

Editor's note: Andy serves on the ITAL Editorial Board and as the ITAL website manager. He earns our gratitude every quarter with his timely and professional work to post the new issue online.

The title of this recurring column is "Editorial Board Thoughts," so as I sit here in the middle of February, what *am* I thinking about? As I trudge to work each day through the snow and ice, I think about what a nuisance it is to have a broken foot (I broke the fifth metatarsal of my left foot at the Midwinter Meeting in Boston—not recommended) but most recently I've been thinking about *ITAL*.

The March issue is due to be mailed in a couple of weeks, and I got the digITAL files a week or so ago. In a few days I'll have to start separating the PDF into individual articles, and then I'll start up my Web editor to turn the RTF files for each article into nicely formatted HTML. All of this gets fed into ALA's content management system, where you can view it online by pointing your Web browser to <http://www.lita.org/ala/mgrps/divs/lita/ITAL/ITALinformation.cfm>. In case you didn't realize it, the full text of each issue of *ITAL* is there, going back to early 2004. Selected full-text articles are available from earlier issues going back to 2001. The site is in need of a face lift, but we expect to work on that in the near future.

Starting with the September 2008 issue of *ITAL* we launched *ITALica*, the *ITAL* blog at <http://ITAL-ica.blogspot.com/>, as a pilot. *ITALica* was conceived as a forum for readers, authors, and editors of *ITAL* to discuss each issue. For a year and a half we've been open for reader feedback, and our authors have been posting to the blog and responding to reader comments. What's your opinion of *ITALica*? Is it useful? What could we be doing to enhance its usefulness?

In reality we haven't had a great deal of communication via the blog. We are looking at moving *ITALica* from Blogger to a platform more integrated with existing ALA or LITA services. Is a blog format the best way to encourage discussion? When I look at the LITA Blog ([\[lita.blog.org/\]\(http://lita.blog.org/\)\) I see that there are occasional posts, but there are rarely comments and little in the way of real discussion. It seems to be oriented toward announcements, so perhaps it's not a good comparison with *ITALica*. Some ALA groups are using WordPress for their blogs, a few with user comments, but mostly without much apparent traffic \(for example, the LL&M Online blog, <http://www.lama.ala.org/LLandM>\). In general, blogs don't seem to be a satisfactory platform for discussion. Wikis aren't particularly useful in this regard, either, so I think that rules out the LITA Wiki \(\[http://wikis.ala.org/lita/index.php/Main_Page\]\(http://wikis.ala.org/lita/index.php/Main_Page\)\). I've looked at ALA Connect \(<http://connect.ala.org/>\), which has a variety of Web 2.0 features, so it might be a good home for *ITALica*.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

We could also use a mailing list, either one that already exists, such as LITA-L, or a new one. The one advantage e-mail has is that it is delivered to the reader, so one doesn't have to remember to visit a website. We already have RSS feeds for the *ITALica* blog, so maybe that works well enough as a notification for those who subscribe to them.

I've also wondered whether a discussion forum (aka message board) would be useful. I frequent a few software-related forums, and I find them conducive to discussion. They have a degree of flexibility lacking in other platforms. It's easy for any participant to start up a new topic rather than limiting discussion only to topics posted by the owner, as is usually the case with blogs. Frankly I'd like to encourage discussion on topics beyond only the articles published in *ITAL*. For example, we used to have columns devoted to book and software reviews. Even though they were discontinued, those could still be interesting topics for discussion between *ITAL* readers.

In writing this, my hope is to get feedback from you, the reader, about what *ITAL* and *ITALica* could be doing for you. How can we use ALA Connect in ways that would be useful? Could we use other platforms to do things beyond simply discussing articles that appear in the print edition? What social Web technologies do you use, and how could we apply them to *ITAL*?

After you read this, I hope you'll join us at *ITALica* for a discussion. Let us know what you think.

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