From the Chair:

It's hard to believe that we are already thinking about the holidays and the New Year. Before we know it, we'll be packing for Philadelphia! The MARS committees and discussion groups continue to plan many creative activities for 2003. Several very interesting discussion forums will take place at Midwinter as well as the usual business meetings; look for details below in the messages from the chairs. I would like especially to remind you that the first meeting of the newly established Virtual Reference Discussion Group takes place in Philadelphia on Saturday afternoon. "Virtual" or "digital" reference is certainly in the forefront of new library services and we're excited about this opportunity to pull people together from all types of libraries and in all stages of development of electronic reference services.

The MARS Section Review Task Force, led by Paige Weston, has been officially discharged and their final report has been submitted to the RUSA Board. A big Martian "thanks" goes to this group for an excellent report that captures so well the accomplishments and energy of MARS. We will certainly continue to look at this useful document, following up on any outstanding issues and looking ahead to what we can do to fulfill our mission and also to keep track of our activities for future section evaluations.

The Preconference Planning Committee is hard at work on the second Digital Reference preconference scheduled for June 20, 2003 in Toronto. The three co-chairs are Danianne Mizzy, Lesley Bell, and Donna Hogan. Several people from last year's preconference committee are participating in the planning once again, as well as members of the Management of Electronic Reference Services Committee who will be developing a part of the program. You may already be aware that RUSA/MOUSS is presenting a preconference on "Evaluation of Reference & User Services" the same day as ours. I'm very pleased to announce that the two planning committees are developing a joint session focusing on evaluation and assessment techniques to help deliver quality digital reference service. This is a great idea and a fine example of collaboration.

Please watch MARS-L and other listservs for Preconference updates as planning progresses. The call for presentations will probably go out sometime in late November. Topics will focus on "directions and opportunities," including evaluation and assessment, collaborative services, best practices, marketing, and yes, a look at the future too.

The MARS Best Free Reference Web sites list for 2002 is up on the MARS web site and also out in the latest (Fall) issue of RUSQ. Congratulations to the MARS Best members, now moving into their second year as an official MARS committee! This list has certainly become a popular and well-known link for
reference desks in all sizes and types of libraries. I'll soon be appointing a task group to look at the feasibility of establishing a MARS Best list of fee-based reference web resources. Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this group.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to call your attention to an issue that is sure to be discussed in many different forums during the 2003 ALA conferences; that is, the USA Patriot's Act. The implications of the antiterrorism powers granted under this act are many and certainly not well understood. We owe it to ourselves and to our profession to keep informed on this and other legal issues that may threaten the rights of privacy and access to information. Good places to keep on top of developments are the ALA Washington Office's home page at http://www.ala.org/washoff (you can subscribe to their electronic newsletter at http://www.ala.org/washoff/alawon) and the ARL web site at www.arl.org. There is an ARL site devoted to anti-terrorism legislation, homeland security and related issues at http://www.arl.org/info/frn/other/ATL.html. The ARL website also has a good section on copyright and fair use issues.

My best wishes to all for a happy and restful holiday and a peaceful beginning to the New Year. I look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia!

LeiLani Freund
MARS Chair

The MARS Best Free Reference Web Sites Committee's list for 2002 will be published in the Fall issue of RUSQ. It is also available on the MARS web page. The committee will meet at Midwinter Sunday, January 26 from 2:00-4:00pm. for those who are able or interested to attend.

Lori Morse, lmorse@hslc.org and Carolyn Larson, clar@loc.gov, Co-Chairs, MARSBEST

The MARS User Access to Services Committee will offer a discussion session on Sunday Jan. 26, 2-4 pm, on the topic “Electronic Access and Authentication in Different Libraries—Different Problems—Different Solutions.” Please join us to share information and ideas. If there is a particular aspect of the issue that you would like to include in the discussion, please e-mail Danise Hoover, chair, dhoover@hunter.cuny.edu.

MARS Products & Services Committee Minutes
Sunday, June 16, 2002
Sheraton, Atlanta 5
Members: José Aguiñaga (Chair), Deborah Bezanson, Lea Currie, Mark Dibble, Leslie Dillon, Diana McKellar, Rosemary Meszaros, Doris Ann Sweet (Exec Cmte Liaison), and Jason Vaughan.

- Various announcements were made regarding programs in Atlanta. There was also discussion regarding the RUSA digital library preconference.
- There was substantial conversation regarding the discussion forum in 2003 at ALA Midwinter in Philadelphia. Committee members proposed various suggestions, ranging from virtual reference, portal software, and one-stop searching. Members agreed that “One-stop searching and effects on information literacy, research, and the learning process,” should be presented for approval from MARS EXCOMM. (This discussion forum was approved on Monday, June 17, at the MARS EXCOMM meeting.)
- The discussion forum at midwinter 2003 will take place on Sunday, January 26, 2003, 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
- José Aguiñaga thanked Deborah Bezanson for taking over as Chair of this committee. He also expressed his gratitude to the committee’s efforts during the past year. Rosemary Meszaros and José Aguiñaga will be leaving the committee at the end of Annual 2002.

