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vol. 10, no. 2

information outlook

February 2006

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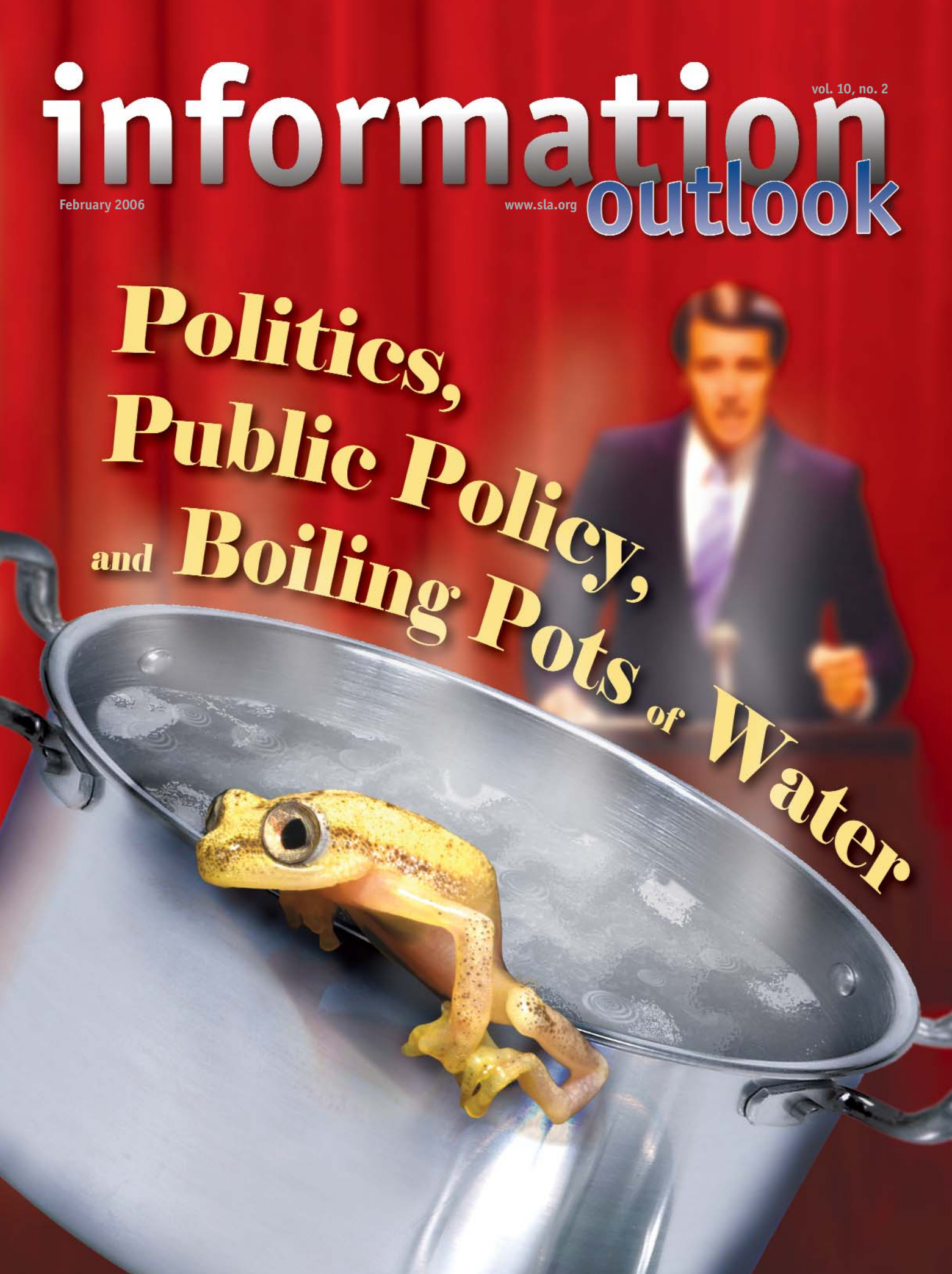
Politics, Public Policy, and Boiling Pots of Water



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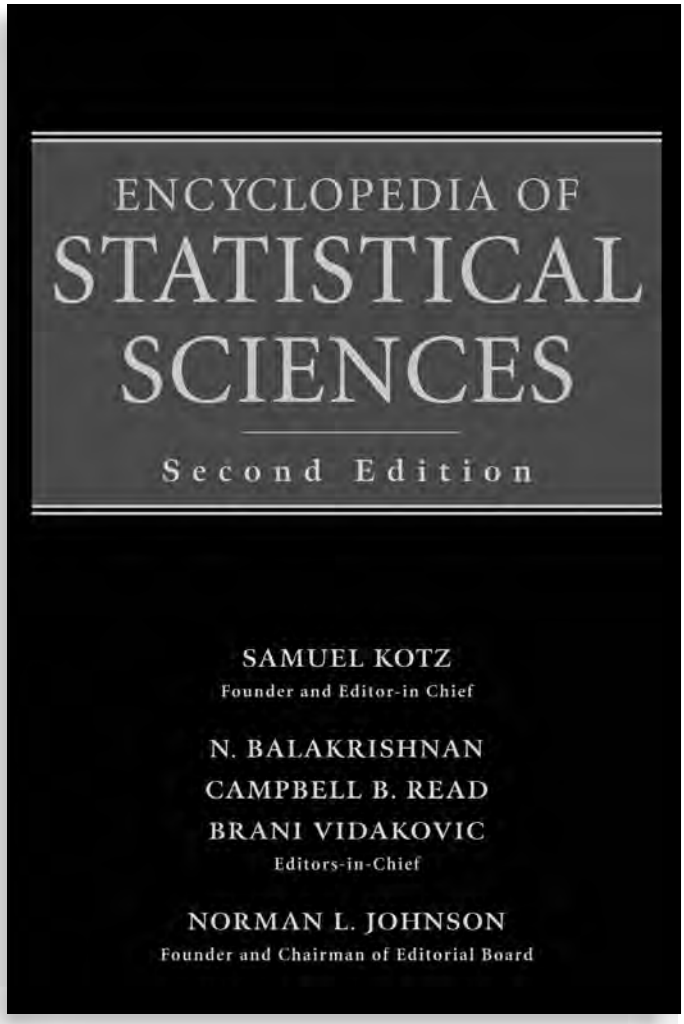

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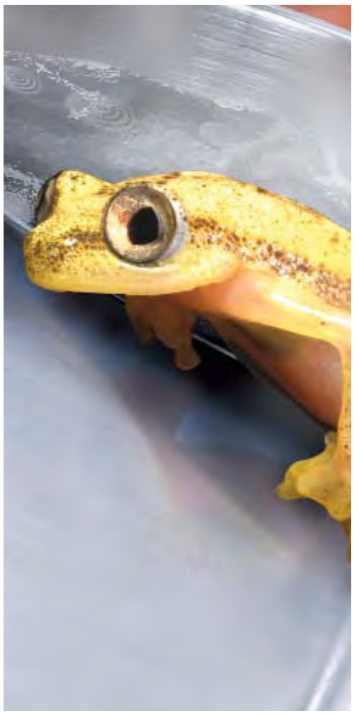
table of contents

Features



10

A High School Library Volunteer Follows Her Dream
By Forrest Glenn Spencer

15

Politics, Public Policy, and Boiling Pots of Water
By Douglas W. Newcomb, CAE

23

Market Research for Libraries
By Samantha Chmelik

27

The Learning Engine
By Deb Wallace, Ph.D.

31

CoPs—Developing Relationships, Fostering Learning
An interview with Vicki Hornus

Columns and Departments

5

Executive Outlook
The Future Is Coming—Fast!
By Janice R. Lachance

6

SLA News

6

Web Sites Worth a Click
By Carolyn J. Sosnowski

8

Business Management
Integrating the New Librarian into Your Library
By Debbie Schachter

36

Copyright Corner
The Section 108 Study Group
By Lesley Ellen Harris

37

Coming Events/Ad Index

38

Information Tech
43 Things I (or You) Might Want to Do This Year
By Stephen Abram

40

Information Management
What's New about Innovation?
By John R. Latham

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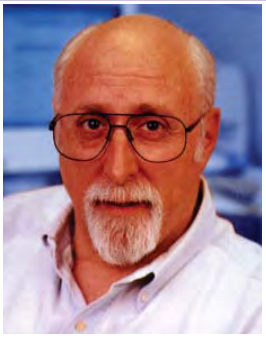

Walt Mossberg
The Wall Street Journal

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The Future Is Coming—Fast!

Janice R. Lachance

With 2006 in full swing, we now look to harness the momentum of a successful SLA Leadership Summit in Houston and make some great things happen. There are lots of issues on the table for us to discuss in the coming weeks and months—many regarding the future of the profession.

I shared something with SLA leaders in Houston that I had read recently. The 23 January issue of *Business Week* features a cover story on the rise of mathematicians in the business world. In particular, the article focuses on how they are addressing the use of information to achieve organizational goals. I highly recommend the article to anyone who wishes to get a glimpse of the future taking place today, but here's what struck me as I read it during my flight to Houston.

The article begins with an introduction to Neal Goldman, a "math entrepreneur." He works on Wall Street, but his focus these days is on the world of words, rather than numbers. His startup company is called Inform Technologies, and it is developing an innovative analytic tool. To quote the article: "Every day it combs through thousands of press articles and blog posts in English. It reads them and groups them with related pieces. Inform doesn't do this work alphabetically or by keywords. It uses algorithms to analyze each article by its language and context. It then sends customized news feeds to its users, who also exist in Inform's system as—you guessed it—math. Mr. Goldman refers to his innovation as a "robotic librarian."

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to your future.

These kinds of changes are going to come at us at an alarming pace. They will remind us that we cannot afford to sit still, to rest on our laurels, to presume that our value is a constant. It also points out that living, working, and growing cannot be done by continually looking in the rearview mirror. We must be aggressive in the effort to prepare the minds of the profession for these challenges and to promote the value of the profession to the world. We must commit ourselves to doing whatever it takes to guarantee a healthy future for the profession.

Our 2005 successes will propel several new initiatives in 2006. Click University will continue to garner significant attention as it begins to fire "on all cylinders." A new Web interface for Click U will make the site more user-friendly and visually appealing. And we've already begun to consolidate all of our learning services under its banner, with the SLA Virtual Learning Series now becoming a part of the Click University Live! Series. They will be available only to members of SLA, so this is one more example of how we can increase the value of your membership dues.

SLA 2006 in Baltimore will be structured a little differently this year to maximize your time there. Our opening general session, for example, will take place on Sunday evening, June 11. Look for more announcements on new and exciting changes to our conference structure. (You can start planning your time in Baltimore right now. This issue of *Information Outlook* is accompanied by a special supplement that includes advance information on conference programming and events.)

We will also be conducting several strategic campaigns:

- We will work to define the value of membership so that we can shape services that will keep you involved.
- We will engage in a major push to recruit new members to the association and retain existing members.
- We will promote the value and values of the profession to executives and hiring professionals in organizations.
- We will participate in policy debates that will affect the profession at large.

As we move forward on these initiatives, the momentum from a successful 2005 gives us some advantages that, otherwise, we would not have.

First, we have completed our third consecutive year with an operating net surplus. To keep things moving forward, our finance team, led by Chief Financial Officer Nancy Sansalone, is working to modernize the structure of SLA's finances. In addition, the board approved a change in the association's reserve fund strategy that guarantees a fallback reserve two and a half times greater than the standard practice for nonprofit associations. Any funds above that level are being invested in new services that will directly benefit the membership.

Second, we are increasing our focus on the use of technology to enhance your membership experience. I know many of you have probably had issues with some of the technology-oriented services deployed by SLA headquarters. Just like any organization that takes risks, some of our efforts have flourished, while others have struggled. The Board of Directors and I are committed to the pursuit of technological excellence and experimentation. In October, the board formed a Technology Review Advisory Group of SLA members who are committed to helping the cause.

We seek to acquire back-office systems and technologies that make the commercial, accounting, and customer service-related components of our operations as efficient as we can afford. But we also want to acquire the kinds of technologies that you can use to enhance your interaction with other members around the world. We invite any SLA member to work with us to make sure this effort succeeds.

Third, and possibly most important, we are staying committed to our strategy, which has evolved but maintained the course of focusing on the delivery of learning, networking, and advocacy for the profession and our strategic partners. Consistent leadership in disruptive times is essential to achieving success.

I think you'll agree that the results are showing.

web sites worth a click

By Carolyn J. Sosnowski, MLIS

Rotten Tomatoes

www.rottentomatoes.com

We all peruse movie reviews in our local newspapers, but sometimes I want to know what critics in other cities and forums think about a film I'm about to spend $10 to see. The short quotes that appear in commercials and print ads ("You Must See This Movie!") don't always give the full story. And that's where Rotten Tomatoes comes in. The site boasts more than 120,000 film titles, both current and on video/DVD, and over 600,000 searchable reviews. Really. Blurbs of critics' reviews are linked to the original sources—ranging from *The New York Times* to *Film Threat*. The Tomatometer (yes, you read that right) is a quick way to gauge the sentiments of the reviews—a fresh red tomato denotes that 60% of the reviews for a particular title are positive, and a green splat means that the movie is not recommended. In addition to film reviews, there are plenty of other sections worth visiting—celebrity information, industry news, video game reviews, and an online store for items like movie posters and DVDs (the latter with a price comparison feature). "Top Movies" lists satisfy those trivia needs, and there's even a section devoted to the critics, whose faces we so seldom see.

ASAE's Gateway to Associations

www.asaenet.org/AssociationSearch.cfm

Besides searching the usual proprietary databases and the Internet, where do you look for industry information? Don't forget about associations. These organizations can provide research direction at the very least, and on-target statistics and published reports on many occasions. The American Society of Association Executives maintains this directory, which is especially helpful if you don't have the Encyclopedia of Associations in your information center. Users may search by subject, keyword, and/or geographic area; directory listings include a link to associations' sites. Updated daily, the Gateway to Associations is an easy-to-use resource that helps you get acquainted with unfamiliar subject matter.

sla news

SLA's Top Staff Title Changed to CEO

SLA has changed the title of its top staff executive from Executive Director to Chief Executive Officer.

The Honorable Janice R. Lachance is the first association staff leader to hold the CEO title. She has been the top staff executive since 2003.

"The executive director's role as external communicator and collaborator with the profession's stakeholders has evolved substantially," SLA President Pam Rollo said in a written announcement to SLA's volunteer leadership. "This role requires increasing interaction and engagement with the top leaders of corporations, universities, government agencies, and other associations. Having a CEO as the top staff executive for SLA means that doors may often open more easily for us."

The title change, approved by SLA's Association Office Operations Committee became effective January 1. Rollo said the announcement was delayed so that the matter could be announced first to the SLA volunteer leadership during the Leadership Summit in Houston, January 18-21.

Janice R. Lachance, Esq., is the 13th person to serve as top executive on SLA's professional staff. She has more than 20 years of experience in public service and governance. From 1997-2001, Lachance served as director (CEO) of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the federal government's independent human resources agency, which provides policy and program leadership for 1.8 million federal employees. She was appointed to the position by then-President Bill Clinton and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Recognizing the importance of the federal government as a model employer, President Clinton advanced Lachance's post to cabinet status, giving her the standing and support needed to elevate human capital issues to the highest possible priority.

Government Information Pros: A Diversity of Roles

First of a two parts

By Peggy Garvin and Richard Huffine

The relatively new SLA Government Information Division (DGI) provides connections for information professionals who support government institutions and for those outside of the government sector who use local, state, federal, and international government information to support their clients. Since it was established in October 2004, DGI has attracted nearly 200 members from all levels of government, from the private and non-profit sectors, and from SLA chapters around the globe.

As a way of introducing the new division, we interviewed a handful of our earliest members, asking them about their work and their interests. These members include new and seasoned practitioners whose careers involve reference, research, records management, information technology, information center management, knowledge organization, and—as you will see—much more.

Within their specialties, these members share many of the same concerns of the profession at large, such as the organization and preservation of digital records and the evolution of the library from a physical space to a virtual service. They also share a passion

and commitment about the work they do for their constituencies and in advancing their agencies' missions. Meet some of our members and get a taste of what is going on in the world of government information today.

Tom Rink, officer/information specialist, Tulsa (Oklahoma) Police Department

Tom Rink's job with the Tulsa Police Department has had him both patrolling the streets and tracking down fugitive documents. Rink began his post-college life as a police officer. He later earned an MLIS from the University of Oklahoma while contemplating a career change, never imagining he would be able to combine the two professions. Rink says, "When an opportunity presented itself to build a library for the police department, I jumped at the chance." He founded the department's Resource Center in 1994, an accomplishment he describes as "a great and rewarding experience," and he continues to manage it.

