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Getting Better

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Getting Better

We traditionally greet a new year with resolutions that we know or believe will improve our lives. We set goals for our physical, emotional, and intellectual betterment. At their best, these annual objectives consider what worked and what failed in past years (getting an e-reader? waking up earlier? ditching a fad diet? committing to an overzealous exercise plan?) and apply those lessons learned to create smart, attainable ways to get better and do better in the coming year.

In a parallel to creating New Year's resolutions that encourage us to get better, this first issue of *Student Research Journal* for 2013 offers six different takes on how we as librarians, as information professionals, as archivists—and yes, as people—can do better. Our authors cover several cutting-edge topics in library and information science, but all of the articles published in this issue, which were written by a San José State University School of Library and Information Science faculty contributor and five graduate LIS students from schools across the continent, help us understand ways we can improve, whether it be our communication, our collaboration, our preservation, or our service.

This issue's invited contribution comes from Dr. Christine Hagar, Assistant Professor at SJSU SLIS. Conducting analysis through the framework of "crisis informatics," Hagar (2013) evaluates whether social media is truly an effective tool for sharing information during a crisis, such as a hurricane, pandemic, or terrorist attack. Dr. Hagar explains that during crises, people generally communicate more often and in more complex ways, including via social media. Communicating "trusted information" is especially crucial in these situations, but disseminating information via social media may complicate what are already difficult information landscapes (p. 1, 3). She notes that social media crisis-time communication is, in many ways, a positive development—among other things, it "enhances citizen engagement," empowers everyday people as "citizen journalists," and vastly expands the information reach of relief and government agencies. In the same breath, however, Dr. Hagar calls our attention to the downsides of social media crisis communication—an increased risk of quickly spread misinformation, a potential for information overload, and the possibility of inciting panic. By forcing us to consider that social media may be a "mixed blessing in crisis response" (p. 4), Dr. Hagar encourages us to be smarter, more conscientious producers and consumers of crisis-time social media communications. Given the recent tragedy of Super Storm Sandy, and the knowledge that we will undoubtedly, unfortunately, endure many crises (both natural and man-made) to come, Dr. Hagar's lesson in doing better should resonate with each of us as professionals and as people.

Samantha Godbey makes the case for getting better through collaboration. In her piece "Collaboration as an Essential Tool in Information Literacy Education 9-16: Context, Qualities and Implications," Godbey persuasively argues that secondary school librarians could and would more effectively serve

their students by collaborating with academic librarians at higher-education institutions. After sharing several examples of existing library-based collaborative relationships, Godbey helpfully compiles a list of “essential elements of successful collaboration” (pp. 7-9), a roadmap for success that any librarian—school or academic—should read, consider, and internalize. Godbey concludes with encouragement to school librarians who may consider collaborating with academic librarians to improve the information literacy of their students in high school and beyond:

Through collaboration with academic librarians, school librarians can expand their resources and expertise. They can gain insight from another professional who has an idea of the skills students will need in grades 13 to 16, where the school librarian’s expertise fades. It is an ideal opportunity for collaboration, where each partner’s expertise complements the other (p. 11).

Godbey’s analysis of and justification for collaboration by librarians who serve students in grades 9-16 shows us an important way to create a better foundation for information literacy for a lifetime.

Building on the benefits of collaboration we understand more thoroughly after reading Godbey (2013), Stacey Nordlund’s work “Information Literacy Instruction for Upper-Year Undergraduate Students: A Stratified Course-Integrated Approach” posits a new use of an old tool to help college students undertake the research process. Nordlund (2013) identifies the benefits of collaboration between librarians and faculty and the challenges created by “the chasm separating the faculty member as ‘expert researcher’ from the student as ‘novice researcher’” (pp. 2, 5). She then introduces a method that applies collaboration to address this chasm: Leckie’s “stratified course-integrated approach.” This six-stage stratified approach to information literacy “integrates information-seeking and evaluative skills into the course content” but historically was developed only for first-year undergraduate students (pp. 1, 5). Nordlund convinces us of the merits of experimenting with this approach beyond its traditional application in the first year of higher education, in order to better prepare undergraduates at all levels to meet expected information literacy competencies. The author shares her first-hand observations from a large university’s junior-year information workshop, which employs the stages of stratification to prepare Materials Science students for a research project. These observations light the way toward a method of teaching research that may lead to more collaboration, better connections between students and libraries, and improved information literacy instruction for upper-division students.

