methods, the results, the assessment of the outcomes, and, when feasible, a synthesis of how the research methods or results may be generalized.

I hope to increase the number of articles with multiple authors. Libraries are among society’s most cooperative institutions and librarians, members of one of the most cooperative of professions. The work we do is rarely that of solitary performers, whether it be research or the

(continued on page 21)

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- Problems with unauthorized people accessing the Internet through the wireless network
  - Problems with restricted parts of the network being accessed by unauthorized users
  - Other

3. How were security problems resolved?

### Benefits of Use of Network

1. What have been the biggest benefits of wireless technology? Check all that apply.
  - User satisfaction
  - Increased access to the Internet and online sources
  - Flexibility and ease due to lack of wires
  - Has improved technical services (use for library functions)
  - Has aided in bibliographic instruction

- Provides access beyond the library building
- Allows students to roam the stacks while accessing the network
- Other

2. How would you describe current usage of the network?

- Heavy
- Moderate
- Low

3. In your opinion, has this technology been worth the benefit-cost ratio thus far?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

4. What advice would you give to librarians considering this technology?

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*(Editorial continued from page 3)*

design and implementation of complex systems to serve our users. Writing about that should not be solitary either.

I hope to publish think-pieces from leaders in our field.

I hope to publish more articles on the management of information technologies.

I hope to increase the number of manuscripts that provide retrospectives. Libraries have always been users of information technologies, often early adopters of leading-edge technologies that later become commonplace. We should, upon occasion, remember and reflect upon our development as an information-technology profession.

I hope to work with the editorial board, the LITA Publications Committee, and the LITA board to find a way, and soon, to facilitate the electronic publication of articles without endangering—but in fact enhancing—the absolutely essential financial contribution that the journal provides to the association.

In short, I want to make *ITAL* a destination journal of excellence for both readers and authors, and in doing so reaffirm the importance of LITA as a professional division of ALA.

To accomplish my goals, I need more than an excellent editorial board, more than first-class referees to provide quality control, and more than the support of the LITA officers. I need all LITA members to be prospective authors, prospective referees, and prospective literary agents acting on behalf of our profession to continue the almost forty-year tradition begun by Fred Kilgour and his colleagues, who were our predecessors in volume 1, number 1, March 1966, of our journal.

### Reference

1. Walt Crawford, *First Have Something to Say: Writing for the Library Profession* (Chicago: ALA, 2003).