Rink's multitasking goes beyond his unique officer/librarian role. He develops curricula for the department's training academy, conducts planning and policy development for the department, and assists with technical writing for proposals. He also coordinates the department's "Managing Law Enforcement Initiatives" program, a structured project management approach to generating ideas for reducing crime and developing the best proposals into funded, implemented programs. Aside from the non-traditional tasks, Rink does everything a solo librarian does: "reference, collection development, circulation, administration…I get to do it all!" One of his most gratifying roles recently was being the "go-to guy" for finding the numerous elusive documents needed by the department for its national accreditation, which was granted. On the reference front, he faces ongoing challenges in finding homeland security information from the federal, state, and local levels at a time when the information source—the homeland security bureaucracy—is in a steady state of change.

Rink is an SLA Fellow and has been very active in the association nationally and at the Oklahoma chapter level. He is president of the Oklahoma chapter.

Peggy Garvin is division chair-elect of the Government Information Division and president of Garvin Information Consulting; Richard Huffine is division chair and the web analytics manager of firstgov.gov for the U.S. General Services Administration. Both work with U.S. federal government information in Washington, DC.

Coming in the March Information Outlook: More Government Information Division member profiles.

Other SLA divisions are welcome to contact Information Outlook about profiling their activities and members. Send an e-mail to jadams@sla.org with the subject line DIVISION PROFILE.

web sites worth a click

Exploratorium

www.exploratorium.edu

The online presence of San Francisco's "museum of science, art, and human perception" is an experience itself, offering facts and fun through interesting articles, interactive features, and various multimedia tools. Although one might think of this site as the perfect source of activities for kids (who will get some great ideas for science projects), adults will find that mind-bending puzzles may help them think "outside the box" in their workday lives. The digital library offers resources for educational use. In addition to an "asset" database, in which there are over 11,000 documents, images, movies, and sounds, educators (and parents) can also search the Learning Resources Collection for activities and view webcasts related to the museum's exhibits.

Links to Literary Weblogs

www.complete-review.com/links/bloglink.htm

These days, many of us use blogs to keep up with work stuff—the information industry or the subject matter that we research on a daily basis. How many of you read (or write) blogs for pleasure? Here's a good site for finding blogs that focus on literature. If you are looking for some new authors to read or want to know what people are saying about the latest by Zadie Smith, you'll find what you are looking for through this site. Think of these blogs as virtual book groups, attended by readers across the world who love books enough to share them.

APQC

www.apqc.org

Once known as the American Productivity and Quality Center, APQC helps organizations (both for- and nonprofit) succeed by providing research (case studies, white papers, etc.) in the areas of benchmarking/best practices, knowledge management, metrics, performance measurement, and professional development. Although some of its resources are available only to members (your company might be one), there are many articles and other tools that may be accessed for free. The bookstore offers materials on topics like competitive intelligence, customer satisfaction, communities of practice, and training, which are of value both to your library and your company as a whole.

Carolyn Sosnowski, MLIS, is an information specialist at SLA.

Integrating the New Librarian into Your Library

By Debbie Schachter

When you post a job opening for a librarian with your library, you have probably already decided what level of experience/expertise you require for this position. The unique attributes of each candidate who applies for a position you post, whether those be in respect to the professional, education, or personal realm, give you the opportunity to consider candidates for reasons that extend beyond their match to the posted requirements. This is true for new librarians, who by definition have no professional librarian experience, but many other skills or work experiences they can draw upon.

Today, we should all be aware that it may be equally difficult for the new graduate as well as those with many years of experience to find a permanent position, or indeed any position, in some markets. So you may find quite an avalanche of applicants for any professional position you post, regardless of the years of experience you seek. If your position is one best suited to a new graduate, you will generally be clear about that in your expectations as far as years of experience and particular skills or abilities, and these requirements will probably match the compensation level you are offering.

Why would you decide to hire a new graduate/new librarian to fill this role? It's probably because the position is an entry-level professional position, a position that is ideal for someone with the current and cutting-edge library school training that the new graduate will have, in addition to being a learning position. It may also be your philosophy to support new graduates within your organization, or the simple fact that you have the opportunity to create a new entry position with a salary appropriate to that level. Regardless of why you have determined that you need a new librarian for this position, there is specific work that you must do to ensure the effective integration of the new graduate into your library and, in effect, into the workforce.

As we all know, new librarians have a wide range of skills and unique backgrounds. Many will have come to librarianship with a wealth of experience, either personal or professional, from a variety of backgrounds. New graduates may either have very little library work experience, or in any workplace, having been at school continuously from high school graduation. On the other hand, many library school students are entering library school as a second career, or after a number of years specifically in library settings, only not as a librarian. In any case, the new graduate will have a unique background to bring to your library environment.

Individual librarians' expectations as to their new position will differ, most notably based on whether they are beginning their first professional position, or whether they are entering the workforce for the first time. You will have to be aware of and prepared for the amount of support you must provide, to assist not only in integrating a new employee into your organization, but also in assisting the new graduate with the experience of entering the professional work world.

The orientation process is the most important factor in the successful integration of the new librarian. This process involves several key components and, depending on the type of position, may take some time to complete. Some of the components to this include

- Culture integration
- Expectations for the position
- Feedback
- Ongoing mentorship

Integration

One of the major components of integrating the new librarian into your library is to familiarize the new librarian with the organizational culture of your workplace. This part of the orientation is actually equally important for the new graduate as for those who have experience in the work world. At the same time, the other library staff members will need to perceive that the new librarian is becoming aware of and begins to adapt to the library culture. Your assistance in helping the new librarian to understand "how things work around here" is as important as an early success factor as is their understanding of what the responsibilities of the position is. Expectations are explicit for the type and amount of work that is accomplished by each staff member, but often the implicit culture of how staff members interact, whether your library is a family oriented organization, entrepreneurial, or hierarchical, is not always clear to the new employee. Especially the new librarian who has little workplace experiences to draw upon, it is important to help them to succeed with other staff members by helping them to understand the culture.

Expectations

As the library manager you need to be thoroughly clear as to your expectations for the position. This begins even before you post and hire, when you are deciding what responsibilities the new staff member will have. Only then do you post for an appropriate person to fill this position. Once you have hired the new librarian, you need to be very specific

Debbie Schachter has a master's degree in library science and a master's degree in business administration. She is the associate executive director of the Jewish Family Service Agency in Vancouver, British Columbia, where she is responsible for financial management, human resources, database and IT systems, and grant application management. Schachter has more than 15 years' experience in management and supervision, technology planning and support, in a variety of nonprofit and for-profit settings. She can be reached at dschachter@jfsa.ca.

about the actual work and related expectations. New librarians need to understand the milestones for projects and for their learning process, and the support they will receive to achieve their goals.

If you have a performance management system in place you will probably have little difficulty conveying this type of information. You will probably have feedback mechanisms in place for both you as the supervisor and the new employee to check in with each other on progress. If you don't have a formal performance management system, you will need to be clear with the new librarian from the beginning as to what the work entails and how you will be working together to monitor progress. Having a fairly specific schedule, and a list of activities, in the earliest days, is often the best way to orient new librarians and to have them on track for their individual responsibilities, once their orientation is completed.

Feedback

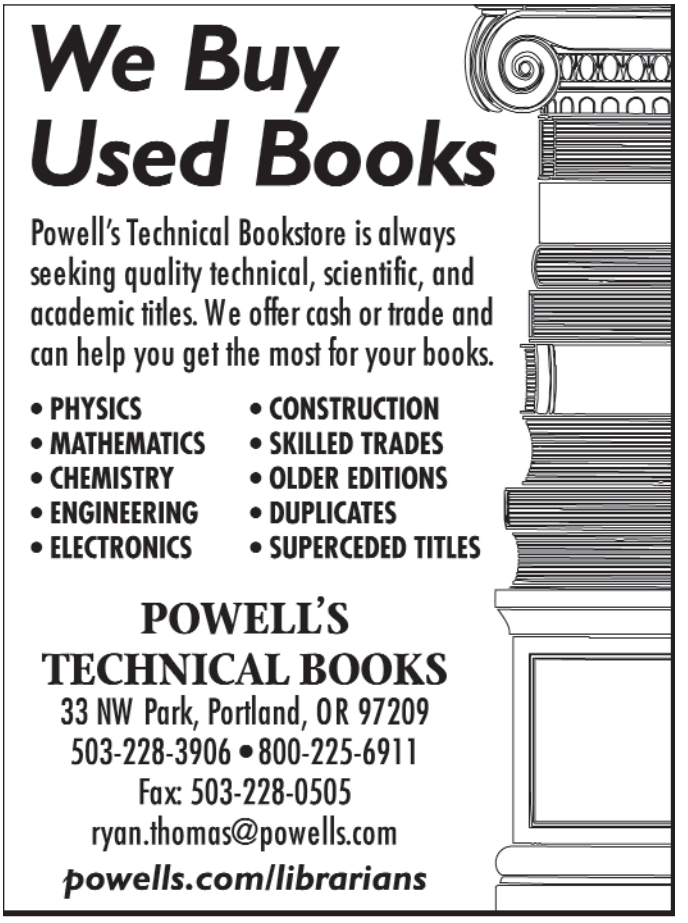
New librarians also need to be assisted in their progress by providing them with feedback methods and identification of milestones and goals. This, of course, is true for all employees but the new graduate may have little understanding of how to give and receive feedback in the work world. Supervisors also need to ensure that goals and responsibilities are challenging enough for the new librarian, especially if the position is a new entry-level position. Make sure that you have developed the position appropriately for the new librarian you have hired. This may mean changing the position's responsibilities early in the librarian's tenure with you, to better take advantage of unique skills and talents. For example, if your new librarian has a communications background, perhaps they should be recruited to assist in writing user manuals, library marketing/communications, or Website communications, even though the original job description didn't include these expectations. Make sure that you meet regularly with the new employee to give and receive feedback. If systems don't seem to work for the new librarian, ask them for suggestions for improving them. Their expertise and fresh eyes are important assets to the library, so they should feel comfortable in your system of receiving and providing feedback.

Mentorship

Mentorship is also an important factor to the new graduate's success, and can be provided by a colleague or seasoned librarian, rather than solely by the new librarian's supervisor or manager. Often having someone act as mentor who is not in a direct line of supervision is useful for the new librarian's development. Depending on the size of the library or larger organization this may not always be possible.

A new graduate who is also new to the professional work world may have double the need for a mentor. New graduates will benefit from an experienced librarian's or manager's perspective and your professional expertise to help them in their new position. Not only for career development but simply helping the new librarian to understand professional work environments, behaviors, and means of requesting and receiving feedback from supervisors and colleagues to ensure their success.

Providing the new librarian with structure, support, and with enough responsibility and challenges in their earliest days will help to integrate them into your library and help them to feel that they are successfully contributing to library goals. Make sure you don't make assumptions about new librarians' lack of skills or general knowledge, just because they haven't worked as a librarian before. Draw upon their expertise in educational areas and personal or previous workplace experience and develop mentorship for them so they can understand how better to contribute and develop as a librarian. It is a fine balance between too much monitoring and not enough support for the new librarian, but if you create a structure of support, from providing a project for them as part of their introduction to your library, you will help to ensure their growth and success.



SLA Member Profile
Jessica Baumgart

Joined SLA: 1999
Job Title: Information Resources Specialist
Employer: Harvard University Office of News and Public Affairs
Experience: "It all depends on how you count. I consider myself to have been in the profession for 15 years: four years volunteering in high school, plus three years working part-time in college, plus three years part-time in grad school, plus five years at Harvard. Many of our colleagues only count the last five years as being valid, though, since I earned my MALIS five years ago."
Education: MALIS, May 2000, University of Wisconsin Madison; BA, May 1997, Newberry College, Newberry, SC, Magna cum Laude
First LIS job: Volunteering at high school library
Biggest Challenge: Doing all the things on her "someday I'll do this" list.

A High School Library Volunteer Follows Her Dream

By Forrest Glenn Spencer

People tend to have the illusion that they choose their careers in life. It's a common misconception. Each of us truly believes that we have looked logically at the best choices available based upon likes, available schooling, growth potential, salary requirements, perks, and then pursued it.

Nothing can be farther from the truth; the reality is that we do not choose our life's work. It chooses us. It attracts us, draws us in, and, once ensnared, one cannot imagine any other way of life. That is a fact recognized early on.

We may choose employers and job offers, but not the profession. Somewhere, at some point in time, in each of our lives, there was a seed that germinated, was then cultivated, harvested, and reaped—as it was for Jessica Baumgart, the prolific information resource specialist at Harvard University.

Upon reviewing her work and career it is little wonder that she was the winner of the 2005 SLA Boston Chapter Achievement Award, honored for her tireless advocacy for the use and usefulness of blogs and RSS news feeds in special libraries and for her work spanning several years on the Boston Chapter Logistics Committee. Baumgart is the youngest to date ever to have won this award in an SLA chapter. And yet it began with the attraction of the library profession and the information industry early in her life, and her career has been one in the fulfillment of her dreams from the opportunities before her.

Jessica Baumgart, 30, was born in DeKalb, Ill., the youngest of four children, in the former Kishwaukee country, a once renowned frontier trading region known for its abundant forestry, wildlife, and Native American villages. Her time in northern Illinois was short; her family moved to Summerville, an idyllic southern community along a pine-forested ridge outside of Charleston, S.C., It was here, during her high school days in the early 1990s, that her track in life was being laid.

"I was volunteering at my high school library all four years," Baumgart recalled. "I'm one of those odd librarians that by the time I was a sophomore I figured out I wanted to be a librarian."

First Mentors

It was at her high school that the first mentors entered her life. "The high school I went to was quite large so that we had two campuses connected loosely by a path. The first two years I worked with Buddy Willis and Dr. Sandra Parker. They were anything but the typical librarian stereotypes. They were very appreciative of their student volunteers; they were just fun people. I later moved up to the main campus. I worked with head librarian Polly Bing and she was a very incredible woman—high energy, enthusiastic, loved her job.

"Meeting and working with these people right off the bat was inspirational. I had a friend who had been working in the libraries as a student volunteer but she didn't get along with one of the librarians and didn't return. And if I had an experience like that then I might have chosen a totally different career."

The blogosphere might be less than engaging—but that's for later. After high school, the instinctive and industrious nature of Baumgart began to emerge and be nurtured further at the small, private Evangelical Lutheran college of Newberry in the central Piedmont region of South Carolina. It was at Newberry that she decided to become a theological librarian. At Newberry she found the people and the library environment rich and special.

"At Newberry I worked with a woman named Victoria Horst and she was wonderful, very enthusiastic," Baumgart said. "The college wasn't computerized and we were way behind the times, so I learned how to file a card catalog as a student worker. The library staff was really great; mostly, there were too few students who wanted to be a librarian so when they found one like me they would say, 'Oh, wow, let us teach you how to do this and show you some other things.'"

Attending a private institution, she able to immerse herself in many activities that stimulated her interests and many that would propel her career, such as joining the various campus publications. "I enjoy writing and I identify very strongly in being a writer. There were about 500 students at Newberry and it was very easy to get involved." Baumgart wrote for the school newspaper and worked on the literary magazine for four years, serving as an editor. After Newberry, she returned to the Midwest for her master's degree at the University of Wisconsin Madison. With her family coming from Chicago and the Midwest, it seemed a natural decision. "It was one of the library schools I was looking at and things just worked out for me to go there. They also have fabulous caramel-apple ice cream and lakes, which doesn't hurt as incentives."

It was at UWM that Baumgart earned her master of arts in library and information studies and where her interests in technological applications within LIS ensnared her. She soon secured a student job at UWM's Memorial Library. "The bulk of the position was actually caring for a collection of 20,000 to 25,000 files of newspaper clippings and magazine articles," she recalled. "It is a really nice collection that is historically valuable. I got a lot of hands-on experience working with a really unique collection."

On to HTML

Always with a strong interest in computers, Baumgart and her fellow students felt they were getting the experience that employers were looking for—then she saw a position for Web page editor advertised at the library for someone to do some editing for one of the bibliographers for South and Southeast Asia guides.