Submitted by José Aguiñaga
July 26, 2002

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“My Favorite Martian” Award

Denise Beaubien Bennett received the RUSA MARS (Machine-Assisted Reference Section) Achievement Recognition Certificate at the 2002 Annual Conference of the American Library Association in Atlanta, Georgia. This honor, better known by its informal name, “My Favorite Martian,” recognizes individuals for excellence in service to MARS. The certificate was presented to Denise by William A. McHugh, chair of MARS, with the following citation: “This honor is awarded to Denise Beaubien Bennett for her leadership within MARS and her commitment to excellence in MARS programs and activities; for her outreach to fellow Martians and her consistent willingness to act as a resource for her colleagues; for her dedication to organizational efficiency, continuity and quality programming.”

Denise has been an active participant in MARS since 1990, when she joined the MARS Measurement and Evaluation of Service Committee. Denise chaired the Local Systems and Services Committee, was a member of the MARS 1995 Program Committee and served as chair of MARS in 1995-96. As a member of the Outreach Task Force in 1997-99, Denise helped develop the MARS mentoring program and establish Meet Martians events during conferences. She served on the Planning Committee in 1994-95 and 1998-2002, chairing the group
from 1998 to 2000. During this time, she created “Martian-to-Martian Transmissions,” a Web-based publication of collective wisdom for MARS officers and committee chairs, including MARS Program Planning Advice, MARS Discussion Group/Forum Planning Advice, Publicity Avenues for MARS activities, Tips for Running/Attending MARS Executive Committee meetings and the Tickler file of MARS discussion/program topics. This document was a positive and definitive response to the ongoing need to acclimatize new Martians or experienced Martians to new roles quickly.

Since 1987, Denise has held the position of Reference Librarian, Engineering Selector and Online Coordinator at the Marston Science Library, University of Florida, Gainesville, where she has presented numerous training sessions and guest lectures on electronic resources. She received both her A.B. in psychology and her A.M.L.S. in library science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Denise has authored several articles, including “Managing Access to a Publisher Package: IEEE, IEL, and Xplore,” with John Matylonek, in *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship* 30 (Spring 2001) and “Archaeology and Evolution: What Happens when you Clean your Office,” in *College and Research Library News*, 63 (January 2002), p. 30. In the latter, Denise provides a humorous and poignant look at the changes in technology over the last dozen years, through the eyes of a student assistant who ponders artifacts discovered while cleaning out an office.

Denise continues to be active in both RUSA and MARS. As chair of the RUSA Organization Committee, Denise has been instrumental in guiding the MARS Section Review Task Force over the last year. At the same time, she Co-Chaired the Planning Committee for the very successful 2002 RUSA MARS Pre-Conference on Digital Reference@Your Library. Responding to high interest in this topic, the Planning Committee developed the pre-conference in record time. Denise’s contribution to this intense effort is emblematic of her dedication to the mission and goals of MARS. She is truly an outstanding “Favorite Martian.”

Doris Ann Sweet <dasweet@simmons.edu>  
MARS Awards Committee

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Nominations Sought for the MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate

It’ time to nominate your “Favorite Martian.” Submit your one page nomination to all of the Committee members listed below. Your nominee for the MARS Achievement Recognition Certificate should be a current member of MARS who has been active for the past two years. Criteria for nomination includes either service remarkable for sustained contributions toward attaining the goals of MARS or for making a single significant contribution that has resulted in a positive impact upon the work of the section. See the MARS Web page at

This year’s Awards Committee includes Doris Ann Sweet, chair (dasweet@simmons.edu); Denise Beaubien Bennett (dbennett@ufl.edu); Naomi Lederer (nlederer@manta.library.colostate.edu); Alesia McManus (am245@umail.umd.edu).

Managers in MARS Discussion Group

The “Managers in MARS Discussion Group” will meet at the ALA Midwinter Conference on Sunday, January 26, 2003 from 4:30-5:30pm.

The discussion topic will be “Security for Machine-assisted Reference.” Areas of discussion will include:
- Protecting computer equipment
- Backup systems and procedures
- Anti-virus software and Firewalls
- Acceptable Use Policies
- User Authentication procedures
- Confidentiality of access

For more information about the “Managers in MARS” Discussion Group, contact Kate Todd, Chair, at katetodd@juno.com.

The Virtual Reference Discussion Group will meet for the first time at Midwinter 2003, Saturday, 4:30-5:30 pm, to discuss issues that concern you. To facilitate conversation, attendees will break into small groups, partnered with an experienced virtual reference librarian. Please e-mail co-chair Jana Ronan (jronan@ufl.edu) with suggestions.

Jana Ronan, co-chair, jronan@ufl.edu

MARS-L Subscription Instructions

To subscribe to MARS-L, send the following message to listproc@ala.org (but leave the subject line blank):

subscribe mars-l Firstname Lastname