

**In This Issue**  
**“A Focus on Professionalism”**

**The Meaning of “Professionalism” in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

For more than 40 years, various individuals who work directly with volunteers, or authors and consultants who train and support those who do, have argued and debated the question of whether that work constitutes an actual profession. While most readers of *The IJOVA* would not hesitate to respond with a resounding “Yes!”, events and situations at the national and international levels during the past few years may have led some to perhaps be a little bit slower in sharing that response. Still, few if any can argue that contemporary volunteer resource managers (VRMs) are both individually and collectively actively working to improve and strengthen their knowledge, skills, and abilities so as to successfully engage volunteers in addressing critical issues and needs we face today as a society. But, how does the professionalism required of today’s VRMs compare with expectations from years past?

By providing insights into the answer to this question, this first issue of Volume XXVII opens with three excellent original *Feature Articles*, each of which contributes new ideas and strategies regarding professionalism among contemporary volunteer resource managers. Joseph Allen, Adrian Goh, Steven Rogelberg, and Anna Currie open the issue by discussing the increasingly important role of volunteer VRMs as “cyber marketers” (NOTE: my term . . . not the authors’) in attracting volunteers using the web. According to the authors, “web site improvement could not only benefit the volunteer program in terms of sheer numbers of volunteers, but research also indicates that nonprofit organizations that provided mission statements, organizational goals, and reports on a web site are able to raise more donations than those that used a sales approach.” Next, Sarah Jane Rehnborg, Christine Sinatra, and Angela Bies share important findings about the capacity of nonprofit organizations to actually manage volunteers. The authors conclude, “Volunteer resource managers should band together to bring greater attention to their needs and the importance of their role, including those related to training and continuing education, executive leadership support, and organizational resources.” Their article underscores the importance of the value of investments in volunteer resource management and highlights challenges unique to managing an unpaid workforce. In the third and final *Feature*, Richard Waters and Denise Bortree address the role of cybervolunteerism in today’s nonprofits, and outline a strategic approach that VRMs may use to introduce and/or expand the role of cyber volunteers in programs and services. The authors argue that “Given the increasing prevalence of technology in the lives of all Americans, volunteer resource managers should consider adopting the principles of the ROPES model to introduce cybervolunteerism into a nonprofit organization. By using currently available technology, nonprofit organizations could not only become more inclusive by reaching out to busy professionals who have valuable skills but cannot volunteer on site during normal operating hours, and to individuals with disabilities and others who may not have the abilities to volunteer on site.”

Two thought-provoking *Commentaries* examine professionalism among volunteer resource managers from two different perspectives. Tracy Connors argues for “strategic professional development” among VRMs and describes how such strategic professional development is inherently connected to the overall sustained excellence in and success of nonprofit organizations engaging volunteers. Connors concludes, “Expanded, visionary, strategic professional

development for current and future leaders of volunteer programs (including focused research to support that development) is our best hope to meet the increasing demands for improved human services, and to realize the inherent potential within human resource management and volunteer resource management to contribute substantially to achieving and sustaining organizational excellence.” Nancy Macduff and Ellen Netting discuss the role of “pracademics” and its implications for VRMs. According to the authors, “Whether it is through one person who can see both or in a collaboration that pulls from the strengths of engaged scholars and reflective practitioners, the “pracademic” way is to see both the forest and the trees as a integrated whole. We think the “pracademic” term is descriptive of what professionals who manage volunteer resources need to be in a highly complex world.”

In *From the Annals*, we are also pleased to reprint five articles published previously in *The Journal of Volunteer Administration*: “Volunteer Services Coordinators in the Seventies” by T.O. Wedel (first published in 1971); “Higher Education programs for Administrators of Volunteers” by J. Malcom Walker and David Horton Smith (published originally in 1977); “Continuing Professional education for Volunteer Administrators” by Joe Agnello (published in 1984); “Practical Volunteer Administrator professional development Strategies” by Robert F. Long (first published in 1992); and “Moving beyond the Volunteer Management System” by Mary V. Merrill (published originally in 2003).

I join the entire Editorial Board and Reviewers of *The International Journal of Volunteer Administration* in sharing this issue so that VRMs may strengthen their professional status and development within the context of our overarching nonprofit sector.

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