"It was one of those things where the bibliographer wanted me to update some Web pages and do some redesigns," said Baumgart. "She had everything pretty much laid out in what she wanted to do, me just being a code monkey. Word started to spread around the department that she's got this person who is doing HTML and then other bibliographers went to her asking to borrow her student for their guides to be updated on the Web. So I ended up working on the European Union guide as well. That was a fun, learning experience. When I was on the job market anyone who saw my résumé was more interested in my Web skills than my experience in libraries. Over and over again I heard, 'Oh! You know HTML!' That always cracked me up."

Her three years of studies propelled her a new career level, but what she learned best didn't come from the classroom.

"I've been in these discussions lately on the future of LIS education and there were four people who talked about the library programs they went to, and one of the things I saw in library school was that having hands-on, practical library experience was incredibly valuable. One of the strengths of the program at Wisconsin is that they offer lots of opportunities for a practicum. In fact, they require a practicum as opposed to a thesis, which many other programs offer. And when I was applying to schools I didn't think too much about, 'Gee, do I want to write a

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thesis or do a practicum?' It just didn't enter my mind at all, but I think getting that hands-on experience was incredibly valuable to me."

It was also during her time at UWM that Baumgart learned about SLA. "I didn't know anything about special librarianship until I got to grad school and ended up working in a special library. It wasn't really anything I was thinking about doing," she said. "I wanted to do something with technology. I had all these classmates, some of whom were already working in corporate or other special settings, so through them I learned about SLA. We had a student chapter but I was really busy and didn't want to get involved in one more thing. My friends finally convinced me to come to a meeting and find out what it's all about. Then I had this 'Oh! This is what special librarianship is!' moment and officially joined SLA the following year.

"I got involved with SLA and the News Division right off the bat. It's been totally invaluable to me. The News Division is absolutely fabulous. They're just terrific people."

In February 2000 Baumgart saw an advertisement for a new position being created at Harvard University's Office of News and Public Affairs. By this time she had moved away from theological librarianship and decided to focus on news librarianship, and she felt the Harvard position might fit the bill.

And on to Harvard

"When they saw my résumé and saw that I was already doing this kind of work, they weren't expecting that all," she said. "It was the mix of my background and the willingness to hop yet again across the country, and with my personality, etc., that made them decide on me as a candidate."

One of the reasons Harvard's News Office wanted to get a librarian was to match someone with the tasks needing attention, such as its photo collection. "We have six photographers on staff and who knows how many thousands of digital images, as well as a thousand or so slides and thousands of prints. The photographers don't always have time to take care of the collection and they don't have the information skills that librarians have, so far as in organizing a collection, making it accessible to others, time to add meta data, indexing, etc. We got the archiving system Merlin, which is a big system that many major newsrooms use, like *The New York Times*. After we got Merlin, the photo chief decided that it wasn't necessary to have me involved in the project anymore."

That change did not diminish her growing to-do list. She began preparing daily reports for then-new Harvard University President Lawrence Summers. "President Summers came from government, with a giant press corps, and one of the things he wants every morning is a list of news articles that have his name in them. That duty would take one to four hours of my day. Last January, when he made the statements about women and science, I spent the next two weeks literally doing nothing but pulling news articles for him."

In the summer of 2005 Baumgart sat down with her supervisor about her duties and where they thought her time would be better spent. One of the new projects is a Web site called Research Matters, an indexing and abstracting service for news articles that focuses on research performed by faculty and staff, students and Harvard affiliates. "It's something that we want to keep updated and have it take a high profile among Harvard's Web sites."

She added: "It's been a struggle because we don't always have the time to devote to it. So they decided in the last year that it needs to become a bigger priority for everyone in the office."

Despite all her tasks and duties in the News Office, Baumgart still found time for other ventures. The writer within her kept busy with the *Harvard University Gazette* where she's responsible for at least two articles per year: one in October on Eliott House's big ice skating exhibition, which usually features former and prospective Olympians to raise money for the Jimmy Fund at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, and the other in the commencement issue, with a year-in-review perspective.

Her time in Massachusetts has been a blossoming period and has anchored her solidly in the information profession. Outside of her Harvard job Baumgart has given more than two dozen presentations and written more than articles for the *Gazette*, the *News Library News*, and the *Boston Chapter Bulletin*; but it is the new world of blogs that has consumed her writing time most.

"I blame blogging on SLA," she says with a laugh. "Dave Weiner—who's a pretty well-known software engineer and is credited with RSS 2.0 spec—came to Harvard as a Berkman Fellow in January 2003. And he came over to the office in April and he said he wanted to get connected with the campus librarians. At the same time, Liz Donovan, who is a librarian at the *Miami Herald*, and at that time, I think, she was publications director for the News Division of SLA, was talking about blogs and how to do one for the news division. She said, 'Jessica, you'll like this. You go figure out how to do one.' Dave was running this support group for bloggers on Thursday nights so I went to one shortly after that and I decided to just jump into blogs and see what happens. Eventually, I became the unofficial coleader of the group."

Baumgart entered the blogosphere in April 2003; in fact, she had two blogs up and running within a few short weeks of one another. The first is her now infamous J's Scratchpad. Then in late May that year came her second blog with SLA's News Division. "We were going to use it as a way to share information about the conference in 2003," she recalled. "We use it for other division matters—it's still out there, still alive and well, which I think has surprised both of us. And also much to my surprise, J's Scratchpad has just grown. When I started it, it was more like writing a note, putting it in a bottle and casting it into the ocean. Recently I found out that one of the really popular bloggers at Microsoft has me in his aggregator. Its like: 'No pressure, but everybody is reading you!'"

A Popular Blog

Baumgart estimates that 4,500 feed subscribers access J's Scratchpad's information. On an average day she gets thousands of hits, averaging 300 to 500 per hour, with readers in Europe and Asia, and throughout the world.

"I've heard that I'm being syndicated on various newsroom intranets. It's

funny how it's happened. I read something that I wanted to take notes on or if I went to an interesting talk or anything else: I would blog it. From the start I thought of blogs as a professional development resource for news librarians. So why is this guy from Microsoft reading me? What does he find invaluable? I'm horribly curious. Lots of my other programming friends follow my blog, too. It's interesting to think that I've got this resource for news librarians and it's going far beyond them to other readers."

Baumgart finds blogging enjoyable, first and foremost. "I don't spend a lot of time in the day blogging, and that surprises people the most," she said. "I'm looking at the things that I would be looking at anyway, for my own professional development or personal curiosity. It may take five-ten-fifteen minutes. Sometimes I'll do original research in a blog post that might take a lot longer. I'm not online more than an hour a day writing the blogs."

What excites Baumgart is the technology—and, of course, what is to come next in the development of blogs. She believes the profession will employ different technologies to create new systems, and that the industry will employ librarians to manage XML feeds or a company's aggregator.

"What's going on with blogs and feeds now is like what was going on with the Web in 1995, when people were wondering what they were going to do with this new technology," she predicted. "Now—when you think about the scope of library jobs you've got librarians who do nothing but manage the corporate intranet or manage a few Web sites or map databases on a system; it's pretty incredible. That's the same thing that's going to happen with blogs and feeds, too."

One must wonder if Baumgart ever sleeps; and if she sleeps—what she dreams of. "I dream of the day of having an eight-hour workday," she answered with a laugh. "If I want to give my heart and soul to the job, I could live out of my office and still not get everything done. I try hard to have a life outside of work. It also depends on what else is going on. Things have been (knock on wood) quiet lately." And then there's her time commitment to SLA through the Boston Chapter, the News Division, and the Solo Librarians Division.

As for her future she's evaluating what she wants to do next in her career, in what might ensnare her. "I've been at Harvard for five years," she said. "For some that's way too long so I've been thinking about: Do I want to stay here for another 20 and retire? I don't know exactly what I'll be doing, but one of my side dreams is to learn how to program computers, even if I don't do anything with it. I'm thinking of going back to school for computer science, but I've been saying that for years. Who knows if it will really happen?"

To think: Baumgart's career started only 15 years ago at her high school in Summerville, S.C.—shelving books.

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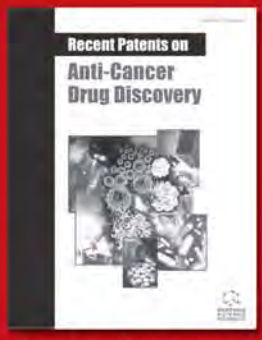

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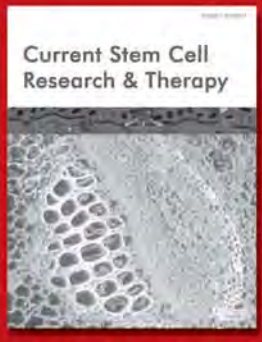

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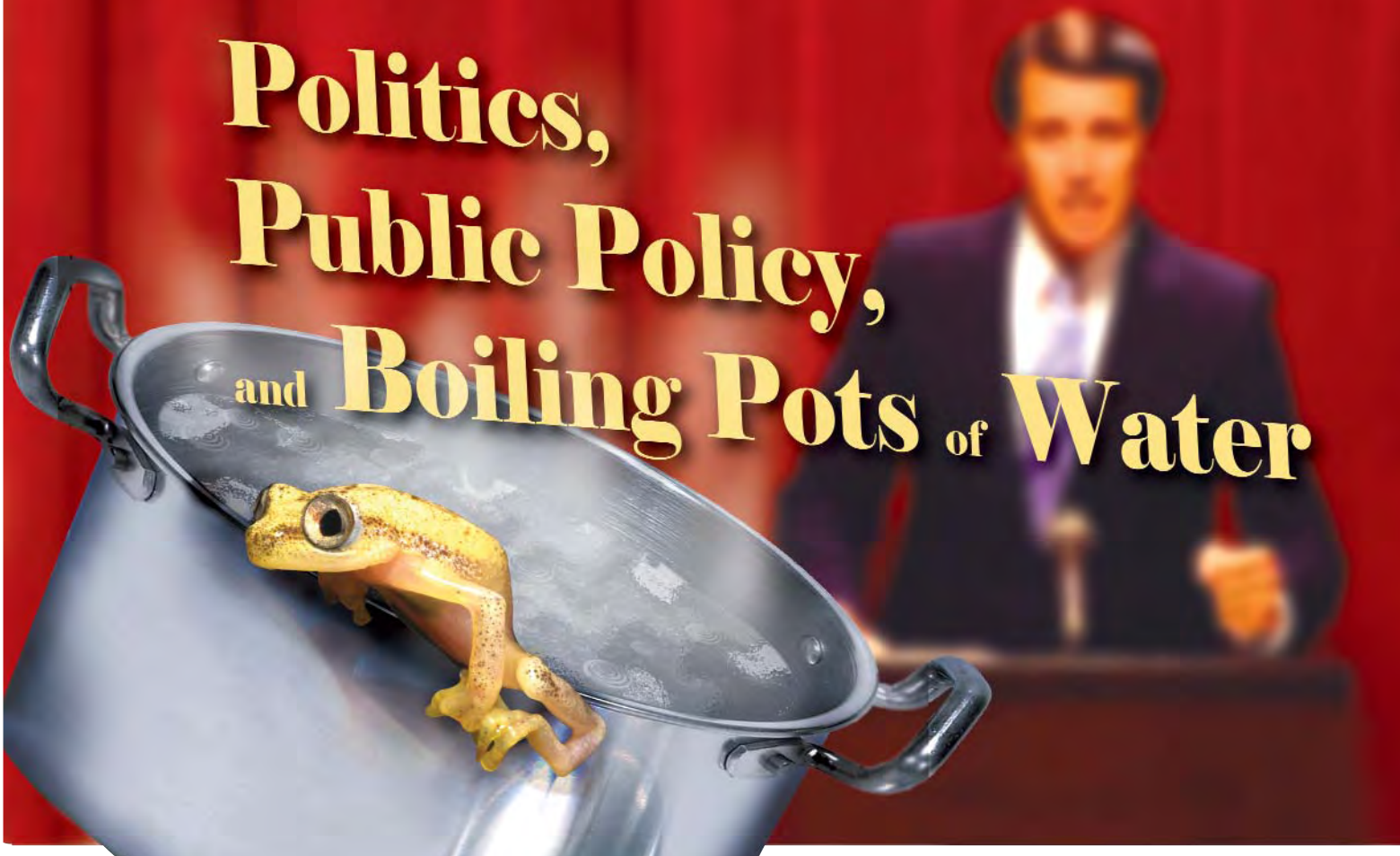

By Douglas W. Newcomb, CAE

As the lead in SLA's public policy program, one part of my job that I find very satisfying is that I'm fortunate to be involved almost every day in conversations with smart, thoughtful, caring people. These good people are dedicated to creating, influencing, and identifying public policy issues that need attention, and, rather like triage, they work to determine which issues are of immediate concern, which are "pending," and which are of eminent concern to SLA's members. Planning, experience, timing, and efficiency are crucial in this work. It's difficult to know which issue can be left "on the back burner" as a pot of tepid water, which pot has had the heat turned on, and which pot, all of a sudden, is at a full, rolling boil.

Sometimes when I talk with people who work toward fair and balanced policies for information professionals, we liken this issue triage to boiling a frog.

I may have taken a few culinary courses from time to time, but I have never actually boiled a frog, nor do I foresee any desire to do so in the future. From the tale that I've been told, though, drop a frog in a boiling pot, the frog recognizes the danger and immediately jumps out.

But if you put the frog in a nice, comfortable pot of water, where there is no immediate danger, and you slowly turn up the heat, the frog acclimates and adjusts to the temperature. Little by little the water gets hotter, and by the time it reaches the boiling point….it's too late for the frog.

To me, this frog story is analogous to how we in the information profession face and deal with issues small changes in the environment. These "small changes" may seem to have

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minimal effect taken as discrete actions, but when combined, they lead to a new dimension, which could harm the ability of information professionals to efficiently perform their jobs, as well as the often difficult to measure effects on society as a whole.

Each year, SLA works on and affects issues that affect its membership. Many of these items would possibly slip under the radar screen if it were not for SLA's dedicated members, and SLA's Public Policy Committee (chaired by Pat Wilson), working to ensure the public policy program has the ability, and empowerment, to move swiftly. One of the key elements in guiding the program is SLA's Public Policy Platform, which outlines the types of policies SLA supports.

These issues are often highly complex, and unless full attention is paid to them, they often may not seem to be things that an information organization might want to keep its full attention on. The fact is, that so many of the freedoms and tools that are taken for granted in the U.S. and around the globe are rights that have been hard fought for, and not always in the most direct way.

Copyright Collaboration

With the world of information expanding, there are no longer any natural or political boundaries. The rapid advancements in technology continue to expand and morph into tools not dreamed possible a few decades ago. Issues have become so diverse, and yet so important, that collaboration with other groups on critical issues is the key to successful advocacy—serving as a united front versus being fragmented and disorganized.

Many of the current issues deal with copyright: application of current law and new legislation. Content creators and rights holders most certainly deserve a system that provides appropriate rewards for their work product, and one that motivates them and others to continue their work. However, our global society also requires access to this crucial information in a timely and financially attainable manner. It is only with a well-informed citizenry that a global society is able to perform effectively as entrepreneurs and as business people to take responsibility to meet life's challenges.

Information must not only benefit its copyright holders and content controllers, but also simultaneously serve as the basis to advance the efficient functioning of our global economy. Information must serve both the economy and humanity. To ensure that the copyright law remains balanced between these two sets of interests, SLA works as part of the Library Copyright Alliance (see www.LibraryCopyrightAlliance.org).

SLA Public Policy Platform

SLA supports government policies that:

- Strike a fair and equitable balance among the rights and interests of all parties in the creation, distribution, and use of information and other intellectual property.
- Strengthen the library and information management operations of government agencies.
- Promote access to government public information through the application of modern technologies and sound information management practices.
- Encourage the development and application of new information and communications technologies to improve library services, information services, and information management.
- Protect individual intellectual freedom and the confidentiality of library records, safeguard freedom of expression, and oppose government censorship.
- Foster international exchange of information.

With regard to the actions of government bodies and related international organizations in the policy areas listed above, the Association shall:

- Monitor executive, legislative, and judicial actions and initiatives at the national and international level and, to the extent practical, at the subnational level.
- Educate key decision-makers on the concerns of SLA's membership.
- Provide timely updates to the membership on critical issues and actions.
- Encourage members to influence actions by expressing their opinions.
- Develop cooperative relationships with other like-minded organizations, so as to expand SLA's visibility and impact.

The Library Copyright Alliance

The Library Copyright Alliance (LCA) consists of five major library associations: the American Association of Law Libraries, the American Library Association, the Association of Research Libraries, the Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association. These five organizations collectively represent more than 80,000 information professionals and thousands of libraries of all kinds throughout the United States. They work through the LCA to address copyright issues that affect libraries and their patrons.

