



Report on *Information Technology and Libraries*

Prepared for the LITA Board by

Ken Varnum, Editor

January 2020

Key Activities

This report covers my tenure as editor (October 2017-December 2019), because no annual reports were submitted for calendar years 2018 and 2019. I will highlight the key activities around ITAL for this two-year period.

Publishing

The core activity of the Editor and the Editorial Board is, of course, soliciting, reviewing and publishing articles. During the past three calendar years, ITAL has received 293 articles, of which 94 have been accepted after review and 63 have been published (see Table A in [Appendix 1](#) for a five-year summary). That gives ITAL a 32% acceptance rate over the past 3 calendar years. Time to publication varies somewhat depending on when articles are submitted (there are upswings in submissions near the end of the typical academic fiscal and calendar years, presumably as authors' annual performance review periods draw to a close), but is typically in the 5-8 month range.

Full-text PDF downloads, according to the COUNTER reports provided through the publishing platform, increased significantly in 2019 over the previous two years. The significant increase in full-text downloads in 2019 (148,649), especially compared to 2018 (41,003) is noteworthy although not well understood. It is likely caused by the update from COUNTER 4 to COUNTER 5 reporting in April 2019 (which happened as part of the change of the journal publishing platform discussed below). In COUNTER 5, the total number of downloads is now calculated as the sum of the HTML and the PDF accesses. Since ITAL does not provide an HTML equivalent to its articles, only an abstract, on its HTML landing page, any abstract view would be noted in

COUNTER as a full text download. Not all abstract views lead to PDF views, so the actual number of PDF downloads is probably half or less of the total.

In 2018, the journal celebrated its 50th anniversary with each issue highlighting articles from a previous decade. Editorial Board members volunteered to summarize a decade and culminated (coincidentally, as the article was not solicited) in March of 2019 with a bibliometric study of the journal's history.

Also in 2018, we initiated a new quarterly feature, Public Libraries Leading the Way, joining our three existing features, the Letter from the Editor, the LITA President's Message, and the Editorial Board Thoughts column. Public Libraries Leading the Way columns are intended to showcase interesting innovations from public libraries through a shorter essay by a technologist in a public library. These columns are not peer reviewed, but are selected through an annual proposal and review process and go through the same editorial review as other content.

See [Appendix 2](#) for a summary of the most frequently downloaded articles published in 2019, as well as the most-frequently downloaded articles across all volumes and issues.

Changes to the Journal Publishing Platform

In early 2019, our partners at Boston College (where ITAL has been hosted for the last decade), upgraded the version of the Open Journal Systems (OJS) publishing platform that runs the journal publication process from version 2 to version 3. At the same time, they outsourced the management of the software to an external vendor. As with any migration, there were a few hiccups, but overall the process went smoothly. Boston College has continued to be a responsive, valuable partner in publishing the journal. On a personal note, I am most grateful for Boston College's generosity in providing rapid assistance when problems arise, particularly given their willingness to waive the annual hosting fee they would otherwise expect.

The updated OJS software brought with it a much cleaner and easier to use workflow for managing submissions, assigning them for review, and seeing them through to publication. Unfortunately, the migration resulted in the loss of the custom theme for the journal, based on the LITA website style, that had been developed by Kelly Sattler and the Web Coordinating Committee in 2018. The new hosting service, for simplicity of support, does not allow custom themes. The stock theme being used is perfectly acceptable, but it is unfortunate that visual continuity was lost.

Making the ITAL/JOLA Backfile Available

While ITAL has been published online as an open-access publication since 2012, not all of the previous 43 years of ITAL or its predecessor journal, the *Journal of Library Automation* (JOLA) are available online. Over the years, there have been some efforts toward scanning articles available before the journal went online and making those articles available through the ITAL

site, but they have not been systematically pursued. In 2019, we resumed this process by creating an inventory of volumes and issues that are not available online, developed a crowdsourcing plan to scan and OCR-process missing issues, and drafted a call for volunteers to take this work on piecemeal. This work should continue into 2020, but may need additional volunteer resources to see the work through to a successful conclusion.