In “Consider the Source: The Value of Source Code to Digital Preservation Strategies,” Michel Castagné documents the debate over “why and how software should be preserved” (p. 1), and explains several approaches for preserving software. Castagné (2013) carefully walks through five software “preservation strategies,” offering critique and insight into each. The author calls particular attention to the benefits of both source code and the open source community in preserving software. Castagné’s article also serves as a call to action for continued support of standards for open access to source code. He inspires us to get involved in preserving this critical piece of our digital history.

Becca Bastron also tackles the issue of preservation in her article “Preserving Film Preservation in the Digital Era.” Bastron (2013) introduces the importance of film preservation by sharing some astonishing statistics about the large percentage of films we have already lost. With that preservationist urgency in mind, Bastron surprises us again; rather than supporting the mode *du jour* of preservation—digital—in all instances, Bastron argues that digital preservation is only sometimes appropriate by tackling both its advantages and its disadvantages. In sum, Bastron encourages film preservationists to get better at their work by critically engaging the lure of the new and flashy and by respecting the tried and true. “[A]s tends to happen with many new technologies, imperfections [in digital film preservation] have been revealed over time which contrast with previous assumptions”; these “limitations cannot be ignored” (p. 11).

This issue’s final piece, Susan MW Aplin’s extensive literature review, “Using Technology to Connect Public Libraries and Teens,” collects and analyzes more than a decade’s worth of theories about ways to use technology to make public libraries more appealing, more approachable, and more useful for teen patrons. Aplin (2013) condenses a large volume of scholarly articles into best practices, split across several broad-strokes categories of ways to “connect”: in person, online, through library websites, on social networking sites, and through mobile devices and e-readers. Over these sections, Aplin amasses insights into the types of technologies that public libraries should consider for teens, the best ways to use these technologies, and the appropriate behaviors of a teen-focused librarian. By assembling and examining all of these important practices and tips, Aplin has created a useful repository of ideas for public libraries that want to do better by using technology to reach out to their teen patrons.

Getting better does not stop with these six ideas from these six authors. As Marcoux and Loertscher (2010) note in a “getting better”-themed editorial targeted to teacher librarians but applicable to all, no one scheme or one article will improve everything. Instead, “[t]he way to define what to do is to take a good and hard look at what is happening—at each and every action—against the bigger picture of how what you do contributes” (p. 6). Our authors met this challenge in their articles. Our Editorial Team met this challenge in its hard and

much appreciated work to get this issue to publication. And our hope is that everyone in our field continues to strive to and to encourage others to get better as well.

And finally, on a personal note, the *SRJ* Editorial Team is proud to have published articles by two of our alumnae. Samantha Godbey and Stacey Nordlund contributed tremendously to making *SRJ* better as members of our Editorial Team and we are so pleased that they have made their way to publication through our double blind review process.

Marcoux, E., & Loertscher, D. (2010). Getting better to meet the future. *Teacher Librarian*, 37(3), pp. 6-7.

Dr. Christine Hagar is an Assistant Professor at San Jose State University, School of Library and Information Science. Dr. Hagar holds a PhD in Library and Information Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Samantha Godbey graduated from San Jose State University with her teacher librarian credential and MLIS in May 2012. She also has a single subject teaching credential and M.A. in Education from UC Berkeley. Her research interests include information literacy instruction and reference in school and academic libraries. As of December 2012, she is Education Liaison Librarian at University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Stacey Nordlund is a recent graduate of the MLIS program at San José State University and holds a BS in Psychology from the University of Toronto. She works as a reference librarian for the Toronto Public Library in Toronto, Ontario, and volunteers as a virtual reference librarian for Ask Ontario.

Michel Castagné is a Master of Library and Information Studies candidate at the University of British Columbia. He specializes in digital libraries and preservation in an academic setting, as well as designing effective information architecture and databases.

Becca Bastron is a library student at San Jose State University, and a passionate film history buff.

Susan Aplin has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Pomona College and a Master of Arts in Teaching English from the University of South Carolina. She is a National Board Certified English teacher at Dutch Fork High School in Irmo, SC, where she also serves as a Teacher Technology Leader.