The purpose of the LCA is to work toward a unified voice and common strategy for the library community in responding to and developing proposals to amend national and international copyright law and policy for the digital environment. The LCA's mission is to foster global access and fair use of information for creativity,

research, and education.

Copyright and related intellectual property laws have important effects on the nature and extent of information services libraries provide to their users. Intellectual property laws are currently undergoing major changes in response to the growth in the use of digital formats for works.

The LCA is principally concerned that these changes do not harm, but rather enhance, the ability of libraries and information professionals to serve the needs of people to access, use, and preserve digital information. Our concern is heightened because of emerging technology applied to copyrighted works that is intended to prohibit access, use, and preservation of digital information. But what does all this mean? Read on for a few examples.

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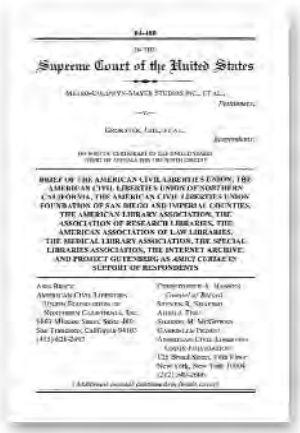
MGM v. Grokster

One of many examples of how SLA effects change is an amicus brief that the LCA participated in filing in MGM v. Grokster, which focused on peer-to-peer file sharing. Many people think of peer-to-peer file sharing as the illegal redistribution of copyrighted works. Does this mean that the library groups supported the illegal copying of works because we filed the brief on behalf of Grokster? Absolutely not! The LCA informed the court that it was an important case to the library, education, technology, and consumer electronics communities as there are significant implications for future technological development and innovation. In this case, 28 entertainment companies sued the makers of file-sharing services Grokster, Kazaa, and Morpheus. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled that file-sharing services were not liable for their users' illegal activity.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The ruling cited the precedent set in the U.S. Supreme Court decision Sony Corp. v. Universal City Studios (known as the Sony Betamax decision, 1984) and noted that file-sharing systems have significant non-infringing uses not unlike videocassette recorders, which allow consumers to make copies of copyrighted works for the purposes of time-shifting. The Library Copyright Alliance, the Internet Archive, the ACLU, and Project Gutenberg filed an amicus brief before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The brief includes examples of peer-to-peer applications in the education and library arenas as well as a focus on free speech issues. Although the decision was unanimous for MGM, the technology itself was not outlawed, but rather the court found that one that distributes a device with the object of promoting copyright infringement "as shown by clear expression or affirmative steps to foster infringement" is liable for impending acts of infringement regardless of the device's lawful uses.

MGM v. Grokster is a prime example of a successful amicus brief, but SLA has also participated in more assertive actions, such as collaboration in a coalition of like-minded organizations to challenge the FCC's authority to impose a "broadcast flag" requirement.

Broadcast Flag Struck Down

A significant win in 2005 was the "broadcast flag" decision, where the Court of Appeals struck down a requirement opposed by library and information professionals. You may be asking yourself, "What is broadcast flag?"

Broadcast flag is a form of digital rights management. The flag would impose significant strictures and constraints on the design of consumer electronics and computer products—limitations that will diminish interoperability between new products and old ones, and that even pose interoperability problems among new devices. The flag would limit what users can do with broadcast television content to a significantly greater degree than they are limited now.

The broadcast flag case, had it not been struck down, would have had immediate ramifications, as it would have stopped the flow of digital information to people who have the right to use and share it. It would have prohibited librarians, archivists, and educators from legally sharing digital works, specifically under the Teach Act.

Library Copyright Alliance

"Broadcast flag," imposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in a 2003 ruling, required that all digital electronic devices, such as personal computers and televisions made after July 2005, be equipped to prevent any redistribution of digital television.

SLA and a coalition of like-minded organizations opposed the ruling, asserting that it undermined the "fair use" provision of the Copyright Act of 1976 and the distance education provision in the Technology,

Education, and Copyright Harmonization (TEACH) Act of 2002. The coalition challenged the FCC's authority to impose the requirement, and the federal appeals court for the District of Columbia circuit agreed that the commission had overstepped its authority. The Copyright Act of 1976 allows for "fair use" of copyrighted works and grants libraries, educational institutions, and archives an exemption to allow the making of copies of copyrighted works.

Following up on this win, a letter was delivered to Senator Stevens, chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. The letter urges the committee to hold hearings before adopting any legislation authorizing the FCC to promulgate broadcast flag in the future. If broadcast flag went into effect, it would, at minimum, hamper the use of broadcast materials for teaching and scholarship and harm effective public discourse (which often requires the copying and redissemination of broadcast content). For example, a Web site seeking to demonstrate the disparate treatment on the news of black "looters" and white "food liberators" in the wake of Hurricane Katrina would need to include clips of television news broadcasts.

But even this type of win is nothing more than a moving target in a global economy where international treaties are negotiated on a regular basis.

Global Issues

Library Copyright Alliance

In October 2005, the Library Copyright Alliance sent letters requesting a hearing on the U.S. Government's negotiation points on the broadcast treaty. The letters were delivered to Senator Orrin Hatch, Senator Patrick Leahy, Representative Howard Berman, and Representative Lamar Smith and request that hearings be held concerning the negotiating position of the U.S. government with respect to the Broadcast Treaty. For several years, the Patent and Trademark Office and the Copyright Office have been participating in discussions at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concerning a proposed Treaty on the Protection of Broadcasting Organizations. The WIPO General Assembly recently decided to attempt to convene a diplomatic conference to finalize the Broadcast Treaty in late 2006 or early 2007.

Treaties and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are now commonplace, and SLA, along with a number of allied organizations, is searching for an appropriate balance. We are working proactively to ensure and advance the global information society. SLA has collaborated in the past with other information organizations to provide comments on U.S. Free Trade Agreements. Trade barriers, data protection regulations, intellectual property protection, cultural barriers, and other protective practices have all been created to protect corporations, political boundaries, and geographical lines. The time has come to move beyond these lines, and to work toward collaborative solutions that will benefit both creators and users. We need a balance that accommodates both the ability of information owners to exploit their works commercially and the societal need to use those works for global well-being. There will be no perfect balances, and there will be a great deal of negotiation and compromise to ensure that a global society needs are balanced and accommodated.

SLA's comments on various free trade agreements include language addressing the fact that societies and economies are increasingly and extraordinarily reliant upon efficient and broad access to information. Those involved in information-related work must have ease of access to information sources that traditionally may not have been available. Some might look at these statements as protectionist in regard to trade barriers, data protection regulations, intellectual property protection, and cultural barriers. SLA looks at them as items essential to maintaining a balanced information environment.

Internet Governance at World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

We all know that the world is now considered a global community, and the Internet is just one of many elements that have made it so. The Internet and digital revolution have changed the way people think, communicate, and perceive others. Several years ago the United Nations (UN) recognized that the phenomenon of new and varied forms of communications requires a truly international discussion of the rapidly unfolding new information society. This resulted in the creation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which was held in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2003, the second phase took place in Tunis, Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005.

SLA's Chief Executive Officer, Janice Lachance, was honored to have been selected to serve on the U.S. delegation to the WSIS after her name was put forward by the Library Copyright Alliance (LCA) to serve as their official representative. One major piece of the Summit was trying to reach consensus of the future on Internet governance.

Information professionals and libraries around the globe are vital in providing people with public access to networked information. With the adopting of emerging technologies, libraries seek to facilitate information retrieval more thoroughly, effectively, and attractively. It is crucial that all stakeholders must be involved in the process, including those from developing countries.

The Internet was developed through an informal collaboration between public, private, and government organizations. As global Internet management evolves, the LCA believes that it is important to avoid overly centralized and hierarchical structures and preserve this multifaceted collaboration.

Librarians have a vested interest in the ongoing development of the cyberinfrastructure, as we are an integral part of the Internet in three capacities.

First, nearly 100% of public libraries offer free Internet access to their patrons, and research has shown that libraries are the leading source of Internet access in the United States after the home and the workplace. Next, many other nonpublic services, such as corporate libraries, provide crucial business information that often results in the enhancement or creation of new information. Libraries also create and administer key electronic resources, allowing us to preserve and explore our shared cultural heritage as never before. Finally, libraries are part of the infrastructure of the Internet by virtue of our participation in and administration of shared networks.

The LCA was very successful in its mission, and the U.S. Delegation to WSIS negotiated an excellent agreement on the subject of Internet governance. It was agreed to establish an Internet Governance Forum that will discuss overarching issues surrounding the Internet but would not be involved in naming or day-to-day technological and administrative issues. This will give all nations, as well as stakeholders, the opportunity to voice issues of concern without interfering in a system that, for the most part, works well. This new Internet Governance Forum will not have the power to control, but will have the ability to strongly influence many things. This collaborative, inclusive approach is crucial for the future of global information sharing and advancement. Janice thought the U.S. Delegation's spokesperson was sharp, thoughtful, and very respectful of other nations' views and perspectives, and she was very proud to be a part of the deliberations, to represent the LCA, and to have the negotiators listen to her views and incorporate her thinking into their language and positions.

The U.S. delegation also succeeded in negotiating language on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the free flow of information, which Janice also had a voice in shaping. Government bodies and related international organizations play a critical role in establishing the legal and social framework within which SLA members conduct information services.

Ongoing Issues

Broadcast flag, MGM v. Grokster, and WSIS are just a few of the issues that have recently been addressed. The following is a listing of the tangible actions made in the past year. All of the following news items are supported with access to the various forms of documentation sent. There are far too many to be included in the space constraints for this printed issue of *Information Outlook*, but you are encouraged to go to www.sla.org/act and link to Recent SLA Initiatives, where you will find a complete listing and links to supporting items, such as letters and amicus briefs.

Organizations request online access to the *World Law Bulletin*. SLA, along with other groups and individuals, sent a letter to U.S. Rep. Bob Ney (R-Ohio), the chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library, requesting that the Law Library of Congress publish the *World Law Bulletin* on the World Wide Web for unrestricted public access.

Open Document Format Adopted in Massachusetts. SLA and others sent letters to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in support of its adoption of the Open Document Format (ODF) as the standard for all electronic documents created by the executive branch. Backward compatibility may be difficult to achieve in 100 years because the developer of proprietary software may have gone out of business, and the specifications for the document formatting may also have disappeared. ODF will significantly ease access to information for future generations as any future programmer will be able to find its open, nonproprietary specifications.

Comments Provided on Circumvention of Copyright Protection Systems. SLA and others submitted comments on exceptions that the Library of Congress should grant to 17 U.S.C. § 1201(a)(1)(C), pursuant to the Notice of Inquiry published by the Copyright Office. Library organizations are pleased to observe that in the notice the Copyright Office seems to have backed away from rigid application of the "substantial adverse impact" standard articulated in the previous rulemakings. Moreover, the office has qualified the standard for actual harm from always requiring a showing of "actual instances of verifiable problems" to "generally" requiring such a showing. Nonetheless, the office continues to interpret the "likely" adverse effects standard as "require[ing] proof that adverse effects are more likely than not to occur."

Psihoyos v. National Geographic Enterprises. SLA, along with other library groups, filed an amicus brief in support of the *National Geographic* in the Supreme Court of the United States. The case presents a direct, material and acknowledged conflict between two U.S. courts of appeal on an important question of federal copyright law.

Statement on "Fair Use: Its Effects on Consumers and Industry." A statement was given in a hearing on "Fair Use: Its Effects on Consumers and Industry" on behalf of the LCA. The statement was presented to the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Energy and Commerce. Fair use is central to libraries' ability to achieve many facets of their missions.

Hearings Requested on U.S. Government's Negotiation Position on Broadcast Treaty. SLA, in collaboration with the LCA, delivered letters to Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), Rep. Howard Berman (D-California.), and Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas). The letters request that hearings be held on the negotiating position of the U.S. government with respect to the Broadcast Treaty. For several years, the Patent and Trademark Office and the Copyright Office have been participating in discussions at the World Intellectual Property Organization concerning a proposed treaty on the protection of broadcasting organizations. The WIPO General Assembly recently decided to attempt to convene a diplomatic conference to finalize the treaty in late 2006 or early 2007.

Illinois Tool Works, Inc., and Trident Inc. v. Independent Ink. Inc. Several organizations, including SLA, filed an amicus brief in support of Independent Ink, Inc. The case involves the tying of products. For example, the manufacturer of a computer printer may require a consumer also to purchase computer paper from the printer manufacturer. Under antitrust law, such a tie is unlawful if the printer manufacturer has market power in the printer market—the market for the tying product. Usually the plaintiff needs to prove that the defendant had market power in the tying product, which can be difficult and expensive to do. In this case, the Federal Circuit ruled that if a person has a patent or copyright on the tying product, market power in the tying product is presumed. The presumption makes it easier for consumers and competitors to bring tying cases.

Hearings Urged on Broadcast Flag before Adopting Legislation. SLA, in collaboration with LCA, delivered a letter to Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. The letter urges the committee to hold hearings before adopting any legislation authorizing the FCC to promulgate broadcast flag. If "broadcast flag" went into effect, it would, at minimum, hamper the use of broadcast materials for teaching and scholarship, and harm effective public discourse (which often requires the copying and redissemination of broadcast content). For example, a Web site seeking to demonstrate the disparate treatment on the news of black "looters" and white "food liberators" in the wake of Hurricane Katrina would need to include clips of television news broadcasts.

SLA and ALA Comment on Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance. The State Department requested comments on the report of the Working Group on Internet Governance. The panel, created by Phase 1 of the U.S. Department of State's World Summit on the Information Society, was tasked "to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of the Internet by 2005."

Fair-Use Comments Requested from Australia. SLA, in collaboration, the LCA, provided comments regarding fair use to the Australian government. Australia is considering adopting a U.S.-style fair use exception, and information colleagues in Australia requested the LCA to weigh in.

U.S. Supreme Court Rules on MGM v. Grokster. In a unanimous ruling in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios v. Grokster, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that distributors of peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing systems may be held liable if they actively induce copyright infringement by users of those P2P systems. Importantly, the court strongly reaffirmed its earlier ruling in Sony Corp of America v. Universal City Studios, which held that technologies could not be outlawed if they were capable of substantial non-infringing uses. SLA and others filed an amicus brief on this case (www.sla.org/PDFs/Grokster_SupremeCourt_Amicus_Brief.pdf). SLA, in collaboration with the LCA, welcomes this balanced decision that supports the interests of libraries while addressing issues of widespread copyright infringement. By focusing on conduct that induces infringement, rather than on the distribution of technology, the decision ensures the continued availability of new and evolving digital technologies to libraries and their patrons.

Forty Groups Oppose Homeland Security's Weak Privacy Rules. More than 40 organizations, including SLA, have opposed a plan proposed by the Department of Homeland Security. The plan proposes to exempt a vast database from legal requirements that protect privacy and promote government accountability. The agency's plan leaves individuals without the ability to correct inaccurate information and without protection against possible abuse of the database. In March 2004, SLA and others filed an amicus brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to reject the government's claim that it may conduct the public's business in secret.

Cheney Task Force Documents to Remain Secret. A U.S. federal appeals court judge dismissed a lawsuit May 10, 2005, that sought to uncover secret documents from Vice President Cheney's energy task force. The judge ruled the task force was not subject to the disclosure requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

LCA Submits Comments on Orphan Works. In a response to a notice of inquiry regarding "orphan works," the LCA submitted comments to the U.S. Copyright Office. Orphan works are those whose owners are difficult or impossible to locate.

"Broadcast Flag" Struck Down in Court. On May 6, 2005, "broadcast flag" was struck down in court. A federal appeals court handed down a unanimous ruling in favor of libraries and consumer groups. Several library groups and others challenged a decision by the Federal Communications Commission to require consumer electronics and computer manufacturers to read and obey a "broadcast flag" signal embedded in new digital television signals. The broadcast flag requirement would have made it difficult for librarians to copy and distribute digital programs for legal purposes.

Library Associations Support GPO 2006 Budget. SLA, AALL, and ALA sent letters to members of the Committee on Appropriations in the House of Representatives and the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch in the Senate in support of the FY 2006 appropriations for the Government Printing Office and the Superintendent of Documents Salaries and Expenses (S&E). Of particular note, the three library associations support GPO's funding request needed to develop the future digital system, but stress that until the system is developed, tested, and fully operational, GPO must continue to use S&E appropriations to produce and distribute tangible products to depository libraries. Currently, only print and microfiche are the trusted and authenticated formats for permanent access to and preservation of important government information.