In a related development, *Information Technology and Library* volumes from 1982-1992 are now available in full text via [HathiTrust](#). They had previously been scanned but were considered in copyright so were not fully viewable. This change in status of the materials in HathiTrust was made possible through the assistance of Jenny Levine, LITA Executive Director, who was able to work with ALA legal counsel to dedicate those volumes to the public domain. The full run (1968-1981) of the predecessor publication, the *Journal of Library Automation*, is likewise expected to be made public domain in 2020.

Updated Policies and Procedures

The final section of this report is focused on the Editorial Board's efforts to standardize and document its activities. The Editorial Board reviewed and updated the job description for [Editorial Board members](#) in 2018 and, with approval by the LITA Board, for the [Editor](#) in 2019. Neither of these descriptions had been updated in recent memory, and the positions in practice had diverged from the formal descriptions.

The Editorial Board also worked on several other policy changes:

- [Making edits to published articles](#). With the policy in place we may, for example, update an important URL, fix spelling or other typographical errors, or other changes that did not materially alter the published article's conclusions). A note about any such changes is to be added to the end of the revised article. Approved by the LITA Board May 2018.
- [Updated Creative Commons license](#). ITAL Articles were previously published under version 3.0 of the Creative Commons license. The license text was updated to 4.0 version, so we began applying the new license with articles submitted after June 2018. Approved by the LITA Board May 2018.

A policy is currently being created, to be submitted to the LITA Board for consideration in early 2020, that requests authors who choose to deposit a published article in their institutional repositories or otherwise make them available online observe two conditions: 1) that they embargo their copy until the article is published and 2) that they add a note to their copy that requests citations go to the ITAL version.

Editorial Board Membership

As Editor, I rely heavily on the volunteer efforts of the members of the ITAL Editorial Board. Without their dedicated service and deep knowledge of their respective subject domains, the journal would not exist. Board members for the years included in this report are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Editorial Board Membership

	July 2017-June 2018	July 2018-June 2019	July 2019-June 2020
Editor	Robert Gerrity (until 9/2017) Ken Varnum (9/2017-2020)	Ken Varnum (2017-2020)	Ken Varnum (2017-2020)
Editorial Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H. Frank Cervone (2016-2018) • Patrick T. Colegrove (2016-2018) • Mark D. Cyzyk (2016-2018) • Mark A. Dehmlow (2016-2018) • Joseph Deodato (2016-2018) • Sharon Farnel (2016-2018) • Kelly J. Sattler (2016-2018) • Sandra Shores (2016-2018) • Ken Varnum (2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steven K. Bowers (2018-2020) • H. Frank Cervone (2018-2019) • Patrick T. Colegrove (2018-2019) • Joseph Deodato (2018-2019) • Kevin Ford (2018-2020) • Cinthya Ippoliti (2018-2020) • Ida Joiner (2018-2020) • Breanne Kirsch (2018-2020) • Michael Sauers (2018-2020) • Laurie Willis (2018-2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lori Bowen Ayre (2019-2021) • Steven K. Bowers (2018-2020) • Kevin Ford (2018-2020) • Jon Goddard (2019-2021) • Soo-yeon Hwang (2019-2021) • Cinthya Ippoliti (2018-2020) • Ida A. Joiner (2018-2020) • Breanne Kirsch (2018-2020) • Holli Kubly (2019-2021) • Brady Lund (2019-2021) • Michael Sauers (2018-2020) • Paul Swanson (2019-2021) • Laurie Willis (2018-2020)
Ex Officio Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marta Deyrup (2016-2019) • Richard R. Guajardo (2017-2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marta Deyrup (2016-2019) • Richard R. Guajardo (ex officio, 2018-2019) • Heidi E. Hanson (2018-2019) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julie Housknecht (2019-2020)

Appendix 1: Journal Statistics

Table A shows summary data about article submissions and acceptances for 2015-2019. Compiled from the COUNTER stats made available through the Open Journal Systems platform that hosts the site. Note that figures are for calendar years; not all articles accepted in one year see publication that year (due to sometimes extended editorial processes) or occasionally ever (due to authors not completing requested revisions).

Table A: Five-Year Statistical Summary of Publication Activities

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL
Peer reviewed articles submitted ¹	74	61	98	81	114	428
Peer reviewed articles accepted after review ²	30	10	42	16	36	134
Acceptance Rate	40.5%	16.3%	42.8%	19.1%	31.5%	31.3%
Peer reviewed articles published ³	19	12	13	24	26	94
Full-text downloads during year (PDF) ⁴	N/A	83,335	52,289	41,003	148,649	325,276

¹ Use the Articles report from OJS and import into Excel. Filter columns. Limit to "Section Title" contains "Articles" and "Communications" and the year in the Date Submitted column.

