

Letter from the Outgoing Editor

In May 2025, *C&RL* published the article “Respecting Privacy of Thought in DEI Training,” by Kristin Antelman.¹ This letter is in response to correspondence received on the article, including one letter to the editor,² an open letter on ACRLog,³ and social media commentary. On behalf of the journal and myself as Editor, I would like to address questions that have arisen regarding the review process and how this article was published.

The *C&RL* Editor’s role involves examining submissions to decide if they get sent to peer review and then sending them to at least two peer reviewers, who then send their comments and recommendation decisions. The Editor selects peer reviewers based on their research and other professional interests within their reviewer profile information. Currently, there are more than 100 peer reviewers for the journal. *C&RL* does not use, nor does it permit its reviewers to use, artificial intelligence of any kind as part of the peer review process.⁴ After analyzing reviewer comments and recommendations, the Editor makes the final decision on what gets published.

In the current publication workflow model, *C&RL* Editorial Board members are consulted with the Editor’s discretion to draw on their collective expertise in an advisory role and as individual reviewers. The Editorial Board, which “serves in an advisory capacity to the editor on the contents of the journal issues and board members form the core of referees, reviewing manuscripts submitted for possible publication,” does not see submissions as they arrive, and they do not make editorial decisions on what gets published.

For increased transparency in communicating this process, I published a 2024 editorial about *C&RL* peer review, which includes the questions that reviewers respond to when reviewing a manuscript.⁵ For more details about *C&RL*’s review process, please visit the Author Guidelines [Submissions](#) page or the [C&RL Guidance for Reviewers](#) LibGuide.

In light of *C&RL*’s editorial processes outlined above, as Editor I take accountability for publishing the article in question. That said, as part of the peer review process with all article submissions, the Editor’s decision is strongly influenced by the reviewers’ comments. Sometimes reviewers have very different or divergent recommendations. From there, the Editor sifts through the reviewer forms and uses their own input in synthesis to make an editorial decision. After that decision is made, reviewer comments, along with any recommendations that the Editor has for the author, are sent to the author with a publication decision.

In addition to questions about the editorial process, we received comments suggesting or recommending that the article be retracted. To discuss, the Editorial Board, ACRL staff and the current *C&RL* Editor met on June 2 and on June 16. In conversations with the *C&RL* editorial team, we referred to and consulted the Committee on Publication Ethics’ (COPE) Retraction Guidelines,⁶ and ALA’s draft of Publication Ethics for ALA Journals,⁷ among other resources and suggestions. I shared the reviewers’ decisions and my own for transparency and accountability. Although the Editorial Board members’ recommendations were not all in agreement with each other, I used the discussion to make a decision. From discussion and two online platforms for anonymously contributing input, concerns and questions among the Editorial Board and ACRL staff, I decided to not retract the article.

While I do not personally agree with all the author's points, that does not mean that it should not be published, as the role of Editor is not to agree with all author viewpoints but rather to provide an appropriate forum for a wide range of scholarly ideas to be shared with our profession. It was with a sincere, optimistic hope that this article would spur constructive dialogue to openly debate with reason and respect, an opportunity for a larger conversation for self-reflection and awareness of internal biases. I recognize that this letter may not satisfy all readers' questions or concerns about this article, but I can only share how it was published and my own thoughts as former Editor, with the intention of addressing everyone with respect. In the current political environment in the United States, I can see how the argument in this article could be interpreted as anti-DEI in its premise. I apologize to all who have found this article offensive or harmful.

Before this article was published and perhaps even more pressing now, incoming Editor Michelle Demeter, the Editorial Board, and I have been having conversations and working toward changes within *C&RL* to make our editorial processes such as peer review more transparent, equitable, and efficient. Some of these conversations and projects involve the consideration of additional editorial staff positions, ways to improve the peer review process, and ways to make the journal's publication process more transparent for all *C&RL* readers and authors. These changes may involve implementing or changing processes to improve and distribute internal workflows while clarifying to authors and readers the work that is underway. Regardless, these changes will take time, and the incoming Editor and Editorial Board are just getting started. As they make progress, there will be updates, but more importantly, hopefully noticeable changes by authors, reviewers, and readers. Thank you, *C&RL* readers and authors for what you bring to this publication and to our profession.

~ Kristen Totleben

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Outgoing *C&RL* Editor (2022-2025)

Notes

1. Antelman, K. (2025). Respecting Privacy of Thought in DEI Training. *College & Research Libraries*, 86(3), 430–448. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.86.3.430>
2. Smith, E. (2025). Letter to the Editor. *College & Research Libraries*, 86(4), 532.
3. Anonymous (2025 May 27). Open letter to CRL from the academic wing of #CripLib. *ACRLlog*. <https://acrlog.org/2025/05/27/open-letter-to-crl-from-the-academic-wing-of-criplib/>
4. Demeter, M., Ho, A., and Lockaby, M. (2025). Introducing C&RL's Generative AI Policy. *College & Research Libraries*, 86(3), 374. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.86.3.374>
5. Totleben, K. (2024). A Peek into C&RL's Peer Review Process. *College & Research Libraries*, 85(2), 142. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.85.2.142>
6. COPE Council. COPE Guidelines: Retraction Guidelines. November 2019. <https://doi.org/10.24318/cope.2019.1.4> © 2019 Committee on Publication Ethics (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) <https://publicationethics.org>
7. American Library Association, "ALA CD#32," Virtual, LLX, and Annual Conference Council Meetings." Accessed June 10, 2025, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/virtual-llx-and-annual-conference-council-meetings-0>. Please note that ALA Journal Publication Ethics will be published in American Library Association's "ALA Policy Manual." Accessed June 10, 2025. <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual>

Letter to the Editor

As a librarian at the University of California Santa-Barbara, I wish to address the publication of the article by former UCSB University Librarian Kristin Antelman.¹ Ms. Antelman criticizes DEI trainings' standardized vocabulary and practices through the lens of "cognitive liberty." I would challenge the application of this term which originated with Duke Professor of Law and Philosophy Nita A. Farahany. Dr. Farahany's work revolves neither around DEI principles nor other advocacy, but rather relates to near-future surveillance via neuroscience.

Other questionable applications of sources include a 1961 text by Dr. Jay Lifton which Ms. Antelman fails to correctly cite. The phrase "thought-terminating clichés" tacitly compares DEI initiatives to Lifton's focus on persecution and brainwashing within Maoist China or (if meant to cite the author's 1989 edition) fundamentalist extremists and cults. It becomes impossible to accept the author's attack on DEI principles and methodology in good faith. Advocating for a backwards trajectory in this perilous time for the profession is not only short-sighted. Rather, the article's publication itself smacks of a disingenuous approach to the advocacy principles established by our professional bodies including our flagship organizations of ALA, ACRL, and ARL themselves.

~ Erin Sweeney Smith

Note

1. Antelman, K. (2025). Respecting Privacy of Thought in DEI Training. *College & Research Libraries*, 86(3), 430–448. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.86.3.430>.