SLA, AALL, and ALA Support LC 2006 Budget. SLA, AALL, and ALA sent letters to members of the Committee on Appropriations in the Senate, Subcommittee on Legislative Branch, and the House of Representatives in support of the recent budget request of the Library of Congress. The library is asking for $628 million for FY 2006, which will allow it to fund ongoing operational activities, while at the same time support a number of key activities of interest to the library community and the nation.

Family and Entertainment Copyright Act of 2005, S. 167. SLA, AALL, ARL, and ALA wrote Lamar Smith (R-Texas), chairman of the Subcommittee on the Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property, expressing their support for the Family and Entertainment Copyright Act of 2005, S. 167. Title III's reauthorization of the National Film Preservation Board and the National Film Preservation Foundation will help ensure the preservation of our national film heritage. Title IV will assist libraries to engage in preservation, scholarship and research of musical works, motion pictures, and other audiovisual works during the last 20 years of their copyright term.

GPO Position on FDLP Distribution. The Government Printing Office has released its position of Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). Since 1996, GPO has been transitioning the FDLP to a predominately electronic basis in full cooperation and consultation with the library community. This initiative has resulted in an exponential expansion of effective public access to government information without substantial increases in funding, and today more than 1 million documents a day are retrieved from GPO Access (www.gpoaccess.gov). At the same time, GPO has continued to provide public access to information in tangible formats in accordance with policy established by GPO's Superintendent of Documents. Judy Russell, GPO's superintendent of documents, has on an ongoing basis continued to meet with various library and user groups, including SLA, to work toward solutions that are workable from the various library needs and requirements.

Library-Related Principles for the International Development Agenda of the WIPO. In December 2004, library-related principles were developed for use in discussions at the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) concerning the impact of intellectual property protection on economic development and the significance of copyright exceptions for libraries, educational institutions, and the disabled. These principles are not intended to serve as statutory language and thus do not reflect limitations and qualifications that would appear in such language. See www.sla.org/documents/libraryprinciples.doc.

ATA Expresses Disappointment with NIH Open Access Publishing Policy Delay. The Alliance for Taxpayer Access (ATA) sent a letter to Elias Zerhouni, director of the National Institutes of Health, expressing disappointment in the delay of the scheduled NIH announcement of its policy on enhanced public access to NIH. ATA is a broad coalition representing patient advocates, distinguished scientific researchers, academic institutions, research libraries and others (including SLA) with a vital interest in the success of NIH research. The Administration postponed announcing the new NIH policy on making research results publicly available.

Pots Still on the Stove

There is no sign that these crucial issues will be cooling down in the near future: combined with the exponential growth and ease of access across traditional boundaries, cultures, and languages, there is the need to continue to carefully monitor multiple issues, or the pots of water on a stove, making sure that tepid water does not become boiling without our input, and catching the analogical frog by surprise. There will always be the cold-to-hot-water situations; there are never final solutions—only new problems and symptoms that we hope will be minor in comparison to those that preceded them. Those who know me, know that I am an eternal optimist, and believe fervently that is crucial that legislation and policy making are conducted openly, allowing individuals and groups such as SLA to monitor and provide input that could have a positive impact on the global information economy as a whole. I fully welcome and encourage SLA members' input and support in all areas of SLA's public policy arena.

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Market Research for Libraries

By Samantha Chmelik

Who are your patrons? What are their needs? These seemingly simple questions have complex answers. In this era of online, end-user focused resources, patrons and their requirements have evolved. Capturing that evolution using classic methods like surveys does not elicit useful or robust responses. Using market research techniques to analyze patrons gives librarians more opportunities to attract new patrons (or customers), create innovative library services, and develop new research skills.

This article will review four concepts in market research:

1. The marketing mix
2. Segmentation
3. Perceptual maps
4. Usability studies

Then we will apply those concepts to libraries. First, we should define what market research is: the formal collection, analysis, and reporting of information relating to the current or future customer or market and its preferences, behavior, opinions, and trends. The results of market research are used for decision making about the marketing mix, a.k.a. the Four P's:

- Product—an offering that satisfies a need or want of and provides a benefit to a specific segment of a market

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- Price—brand value plus production costs plus profit margin
- Place/Position—the literal and figurative distribution of the product
- Promotion— the techniques used to communicate information about the product to the market

The marketing mix is used to create a strategy to sell the product. For libraries, the product could be information. The price could be the charge back rate; promotion could be presentations during new employee orientation sessions. The literal place is the physical library; the figurative position is the idea that the library is place of knowledge. To hone that strategy, segmentation is used to define and understand the customers.

Segmentation answers the question: "Who are my customers?" Segmentation is the grouping of customers by specific characteristics. It is used to discover the specific characteristics of customers and then to create products and advertising and marketing campaigns to appeal to those customers. The basic segment categories are customer graphics, demographics, psychographics, geographics, and product graphics. Customer graphics is Knowledge inForm's term for the initial division of customers into consumer customers or business customers. Each of these markets is quite different, so before you divide your customers into other segments, you first must know which "general" type of customer they are.

Within the business and consumer segments, you can use the other segmentation categories to further subdivide those main customer segments. Demographic segmentation is what people usually think of when they are asked to define market segmentation. Easy to measure and use, demographics categorizes people according to population or occupation characteristics. Common demographic subsegments include age, gender, income, and occupation.

Psychographic segmentation separates customers according to class, lifestyle, values, or opinions. Geographic data divides customers by location. Segments can be defined by zip code, city, state, region, or country. Product graphics is based on consumer behavior towards products and services. Subsegments include brand loyalty, product/service benefits, and product/service usage.

Once you have established your segments, you can then use Hiam & Schewe's Six Steps to Segmentation process to:

1. Determine market boundaries in accordance with business strategy. What is our business focus? Who are our generic competitors? What are the fundamental needs of this market?
2. Determine which segment variables will be most useful. Who is our typical customer? Which of their segment characteristics are related to our product?

3. Collect and analyze segment data, identifying specific customers with the same wants and needs.
4. Draw a profile of each segment that with variable information to form a picture of buying behavior.
5. Target the segments by looking for the best opportunities that come from matching the company's resources with those opportunities.
6. Design a marketing plan that best highlights the product features and creates the image that will appeal to the targeted segment. Determine the best method for reaching that group.

For a corporate library, the answers to these questions could be:

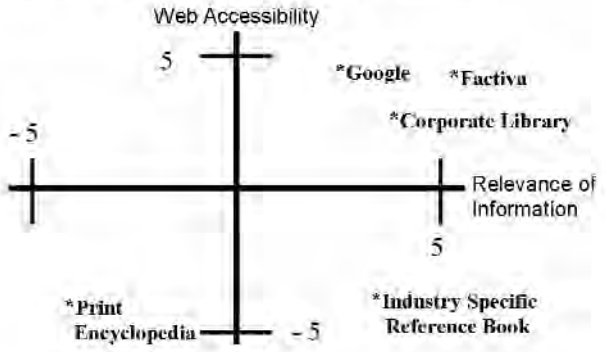
1. Our focus is providing information resources to all the employees of our company. Our competitors are Internet search engines, end-user databases, and other libraries (public or academic). The fundamental needs of our market include: 1) obtaining data for strategic planning, 2) information resources available on each desktop, and 3) training in search strategies.
2. Our typical customer is in middle to upper management, with corporate planning, product management, or competitive intelligence responsibilities. This person needs timely, concise responses to his/her questions in a variety of formats.
3. Our typical customer has a title of vice president or higher, spends approximately 50% of his/her time traveling, and has an MBA.
4. This customer usually requires information at the beginning and end of each quarter. At the end of the year, this customer will have a higher number of requests; those requests will also be more complex.
5. The library should purchase end-user databases that concentrate on industry and company profiling data. Self-paced, online training in these resources and general search techniques would be most effective.
6. To target these customers, e-newsletters, personalized e-mails, and needs assessment meetings are possible promotional methods.

The results of the segmentation research and other customer surveys can also be used to understand how customers perceive the library and its services. Graphically displaying those perceptions versus competing products helps us understand the relationships between those various products in the minds of the customers.

Perceptual maps graphically summarize the criteria that customers use to perceive and judge products—creating the product's position in the customer's mind. The competing products are plotted on a graph to show their differences as well. The key to creating a useful perceptual map is to identify two factors that, in the customer's mind, are important and differentiating. For example, Web accessibility and relevance of information could be the key criteria for corporate library customers. The perceptual map (see Figure 1) illustrates how those customers perceive the corporate library, Google, Factiva, a print encyclopedia, and an industry-specific reference book according to the two criteria.

Figure 1

Perceptual Map for Corporate Library Customers



Ascertaining both the criteria and the customers' perceptions can be difficult. Asking people to define their criteria or to draw such a map may yield false results. Analyzing and interpreting the results of satisfaction surveys is an effective way to create a perceptual map.

After you have developed your product to meet the needs of your customers, you can employ a usability study to test the product. Usability studies ask customers to use the product in a Usability Lab, which mirrors the normal environment in which the product/service is used. A facilitator in the lab shows the product to the customer and then observes how the customer interacts with the product. Ideally, the facilitator should be a neutral third party to reduce bias. Usability studies are an excellent tool to see exactly how a customer uses (or doesn't use) a product/service. The feedback gathered is then used to improve the product's features, instructions, or design. Ideas for other products may also be uncovered.

For example, the library develops an online, self-paced training module. A test group of five customers tries the module and identifies sections that require further development or are irrelevant. The library can then revise the module before the official product launch.

Each one of these four concepts (Marketing Mix, Segmentation, Perceptual Maps, and Usability Studies) is best used as part of an entire product development process. The components can be used separately to ease into a more formal process. However you choose to use them, these four concepts will help you define and meet the needs of your patrons—making the corporate library a valued partner in your organization.

Samantha Chmelik is a principal of Knowledge inForm, Inc., a consulting and training firm specializing in competitive and market intelligence. She is an expert in market research and intelligence.

How to Write for Information Outlook

SLA's monthly magazine is written primarily by and for information professionals. *INFORMATION OUTLOOK* interprets the news and covers trends and issues that affect information professionals in a global environment.

If you know of an interesting improvement in a special library or information center… If you've solved a difficult problem—or prevented one… If you or a colleague have done something extraordinary… If you want to give something back to the profession by sharing your experiences with others… We want to hear from you.

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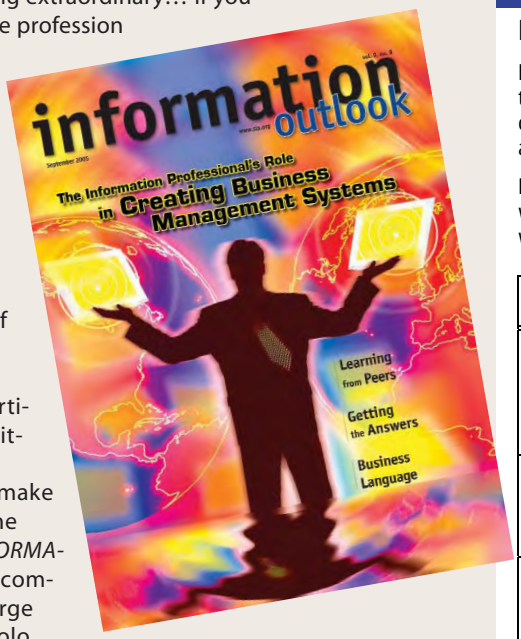

Topics

The editorial calendar is a guide for the editorial direction of the magazine. Each issue covers many more topics than those included in the calendar. "Cover article" topics for one issue will be suitable as features in another.

When you propose an article, make sure you can relate the topic to the specific needs of our readers. *INFORMATION OUTLOOK* readers represent companies of all sizes. They work in large libraries with large staffs and as solo librarians in small companies. Their experience ranges from senior professionals to beginners just out of school.

INFORMATION OUTLOOK readers want to read articles about new techniques, new ideas, new trends. They're interested in articles about search engines, knowledge management, international issues, copyright law, technology, innovation, the Internet. They're interested in articles on administration, organization, marketing, and operations.

INFORMATION OUTLOOK readers like case studies. They're interested in growing their organizations and in planning their careers. They want to know what works, and what doesn't work. They want success stories. They want to know how to confront problems and how to avoid them.

Articles should include something new, something different, something important. When the reader is finished, he or she should feel smarter than before.

A note to vendors and service providers

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To submit a proposal…

If you have an idea for an article, please send a proposal to jadams@sla.org outlining the article and your qualifications for writing it. A paragraph or two and a few bullet points will suffice. We usually respond in a couple of weeks or less.

Editorial Calendar

Each issue of INFORMATION OUTLOOK includes articles on many more topics than the ones listed here. The calendar is only a general guide for editorial direction. "Cover article" topics for one issue will be suitable as features in another.

Please e-mail article queries and proposals to **jadams@sla.org**. If you are writing for a particular issue, your query should be early enough to allow for writing the article.

Issue	Cover Article	Deadline
May 2006	**Career development** Possible topics: Professional development, gaining expertise in content areas, résumé writing, interview tactics.	Mar. 3, 2006
June 2006	**Digital information sources** Possible topics: Selection process, RFP writing, maximizing usage.	Apr. 7, 2006
July 2006	**Managing** Possible topics: Planning, budgeting, supervising a staff, purchasing.	May 5, 2006
August 2006	**Knowledge management** Possible topics: KM systems, indexing information, low-budget KM.	June 9, 2006
September 2006	**Internal Marketing** Possible topics: Using intranets and e-mail, training internal clients, special events, tips for increasing usage, showing return on investment.	July 7, 2006
October 2006	**Web searching** Possible topics: Meta directories, using online search engines, the best sites for various content areas.	Aug. 11, 2006
November 2006	**Copyright** Possible topics: Global considerations, permissions, new laws and regulations	Sept. 8, 2006
December 2006	**Managing** Possible topics: Planning, budgeting, supervising a staff, purchasing.	Oct. 6, 2006

The Learning Engine

Building Capabilities through Communities of Practice

By Deb Wallace, Ph.D.

Managing information and leveraging knowledge within organizations creates a strategic advantage through the development of efficient business practice, resulting in increased productivity. A prominent strategy for achieving this state is developing and supporting communities of practice. While the idea of communities is not new (i.e., people have formed groups to address work-related issues for centuries), the term was first coined in 1991 by then Xerox PARC researchers Wenger and Lavé, who were studying how adults learn within an organizational context.

Their early analysis of knowledge-based organizations identified groups of employees getting together to solve work-related prob-

As an organizational learning consultant, Deb Wallace, Ph.D. draws on her expertise in education, business, and information studies to design strategies and systems that enable organizations to increase capacity and utilize their knowledge capital with an emphasis on collaboration and communities. debra@thekennedygroup.biz

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lems without management directive or involvement. Recognizing the level of information exchange and learning that took place within these groups, management began to pay attention to their loosely formed, often organic, structure. Through a meeting of the minds, community members pooled their expertise, built information stores, shared their experience, tested new ideas, improved on past processes and procedures, and found solutions that resulted in increased capability and improved performance.

A great deal has been written about communities of practice since Wenger and Lavé identified this organizational structure in their book *Situated Learning* (1991). Practitioners and researchers alike have spent the past decade contributing to our understanding of communities by refining definitions, identifying underlying concepts, dissecting components, comparing and contrasting their form to other organizational structures, and devising measurement and assessment practices to substantiate their value.

This knowledge-age version of medieval guilds (minus the traveling wagons, mind you) has become an integral component of knowledge and learning strategies around the world—a representation of a concrete approach to building the individual and organizational capabilities required to create and sustain a competitive advantage.

With the volume of information increasing at mind-boggling speed, knowledge walking out the door with an aging workforce demographic, and a global economy that is demanding new ways of leveraging knowledge assets 24/7, communities of practice offer a naturally forming learning engine that can easily be leveraged in any type of organization.

It's All about Capabilities

Successful organizations know that achieving the expected outcomes of carefully devised strategies depends on having the necessary capabilities to enable performance. Figure 1 illustrates the link that capabilities provide between strategy and its intended outcomes. New thinking suggests that creating distinctive capabilities to meet market demands is the most effective driver for strategy development. "In turn, the organization's performance depends on the quality and reach of its strategies and its ability to provide the necessary individual and organizational capabilities that enable employees to take effective action." (Saint-Onge and Wallace, 2003, p. 59)

The need, then, to constantly increase capabilities means that organizations must invest in strategies and approaches that provide opportunities for employees to learn, to create new knowledge, and to dynamically share what they know. As well, organizations must pay attention to building the capability to learn, to enable the continuous generation of new capabilities, often at an accelerated pace.