² Use the Articles report from OJS and import into Excel. Filter columns. Limit to "Section Title" contains "Articles" and "Communications", the year in the Date Submitted column, and all statuses except "Declined".

³ Use the Articles report from OJS and import into Excel. Filter columns. Limit to "Section Title" contains "Articles" and "Communications", the "Published" status, and that year's volume number from the DOI column. (This includes all articles *published* in the calendar year, not all articles *accepted for publication* in that calendar year.)

⁴ Sum of monthly totals from the XML output of "Journal Report 1" for each year.

Table B shows monthly downloads of articles from the ITAL site for 2016-2019 (data are not available for 2015). Note that starting with May 2019, COUNTER 5 protocols were applied. COUNTER 5 changed the definition of a “download” from just PDFs to both PDFs and the abstract page from which the PDF is linked.

Table B: Download Activity 2016-2019

Month	2016	2017	2018	2019
January	8370	7637	3268	3500
February	6700	7064	2918	3729
March	6016	8583	4211	4472
April	6321	6151	3693	6368
May	7696	2797	2819	10164
June	5388	2593	3176	11067
July	6536	2127	2478	8931
August	5909	2958	3069	12915
September	5696	3175	3675	20397
October	8167	3747	3767	42770
November	10845	2887	4560	12121
December	5691	2570	3369	12215
TOTAL	83335	52289	41003	148649

Appendix 2: Most-Read Articles

Top-Read Articles Published in 2019

These are the top 10 most-read articles published in volume 38 (2019). Note that no articles published in December (the most recent issue of the year) appear in this list:

1. [The Democratization of Artificial Intelligence: One Library's Approach](#) (1084 views)
2. [Wikidata](#) (912 downloads)
3. [Library Services Navigation: Improving the Online User Experience \(878 downloads\)](#)
4. ["Am I on the library website?"](#) (789 downloads)
5. [Library-Authored Web Content and the Need for Content Strategy](#) (642 downloads)
6. [Assessing the Effectiveness of Open Access Finding Tools](#) (626 downloads)
7. [Determining Textbook Cost, Formats, and Licensing with Google Books API: A Case Study from an Open Textbook Project](#) (560 downloads)
8. [Information Security in Libraries](#) (510 downloads)
9. [Weathering the Twitter Storm](#) (507 downloads)
10. [Measuring Information System Project Success through a Software-Assisted Qualitative Content Analysis](#) (491 downloads)

Top-Read Articles in 2019

These are the top 10 most-read articles in 2019, regardless of publication date:

1. [A Library in the Palm of Your Hand: Mobile Services in Top 100 University Libraries](#), Vol 34 No 2 (2015), 4013 downloads
2. [Revitalizing the Library OPAC: Interface, Searching, and Display Challenges](#), Vol 27 No 1 (2008), 3946 downloads
3. [Rural Public Libraries and Digital Inclusion: Issues and Challenges](#), Vol 33 No 1 (2014), 3939 downloads
4. [Mobile Technologies & Academics: Do Students Use Mobile Technologies in Their Academic Lives and are Librarians Ready to Meet this Challenge?](#), Vol 31 No 2 (2012), 3852 downloads
5. [Building Library Community Through Social Media](#), Vol 34 No 1 (2015), 3425 downloads
6. [Adoption of E-Book Readers Among College Students: A Survey](#), Vol 30 No 3 (2011), 3422 downloads
7. [The Next Generation Library Catalog: A Comparative Study of the OPACs of Koha, Evergreen, and Voyager](#), Vol 29 No 3 (2010), 3337 downloads
8. [Evaluation and Comparison of Discovery Tools: An Update](#), Vol 33 No 2 (2014), 3269 downloads)

9. [The Internet as a Source of Academic Research Information: Findings of Two Pilot Studies](#), Vol 19 No 1 (2000), 3042 downloads
10. [Reference is Dead, Long Live Reference: Electronic Collections in the Digital Age](#), Vol 34 No 4 (2015), 2814 downloads