

Editorial

Taking Things Slow: A Note from the Incoming Editor

Several years ago, when I first heard about the “slow movement,” the cynic in me was immediately suspicious. However, as my colleagues discussed concepts like “rest is resistance” and friends shared memes and reels on social media promoting rest and an intentional slowdown in work to improve focus, I began to look more into it. As someone wired (some might argue, programmed) throughout my life to constantly be moving and busy, it felt unusual—even a little stressful—to pause and consider slowing down my work as a tenure-track academic librarian and department head. However, as I grew my department from two people to six, I realized that my team and I were trying to run even before learning to walk—we didn’t have a mission or vision for the department yet, and we lacked some important foundational processes, like transparent and clear workflows for assigning and tracking instruction sessions. Instead, I needed to take a moment to let my new hires settle in, learn their roles and how they wanted to organize and manage their individual time and processes, and then see how we all worked together as a team. And that was going to take time.

I learned that taking the time to think critically, intentionally, and honestly about our projects was not so much a luxury as it was a necessity. If I wanted my instruction team to achieve sustainable success and work as a unified department, I would have to slow things down and take a more measured approach to our work. Could I have slowed down even more than we did? Most likely. However, as anyone who knows me would probably agree, the fact that I considered and then tried to slow things down were huge steps for me.

As I move from my role as Editor-Designate to Editor of *College & Research Libraries*, I am excited and grateful to work with the editorial board, our readers, and prospective authors in shaping this touchstone of our professional and scholarly conversation for the future. However, I also feel the desire and need to take my time as I fully take stock of where the journal is at this moment in time. During the past year, I shadowed immediate-past Editor Kristen Totleben as she taught me the journal’s workflows and processes, while also laying bare the opportunities for the continued improvement of the journal. I am extremely grateful to Kristen for her seemingly unending patience, grace, and support as I often asked the same questions over and over until things finally started to click.

This time was well spent as it gave me a sense of some of the journal’s strengths and challenges. However, even with this year under my belt, I cannot say I have a strong plan for my editorship just yet. In fact, I am sort of glad I don’t. I may be the Editor, but I am certainly not the only stakeholder in *C&RL*’s success, and I plan to spend my first year as Editor continuing to learn while establishing some foundational improvements to the journal’s processes and policies. Other publishing professionals, both in and outside of academia, encouraged me to enter my editorship slowly and to first evaluate the basics to make sure as much is clear and transparent for editors, reviewers, authors, and readers as possible before making any grand editorial shifts.

I have also heard from several publishing colleagues that being the editor of a journal can be a lonely endeavor, and my question after a year of shadowing and benefitting from the perspective of another editorial colleague and the board is why should that be the case? Over a delightful riverside lunch back home in Florida, my favorite high school English teacher (who supervised my first editorial role) noted: I may be editor in title, have good intentions, and maybe will have excellent ideas for advancing the journal, but *C&RL* does not belong to me alone. I am its steward, the person who is accountable for its publication and the decisions made, but I do not have to make those decisions in a vacuum and, when possible, I should consciously choose not to do so.

To this end, I first plan to work with the editorial board to focus on evaluating and improving workflows and editorial policies that I feel could be strengthened, made more transparent, and/or enhanced. Some immediate examples that come to mind include documenting editorial workflows for articles and book reviews, crafting explicit peer review guidelines, and considering ways to expand the role of editorial responsibility beyond one solitary editor.

I love that *C&RL*'s authors have shared their expertise in order to guide, influence, and engage with the broader academic library profession for more than 85 years. I also understand that there are opportunities for improvement that will allow *C&RL* to grow and excel even further. As I begin my editorship, I will take things a bit more slowly than I perhaps originally planned so that I have time to best assess where the journal is at this point in time, deliberate on where the journal might go next, and strategically and thoughtfully make progress toward whatever goals are eventually identified.

These days it feels like time moves simultaneously fast and slow, which is perhaps why it's even more important to take a beat. As I take this time to consider future pathways, I look forward to taking this measured approach to *C&RL*'s management and leadership, and I hope the journal's readers and authors are as excited as I am to see what unfolds.