Even though we've only been formally studying adult learning since the mid-1970s, we know a great deal about what provides the biggest return on the learning and knowledge-creating dollars invested. We know that learning is a social endeavor, that we prefer to learn from trusted sources whether human or material, and that our personal and professional networks are our first point of contact when we "need to know" something. We also know that the majority of what we need to learn in order to do our jobs is actually learned on the job, while working—not isolated in classrooms away from the work environment. And we're getting better at utilizing technology to enable just-in-time learning—from simple forms of capturing threaded dialogues to sophisticated simulations of anticipated events.

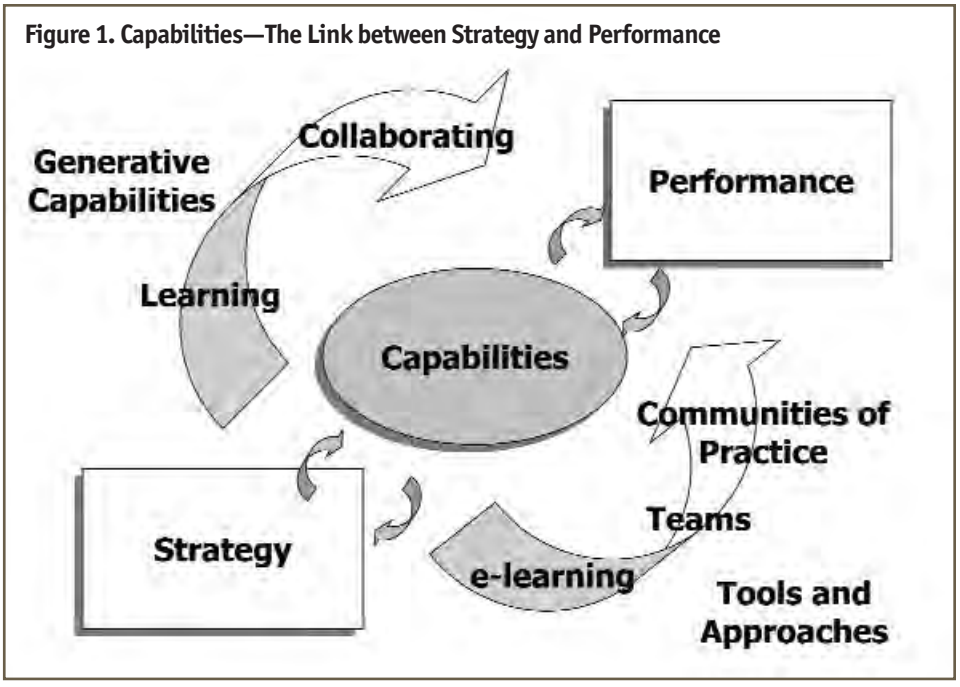
Looking under the Hood

For every organization that is still "kicking the tires" or "test driving" communities of practice as a viable approach to achieving desperately needed capabilities, knowing organizations as identified in Choo's seminal work (Oxford University Press, 1999), already "get it." With what amounts to fairly minimal effort, these organizations have provided support in the form of tools and resources as well as people skilled in community development and support. But more important, they have championed the community of practice concept and openly recognized the value derived from dynamic exchange among experienced and novice practitioners.

The term "community" is considered one of the most complex concepts in the field of sociology. Probably the most common understanding is framed by the community in which we live. It has physical boundaries, infrastructure, rules, and of course lots of people! A key component of communities of practice as well as a critical factor in their success is a shared sense of purpose. While each individual's perspective may have unique qualities, a shared purpose unites the community, becomes the bedrock for collaboration, and fosters the building of trust.

Wenger, who continued to work in the field along with co-authors McDermott and Snyder, provides the most referenced definition of communities of practice:

Figure 1. Capabilities—The Link between Strategy and Performance



"Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their understanding and knowledge of this area by interacting on an ongoing basis." (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 4)

With this definition in mind, others have identified the various components that make up a community of practice. In our work we found that true communities of practices (as opposed to communities of interest, purpose, or learning) include the following features:

- Self-governance—agreed-upon conventions, principles, and governance structure
- Member support—accountability to support one another
- Knowledge base—knowledge created and updated by members that furthers a practice
- Productive inquiry—iterative method of questioning that fuels knowledge creation and exchange, situated in practice and vetted by the members
- Shared knowledge—collaborating and learning as vehicles to make knowledge more widely available.
- Collaborative tools—use of a variety of synchronous and asynchronous collaborative tools, including face-to-face meetings and on-line space
- Facilitation—dedicated human resources to keep the community focused on its purpose
- Organization as a valid way to learn and collaborate; adds value to the organization

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. They range from formal to informal and structured to unstructured, but they all share the common features of being focused on a specific practice and steeped in knowledge creation.

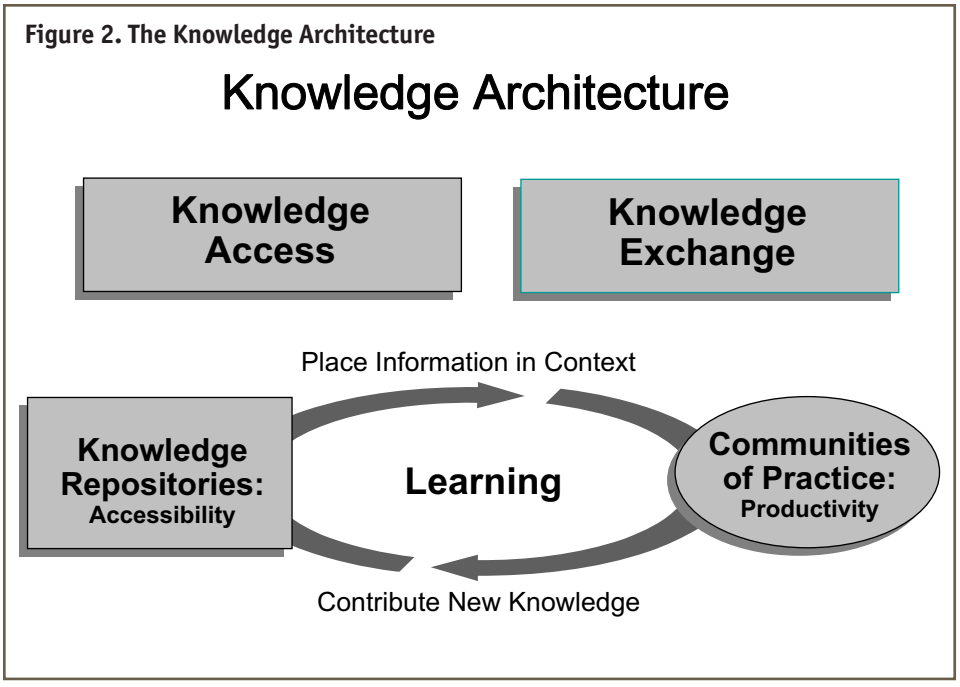
Communities Don't DO WORK!

One of the distinguishing features of a community of practice is that it doesn't do any real work. The typical response to this statement is… "Then sign me up!" But it's a key point that warrants explicit understanding, especially from all levels of an organization's management. Communities don't "do work" in the sense that an organization cannot set the agenda for a community nor can its management dictate a set of goals and objectives to be achieved by the community—that's the responsibility of project teams, workgroups, or units/departments—not communities.

The only "work" that the community does is create knowledge. Once created, that knowledge is captured, stored, and made readily available to other members in a dynamic exchange supported by a knowledge architecture described in Figure 2.

Knowledge access and knowledge exchange form the two main elements of this architecture. Knowledge access puts the full knowledge base of the community at the disposal of all community members. Knowledge exchange allows that knowledge to be put in context and validated by members and draws out additional tacit knowledge that might otherwise lie unused. This dynamic interchange keeps knowledge relevant while also making it persistent. In the end, knowledge resides in communities—not in isolated repositories or physical libraries. The value of community knowledge is that it goes beyond what has been written and unearths the truly difficult-to-know aspects of practice—the nuances, variations, and subtleties that can only be discovered in conversation.

Figure 2. The Knowledge Architecture



Catalysts for Change

In the purest sense of the word, learning is about change—about changing behavior through the acquisition of new knowledge. While we tend to be creatures of habit who will gladly go out of our way, often paying a premium, to reach a favorite coffee shop chain, shop at a preferred retailer, or seek the comforts of a particular hotel, we also live in a world where an accepted mantra is "the only constant is change."

Businesses that celebrate 50 years on the New York Stock Exchange are few and far between—and those that have survived have done so because of their agility, their ability to "sense and respond" (see Saint-Onge and Armstrong, 2004) to the changing marketplace faster than their competition.

Central to this capability is the capacity to learn. We're seeing the expansion of the communities of practice model to include learning communities, professional development communities, and communities of purpose. While the form and formats vary, the function remains the same—social interaction that results in creating and then sharing knowledge.

The place to start is to assess your organizational readiness—your capacity to enable community interactions. In particular, does your organization have:

- Partnering mindsets and capabilities—the values, attributes, and skills necessary to learn, collaborate, and share knowledge
- A supportive context and leadership endorsement—an explicit, collaborative culture that recognizes the value of learning and knowledge sharing with an appropriate rewards system in place

- A strong technology platform—tools integrated into workflow that support communication as well as knowledge harvesting, storage, and access
- Strategic alignment—a community strategy that is aligned with the organization's vision, mission, strategic imperatives, and employee codes and contracts
- Realistic expectations for return on investment—the ability of management to anticipate and then measure the community's contribution in a realistic and meaningful way

Growing Potential

From a life-cycle perspective, communities of practice are still in the early stages of Moore's adoption cycle (1991)—an organization's realization of their strategic importance as a means to create and share knowledge, innovate, and foster change. But innovators and early adopters are already on to the next level of community development, utilizing social network analysis to form and grow communities and grappling with the ever-shrinking availability of time by studying the notion of continuous partial attention.

We've only scratched the surface of the possibilities communities of practice offer organizations. SLA is well on the road to exploring the potential not only for building individual and organizational capability, but for furthering the profession and its practice.

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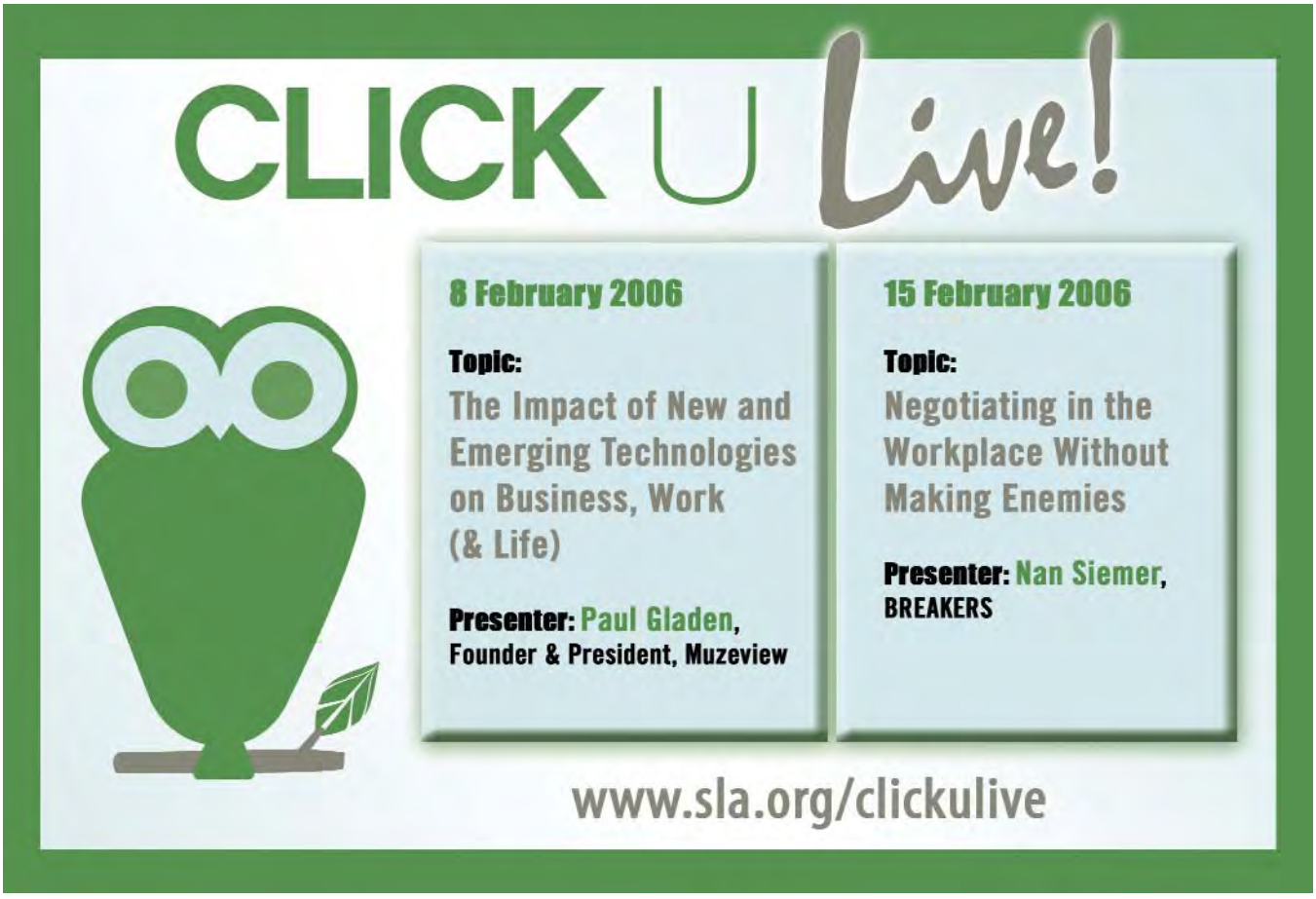
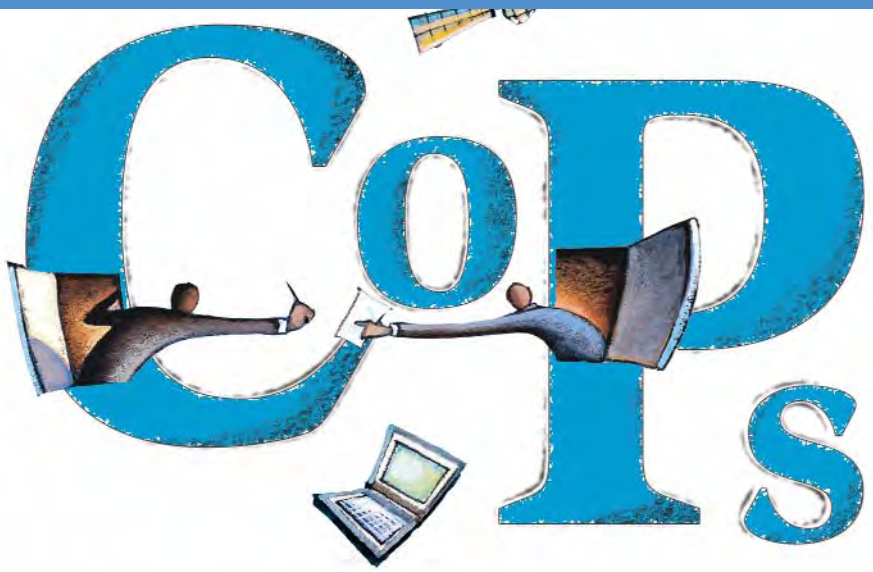
SLA's Community of Practice Site: http://cop.sla.org/COP





— Developing Relationships, Fostering Learning

TAcommunities.org is one of several forums available as part of a technical assistance initiative to exchange strategies and ideas to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. The initiative was created by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Program. The Web site itself is quite large and includes several communities of practice, including data, exiting, identification, early intervention settings, preschool, and LRE (least restrictive environment).

Facilitators of each topic organize a number of events, from online conferences to Web tours; they also post a library of electronic documents. Members can join as many communities as they wish and set up profiles so that they can connect with colleagues with similar interests. In addition to participating in online events, members can post questions, concerns, or ideas to engage in conversation with parents and professionals across the country. The project is supported entirely by federal funds and there are no fees to the users.

The Technical Assistance Communities CoP Web site includes many topics, but Vicki Hornus of the NERRC (Northeast Regional Resource Center) works only in the area of LRE for Part B (children age 3 to 21). LRE is the part of federal law that requires public agencies to establish procedures to ensure that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

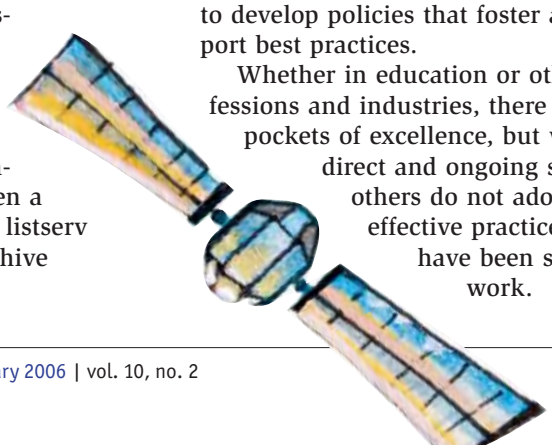
Regular *Information Outlook* contributor Cybèle Elaine Werts recently interviewed Hornus about communities of practice, or CoPs.

Werts: First, I'd like to talk a little bit about the idea of a community of practice. A lot of people are familiar with listservs or discussion groups as ways for groups to share ideas. How is a community of practice different?

Hornus: As you've said, most of us have subscribed at one time or another to a listserv or discussion group. This is basically a service that puts all the e-mails of a group of people under one umbrella e-mail. That way, you only have to send one e-mail to the listserv to reach everyone in the group. When they reply, the reply also goes to everyone. The Internet service Yahoo! is well known for having thousands of these kinds of listservs for lots of special interests, from pigs to toy cash registers. Yahoo! also includes a Web site that archives all the e-mails, as well as other files, such as photos of the members. When you add these other features, the listserv is often described as a "discussion group." Keep in mind that the word "Listserv" is actually a commercial product marketed by L-Soft International, but the name has come into common usage. This is a lot like Kleenex, which may be a brand name, but which is used all the time for tissues of any brand.

On the other hand, a community of practice, or CoP, is a whole different animal. A CoP is a group of peers who are connected to one another by a common sense of purpose, most usually by their profession or their role or special interest. Through their joint problem solving, new knowledge is developed.

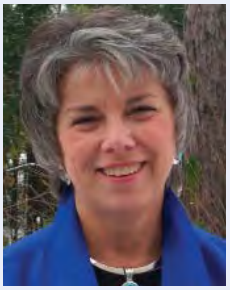
While a listserv or discussion group runs itself using a software application, a CoP has a foundation in people and community. One similarity is that there is often a central Web site where a listserv resides, as well as an archive of library material and other announcements and items of interest. But the CoP goes well beyond this by arranging for webcasts, conference calls, live meetings, and other electronic ways of communication. There is usually a group of leaders who commit to keeping the CoP active and vibrant, as well as reaching out to new members.



Werts: In a recent article in the newsletter of the Council of Administrators of Special Education, author Patrice Linehan writes that "the concept of CoP has its roots in the educational theory of situated learning—i.e., when learning takes place within the context and culture of real situations rather than through representation of abstract concepts." How has the TA (technical assistance) communities' CoP extended this idea to the area of special education?

Hornus: Communities of practice are often formed to bridge the knowing/doing gap. CoPs can create new relationships between and among policy makers, researchers, and implementers. Often, practices do not transfer across organizations or even across sites within a single organization. In particular, in the field of education, research and best practices discovered or developed in institutions of higher education or at research centers do not find their way to practitioners. And, if they do, the practitioners are often left on their own to attempt implementation. A CoP can foster a collaborative relationship that informs each from the other and results in greater positive impact for children, youth, and their families. Teachers are learning alongside the researchers, the researchers are learning from the teachers, and the policy makers synthesize it all in order to develop policies that foster and support best practices.

Whether in education or other professions and industries, there are often pockets of excellence, but without direct and ongoing support, others do not adopt the effective practices that have been shown to work.



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Communities of practice as a technical assistance strategy, as envisioned by OSEP when they developed the six technical assistance communities two years ago, has a different purpose than many of the earlier communities established to manage and create knowledge.

Werts: Does a community of practice require a leader, or do they function well as a democratic society just moving along on their own?

Hornus: Some CoPs form or evolve on their own, or organically, around a common interest and/or purpose—in those cases, I think that the community could function without an identified

leader. Likely, the "leadership" would shift as needs, interests, time, etc., changed among the members, with members stepping up to the plate to do what needs to be done. In the case of the OSEP TA communities, they were formed with designated facilitators, and it has been somewhat difficult to turn leadership over to the membership as they have grown used to expecting the "official leaders" to do the work of coordinating and facilitating the community. We also have to remember that we are talking about a significant culture shift here. For years, OSEP has funded technical assistance centers to "provide" TA to states and parent centers. Now we are asking those states and parent centers to be part of the development of new knowledge and share what they know and have learned with others. It is asking that they move from being somewhat passive recipients of information to proactive participants in the technical assistance process.

Werts: Despite the very positive response you've received to your community, one evaluation of the TA community as a whole found that "many members do not understand the CoP model." Being, as you were, one of the original facilitators, what particular challenges did you face in starting up a community from scratch? Did you find that educating your members as to how exactly a CoP worked was a big part of your initial work?

Hornus: Interestingly, that issue did not seem to be a problem with our community. It may be because many of us have worked in less formal communities of practice before, and parts of the model were already familiar to our members. It always helps to have a base of understanding when you move to the next level. That said, the community of practice did struggle with a number of issues, which included:

- The technology for the Web-based platform
- Identifying who the targeted members were or should be
- Carving out time from existing work responsibilities to devote to developing and nurturing the community
- Determining the array of activities that would serve the TA needs among community members in the most effective way

There were also some challenges that were more specific to the LRE-Part B community, which were:

Unlike the other communities, there were no designated LRE-Part B staff in state Departments of Education, so using existing groups or lists was not an option.

The term LRE connotes different things to different people so that some potential, as well as actual, members felt that we were promoting an agenda that they did not support.

Staff changes within our partner technical assistance center were challenging in the beginning because they disrupted the continuity, but we now have four active co-facilitators including myself, Diana Autin of the Region I Parent Technical Assistance Center @ Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Deidre Magee of the National Institute for Urban School Improvement, and Judy Shanley of the Access Center.

Werts: You have been instrumental in organizing events such as the Newark Collaboration's recent webinar. Which events have been the most popular with your members, and why?

Hornus: Facilitated discussions that highlight the experiences and successes of others clearly fill a need among some of the membership. For those providing the guidance, I believe the experience has been useful as well.

The Newark Collaboration is a partnership between the Newark Teachers Union and its Professional Development Center, and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network. Many schools were placed on the "Schools in Need of Improvement" list at least in part due to the scores of classified students, and the collaboration was designed to help address this issue.

In the case of the Newark Collaboration, the panel members from the Newark School District were reinforced for their really innovative work and are now poised to share it in other venues. Without our invitation and opportunity, they might not have developed their overview into this fine presentation.

We have hosted a few conference calls on specific topics—no expert presenter, just an opportunity for interaction and conversation—which were successful for the participants. One of the things that we have learned is that there is no one activity which will meet the needs of all members, or even most members. We have also learned that people may be "members" for a period of time, get what they need, and then move on. That may not be a negative thing, but just the way communities operate.

Given the hits that we have had on the Web portal for the resources posted there, I suspect that is also a strategy that works for some people—whether they would consider themselves members or not. That is one of the continuing challenges—what is a member? Are there different kinds or levels of members? And, ultimately, we're finding that every kind of member brings something unique to the table.

A strategy that we are planning to use more in the near future is to identify potential practice groups among our "official" members and offer activities (probably mostly conference calls) specifically for them. Practice groups are groups within the community that are formed around a particular area of interest, or to tackle a special topic. They may be short term or long term. This is a place where community members could take the leadership for forming and guiding a practice group with general support from the official facilitators. For example, one of our facilitators, Diana Autin, has planned a series of calls beginning this fall for members who represent parent and advocacy groups.

Werts: Recently you offered an online tour of the Access Center, an OSEP-funded technical assistance and dissemination center focusing on access to the general education curriculum for students in grades K to 8. What kind of response did you get to offering this kind of tour?

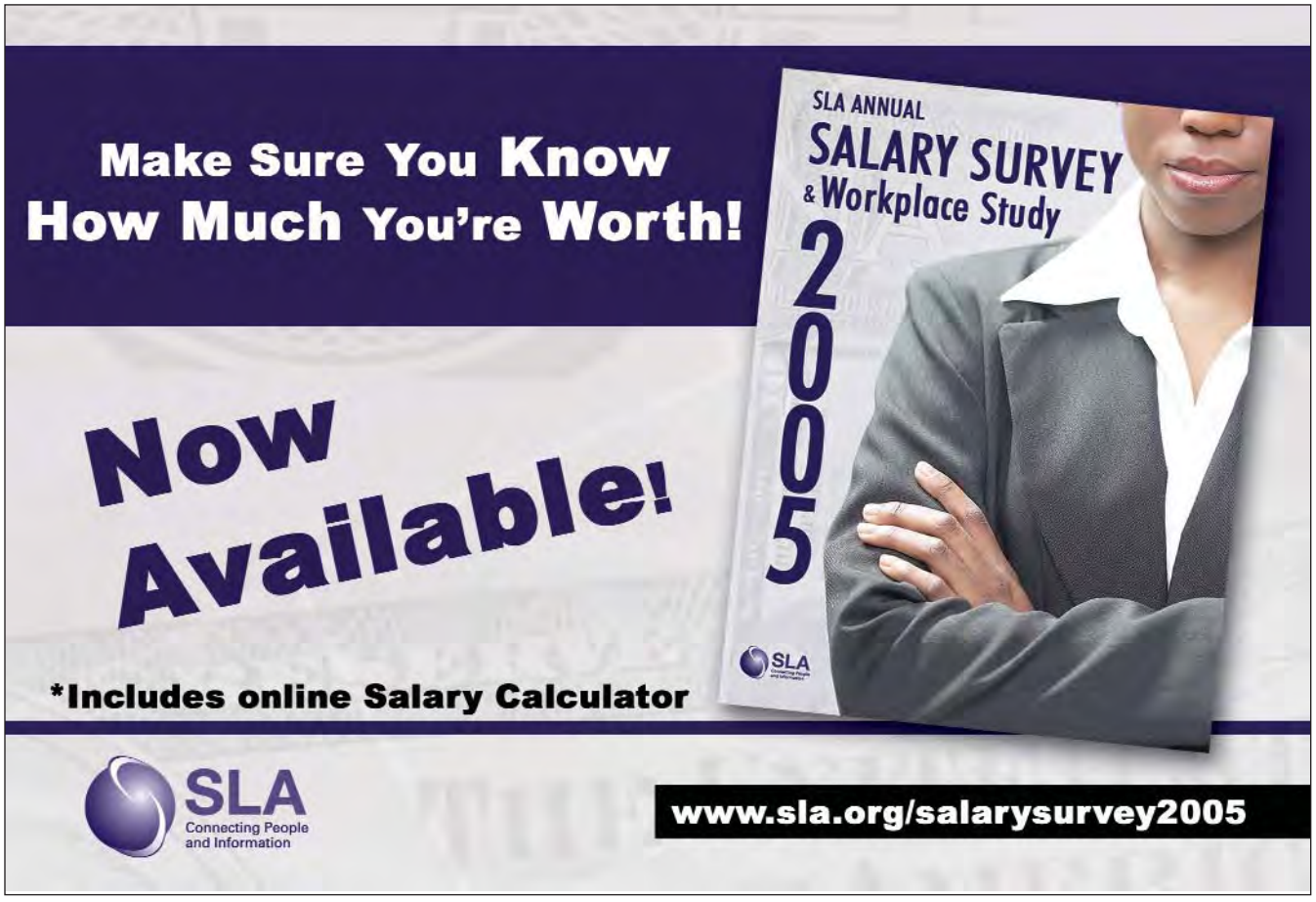
Hornus: We had about 20 sites for the Access Web Tour—folks from across the country and representing a variety of roles. We have had very positive feedback about our Web tours and have a series outlined for the next 12 or so months. Participants have shared that because they simply don't know what is available on a TA center Web site, they don't think to look there, or they miss the link that would be most useful to them. The Web tours also provide a great connection between our community and the federally funded network and give them visibility to an audience that might not otherwise know about them or use their resources.

Werts: This particular CoP focuses on special education. Do you think that CoPs are better utilized in some areas of interest than others? For example, are some professions, such as medical professionals, more likely to be involved than others?

Hornus: From what I have read, heard from others in different fields, and experienced, I suspect that communities are a viable communication and learning strategy for most professions and areas of work. For years people have valued the benefits of "getting together" with others in similar jobs or with similar responsibilities. Often that was only available to a few people because of the costs of getting together at a conference or meeting. With the current technology and the recognition that there is far too much information available for each person to sort out on his or her own, communities seem like a natural strategy to share the wealth, provide support, and encourage proactive learning. I also think that as we become more reliant on the Internet, e-mail, and voice mail, as opposed to face-to-face human interaction, there is a need for more personalization, which a community of practice can foster.

Werts: It wasn't that long ago that most people really felt that colleagues needed "face time" to connect and learn from each other. How do you think that has changed in the new millennium? What do you think are the best tools available to help people connect with each other when they may never meet?

Hornus: I think that having a community facilitator who can "facilitate" the participation and sharing of knowledge and experiences by community members, and foster and nurture their leadership within the community helps the connections. There will always be members that are sometimes called "lurkers" who choose not to share their experiences or ask their burning questions. If a facilitator can find out



more about those folks and invite their more active participation, I think it enriches and strengthens the community. This, however, takes time and dedication from the facilitators. And there is nothing in the CoP theory or practice that negates the importance of at least some "face time." The online CoP platform merely provides ongoing opportunities for sharing in between those face-to-face conferences and meetings.

Werts: On the more positive side, the evaluation report also indicated that members indicated that the CoP Web site (54 percent) and conference calls (46 percent) were the most beneficial activities. Other activities of note were the listserv and face-to-face meetings and conferences. What is your sense about what members really want out of a community of practice?

Hornus: I think that members like opportunities to develop relationships with others, folks who they would ideally meet face to face at some point, but with whom they can at least have a virtual relationship. While teleseminars with experts allow for some interaction, it is the more informal conference calls where people begin to feel comfortable and build relationships. We have seen this with our advisory group. The members do not actually know one another, but over time they have developed a relationship and, as a result, are much better able to give us feedback, suggestions, etc. When we held our very first advisory group call, as facilitators we had a clear agenda that we had sent out ahead of time. The members had all agreed to participate if it proved to be a worthwhile expenditure of their time, etc., and we were eager to get the most from them in the time allowed. As it turned out, they needed to chat and find out about one another, and pretty much threw out the agenda. Initially, we were frustrated because we didn't get the guidance from them that we were looking for, but we quickly realized that they did what they needed to do before they could begin to function as a group.

Werts: Looking toward the future, what technological changes do you see coming down the pike that will add to your capabilities in further development of the communities of practice?

Hornus: I think the biggest change is that people are becoming more comfortable both with technology and with using technology as a mode of communication instead of face-to-face meetings. This is such a change from historical ways of doing business that it will take a real shift over some generations for it to feel intuitive. I also think that as things like videoconferencing and other technologies become both common and easy to use, they will add to our feeling of being right there with our colleagues—even when we are thousands of miles apart. Unfortunately, even though we obviously have this capacity now, it can often be fraught with technological glitches.

Werts: What is your high dream for the LRE community of practice?

Hornus: That the membership would step forward to provide leadership to the community; would offer resources, materials, and strategies that they have used for the benefit of others; and that there would be actual cross-fertilization of ideas and knowledge across roles and areas of expertise. During our most recent advisory committee call, two of our members did in fact "step up to the plate" and agree to co-facilitate some upcoming calls. So I think we are well on our way!

Resources

TAcommunities
One of several forums available to educators as part of OSEP's TA initiative. This project seeks to combine OSEP resources from the Monitoring and State Improvement Planning Division and technical assistance resources from the Research to Practice Division.
www.tacommunities.org/ev.php

The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8
American Institutes for Research
(referred to in the interview)
www.k8accesscenter.org

"Communities of Practice and Organizational Performance"
by E. L. Lesser and J. Storck
www.research.ibm.com/journal/sj/404/lesser.html

"Communities of Practice at the Federal Highway Administration"
by Mike Burk
www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/mayjun00/commprac.htm

"Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System"
by Etienne Wenger
www.co-i-l.com/coil/knowledge-garden/cop/lss.shtml

"Community of Practice: An Overview"
by Fred Nickols
http://home.att.net/~discon/KM/CoPOverview.pdf

National Association of State Directors of Special Education Inc. Synthesis Brief: "Communities of Practice: Activities Sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs"
www.nasdse.org/publications.cfm

"Supporting Pioneering Leaders as Communities of Practice"
by Margaret Wheatley
www.berkana.org/resources/pioneeringleader.html

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The Section 108 Study Group

By Lesley Ellen Harris

In mid-2006, we will see the results of an extensive study on section 108 on library exceptions. Section 108 of the U.S. Copyright Act allows libraries and archives to freely make certain uses of copyright-protected materials for such things as preservation, replacement, and patron access. Section 108 was initially introduced in the Copyright Act of 1976, amended in 1998 by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and the Copyright Term Extension Act, and in 2005 by the Preservation of Orphan Works Act.

The Section 108 Study Group is sponsored by the Library of Congress National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program ("NDIIPP") in cooperation with the U.S. Copyright Office. The goal of the Study Group is to provide balanced, solid recommendations for revising Section 108 to meet the way libraries work in the Digital Age. Following the group's recommendations in mid-2006, the U.S. Copyright Office will hold public hearings on the report before submitting recommendations to the U.S. Congress.

A copy of section 108 is at: http://www.copyright.gov/title17/92chap1.html#108.

The Section 108 Study Group is co-chaired by Lolly Gasaway (former author of this column), director of the law library and professor of law at the University of North Carolina, and Richard Rudick, former vice president and general counsel of John Wiley and Sons. The 17 other members are from a variety of backgrounds.

One impetus behind the formation of the Study Group is to examine how Section 108 works in light of digitally created works (of which no non-digital copy also exists.) Another important issue to examine is the fact that the Copyright Act assumes at various places in section 108 that a library is a physical place and uses wording like "premises" of a library. The Study Group will look at such wording and recommend how it may be updated to reflect the reality of virtual libraries and archives.

Professor Kenneth Crews, in a paper on digital libraries and the application of section 108, sets out a couple of common scenarios in this context:

The following common situations raise questions about the meaning of Section 108 in the context of developing and deploying a digital library:

Situation 1: The library owns a published sound recording of a musical work that is now "out of print." The recording is on a vinyl LP from 1975. Because it has been well used, the sounds are getting weaker, and wear damage on the medium itself is beginning to detract from the music. A nearby library has a clean copy that has been little used through the years. Are you allowed to copy the clean recording and use it to replace your worn version? May you make a digital recording of that work and include it in the digital library for students and researchers to access?

Situation 2: The library has, lawfully, included in a digital library a rich trove of materials related to the life and work of Igor Stravinsky. The materials include scores, recordings, original manuscripts, photographs, maps, and journal articles. These works are accessible to researchers only at terminals located inside the library building. Researchers who come to the library often want clean computer printouts or photocopies of some of the materials for their individual study. The library also receives requests for such copies through the interlibrary loan system. May the library make these copies for researchers at the library and to fulfill the ILL requests?

See Crews' paper at: http://www.dml.indiana.edu/html/crews-sec108/section108overview.html.

The topics that the Study Group will examine are many and diverse and include the following:

- Analog-to-digital preservation copying of published works
- Digital-to-digital preservation copying of published works
- Access to preservation copies
- Who is covered under Section 108, and how to define covered entities
- Different treatment of published and unpublished works
- Copies made at the request of patrons
- Interlibrary loan
- E-reserves
- Licenses and contracts
- Organization and structure of section 108

A Web site for the Study Group is at: http://www.loc.gov/section108. The site contains much background information on the Group as well as several in-depth research papers relating to the topics to be studied by the Group.

Lesley Ellen Harris is a copyright lawyer/consultant who works on legal, business, and strategic issues in the publishing, content, entertainment, Internet, and information industries. She is the editor of the Copyright & New Media Law Newsletter: For Libraries, Archives & Museums *and the author of several books, including* Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians. *She often speaks at conferences and teaches online courses on copyright and licensing. For more information, visit http://copyrightlaws.com.*

coming events

February 2006

8th International Bielefeld Conference
Bielefeld University Library
7-9 February 2006
Bielefeld, Germany
http://conference.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/2006

ECURE 2006: Preservation and Access for Digital College and University Resources
Arizona State University
27 February-1 March 2006
Tempe, AZ, USA
http://www.asu.edu/ecure/

March 2006

Spring 2006 ASIDIC Meeting
Association of Information and Dissemination Centers
12-14 March 2006
Fort Myers, FL, USA
http://www.asidic.org/meetings/spring06.htm

Computers in Libraries 2006
Information Today
22-24 March 2006
Washington, DC, USA
http://www.infotoday.com/cil2006/default.shtml

ASPP 4th Education Conference
American Society of Picture Professionals
March 23-26
San Francisco, CA, USA
www.aspp.com

2006 Information Architecture (IA) Summit
ASIS&T
March 23-27, 2006
Vancouver, BC, Canada
http://www.iasummit.org/

CONSAL XIII
Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians
25-30 March 2006
Manila, Phillippines
http://www.consal13.up.edu.ph/new/

April 2006

Buying & Selling eContent
Information Today
9-11 April 2006
Scottsdale, AZ, USA
http://www.buy-sell-econtent.com/

20th Annual AIIP Conference
Association of Independent Information Professionals
19-23 April 2006
Coral Gables, FL, USA
http://www.aiip.org/Conference/2006/index.html

SCIP06
Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals
April 26-29
Orlando, FL, USA

May 2006

Annual AIIM ON DEMAND Conference & Expo
AIIM: The ECM Association
15-18 May 2006
Philadelphia, PA, USA
http://www.aiim.org/article-events.asp?ID=3277

37th Annual Conference of the CPLQ
Corporation of Professional Librarians of Québec
17-19 May 2006
Laval, Québec, Canada
http://www.cbpq.qc.ca/congres/congres2006/Call_for_papers_2006.html

MLA '06
Medical Library Association
19-24 May 2006
Phoenix, AZ, USA
http://www.mlanet.org/am/

ICEIS 2006
8th International Conference on Enterprise Information Systems
May 23-27
Paphos, Greece
www.iceis.org

LIDA 2006
Libraries in the Digital Age
29 May-4 June 2006
Dubrovnik and Mljet, Croatia
http://www.ffos.hr/lida/

June 2006

CAIS/ACSI 2006 Annual Conference
Canadian Association for Information Science
1-3 June 2006
Toronto, ON, Canada
http://www.cais-acsi.ca/2006call.htm

JCDL 2006
Joint Conference on Digital Libraries
11-15 June 2006
Chapel Hill, NC, USA
http://www.jcdl2006.org/

2006 CLA Conference
Canadian Library Association
14-17 June 2006
Ottawa, ON, Canada
http://www.cla.ca/conference/cla2006/event_proposals.htm

LISA V
Library and Information Services in Astronomy V
June 18-21
Cambridge, MA, USA
www.cfa.harvard.edu/library/lisa

AH 2006
Adaptive Hypermedia and Adaptive Web-Based Systems
21-23 June 2006
Dublin, Ireland
http://www.ah2006.org/

ALA Annual Conference
American Library Association
22-28 June 2006
New Orleans, LA, USA
http://www.ala.org/annual

July 2006

Ninth International ISKO Conference
International Society for Knowledge Organization
4-7 July 2006
Vienna, Austria
http://isko.univie.ac.at/cms2/

99th AALL Annual Meeting & Conference
American Association of Law Libraries
8-12 July 2006
St. Louis, MO, USA

Information Seeking in Context Conference 2006
19-21 July 2006
Sydney, Australia

August 2006

Third International Conference on Knowledge Management (ICKM)
University of Greenwich et al.
1-2 August 2006
Greenwich, UK

29th Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference
6-11 August 2006
Seattle, WA, USA

72nd Annual World Library and Information Congress
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
20-24 August 2006
Seoul, Republic of Korea

index of advertisers

Annual Reviews 2
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www.strategyr.com

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www.marquiswhoswho.com

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www.ovid.com

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43 Things I (or You) Might Want to Do This Year

By Stephen Abram, MLS

43 Things is a cool site. It's ideal for tracking and working on your personal progress to learn new things. I like to think of it as tracking play. Remember your goals for the day as a child? Build a fort. Make an ashtray out of the batch of clay you found by the creek? Climb the cliff in the park. Every time you did something on your mental daily goals list you learned something and felt a sense of accomplishment. You grew.

The basic concept of 43 Things is that "people have known for years that making a list of goals is the best way to achieve them. Why is that? First, getting your goals in writing can help you clarify what you really want to do. You might find you have some important and some frivolous goals. That is OK."

This Web site gives you space for 43 entries on your list. Not every item needs to be earth shattering. Learning is incremental and you can grow a little bit at a time and suddenly realize you're competent in something new. With this site you can discover from others registered on the site the many options of what you can choose to do as well as find others who share your interest. It's a way of engaging in life itself. The goal of the site is to let you make your list, edit it, get inspired and share your progress. As you achieve a goal you've listed you can click on the "I've done this" button and share a story about how you did it.

This site appears to be ready-made for those of us learners who like to engage in self-discovery and tracking our progress. I think that we're a profession of inveterate list makers and love to tick off our accomplishments. So here's my suggestion this month. Beware: this could be a yearlong or lifelong project! I want you to go to 43 Things (See the URL in the sidebar), register and list what you want to accomplish this year. You can make it private or share it with others. Just try it! Can't think of 43 things to do? Here are a few suggestions of simple things to try:

1. Take a digital picture with a camera and/or phone and download it to your PC.
2. Register at Blogger and start a blog. Post every once in a while and add a photo.
3. Register at Bloglines and aggregate your blog and RSS subscriptions into one reader. Check out what other blogs align with your interests.
4. Look at Facebook and see the next generation of social networking.
5. Set up a Flickr account and post a few of digital photos online. Tag and annotate them.
6. Look at LibraryElf and see the potential for personal library tools.
7. Check out LibraryThing and catalogue a few books from your personal collection.
8. Register at MSN Photo Album and build an album to share with friends, family, or colleagues.
9. Check out Myspace and see how this service has become so huge globally.
10. Have some fun with the links on the Generator Blog.
11. Download Firefox and compare it to Explorer and Opera.
12. Research bookmarklets and try a few.
13. Revisit Yahoo! and remind yourself why it is visited more than Google.
14. Learn about iFILM and viral video.
15. Get a PubSub account and start searching the future.
16. Make a map of all the countries or states you've been to at Visited Countries.
17. Experiment with some sound and picture search engines like Podscope.
18. Try some new Web search engines like Exalead, Wink, Gravee, Clusty, Mooter, Kartoo, etc., or others you can find at Search Engine Watch's list.
19. Learn more about visual display tools like Grokker.
20. Check out Google Base and see what the fuss is all about.
21. Register with NetFlix and rent a movie. Learn how to deal with streaming media.
22. Get a Del.icio.us account and play with social bookmarking and tags.
23. Play with Blinkx and learn about searching TV shows, video and podcasts.
24. Try MovieFlix too. There are plenty of free movies here to learn to do this.
25. Set up a Google Picasa account. Post a picture and then edit it.
26. Download an MP3 file to your PC, laptop or phone. Try iTunes, LimeWire, Kazaa, or eDonkey. Look for something that's not music too.
27. Listen to a podcast. There are quite a few about library issues, too.
28. Find your home and your office on Google Maps.
29. Check out your local public library's website. You'll likely find some cool stuff like talking books for that long commute, or classical music collections, or eBooks.
30. Change your ring tone so

Stephen Abram, MLS, is vice president, innovation, for Sirsi Corporation. He is past president of the Ontario Library Association and current president of the Canadian Library Association. In June 2003 he was awarded SLA's John Cotton Dana Award. This column reflects Stephen's personal perspective and does not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of Sirsi Corporation. Products are not endorsed or recommended for your personal situation and are mentioned here as useful ideas or places to investigate or explore. Stephen would love to hear from you at stephen.abram@sirsi.com.

you don't jump when everyone else's default ring goes off.
31. Visit the Google Labs site regularly.
32. Set up a personalized Google or My Yahoo! page
33. Play with JibJab.
34. Play with Wikipedia. Edit an entry, feel the network.
35. Play with Copernic and extend your searching.
36. Play an online multiplayer game.
37. Take an e-learning course from Click University.
38. Choose any of the above and add your own goals. Include some fun things, too.

I could go on about this forever! Many of you will have already tried a number of the above. They're easy and mostly free. By trying some you may find a serious business use for it too. Many of these sites represent some pretty basic Web and technology skills that will be necessary to survive the next few years. Even if they don't help you at work, they're great party talk, too. This past holiday season I asked every teen and college-age friend and relative I met about the way they used the Web, and many of the links above were tools and services that they considered essential to their lives. It's your entry into the new world of next-generation coworkers.

See! It's easy to try new things. Have fun.

43 Things: What do you want to do with your life?
http://www.43things.com

Blinkx
http://www2.blinkx.com/overview.php

Blogger
http://www.blogger.com/start

Bloglines
http://www.bloglines.com

Click University
http://sla.learn.com/learncenter.asp?id=178409&page=1

Clusty
http://clusty.com

Copernic
http://www.copernic.com/en/products/agent/index.html

Del.icio.us
http://del.icio.us

eDonkey
http://www.edonkey2000.com

Exalead
http://www.exalead.com/search

Facebook
http://www.facebook.com

Firefox
http://www.mozilla.com/firefox

Flickr
http://www.flickr.com

Generator Blog
http://generatorblog.blogspot.com

Google Labs
http://labs.google.com

Google Maps
http://maps.google.com

Google Personal
http://www.google.com/ig

Gravee
http://www.gravee.com

Grokker
http://www.grokker.com

iFILM
http://www.ifilm.com

iTunes
http://www.apple.com/itunes

JibJab
http://www.jibjab.com/Home.aspx

Kazaa
http://www.kazaa.com/us/index.htm

Kartoo
http://www.kartoo.com

LibraryElf
http://www.libraryelf.com

LibraryThing
http://www.librarything.com

LimeWire
http://www.limewire.com

Mooter
http://www.mooter.com

MovieFlix
http://www.movieflix.com

MSN Photo Album
http://communities.msn.com/content/features/photoalbum.asp

Myspace
http://www.myspace.com

My Yahoo!
http://ca.my.yahoo.com

NetFlix
http://www.netflix.com/Default

Picasa
http://picasa.google.com/index.html

Podscope
http://www.podscope.com

PubSub
http://www.pubsub.com

Search Engine Watch list of search engines
http://searchenginewatch.com/links

Stephen's Lighthouse Blog
http://stephenslighthouse.sirsi.com

Visited Countries
http://douweosinga.com/projects/visitedcountries

Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page

Wink
http://www.wink.com

Yahoo!
http://www.yahoo.com

What's New about Innovation?

By John R. Latham

In his speech at SLA's annual conference in Toronto Don Tapscott referred to the invention of the blackboard and its enormous impact on education. He used this example as an analogy for explaining that some of the greatest innovations did not come out of new inventions, but by adapting or harnessing old ones.

I suppose you could draw the same analogy from the use of the wheel. Round stones with holes in them had been around for ages, but when Man thought of putting two of them together to create a wheelbarrow, it was a monumental innovation. Woman probably worked it out long before, but knew that Man would use the invention to make her do all the transporting, which he had had to do previously. I digress. Innovation feeds on the appropriate use of information, and that's where we come in.

Obviously we cannot initiate innovation, but we can strive to ensure that our users, customers, clients, or whatever you want to call them, know where to find, and have easy access to, as much information as possible. We are always working on improving the dissemination of information, but let's start by working with the systems that we have in place now.

We need to establish what information is available, required and used. How you carry out an information audit depends on the size and nature of you organization, but it is something that we should be doing on a regular basis. I know that I do not do this, but perhaps it will be a New Year's resolution.

You will need to design one or more surveys, but I suggest that you start by arranging some interviews with users from different areas within the organization. We have an inherent bias into thinking that our colleagues or customers use the information that we make available to them, and therefore are likely to design surveys based on that premise.

Go into the interview with an open mind, and make sure that you do most of the listening. You will need to have a checklist of areas to cover in the interview, but you want the interview to be moderately unstructured so that the interviewee opens up and feels comfortable telling you how he/she works, and how information impacts this work schedule. Remember that you are not only trying to find out what information is used, and how, but also what information or resources your users think they need that are not currently made available to them. Only by understanding what are the goals and objectives of individuals, and how they work to achieve them, will you be able to do this.

At this stage you are carrying out only a few interviews to help you design the survey instruments. Try to include individuals from as many areas as possible, because the requirements of the accountants in the finance department are different from those in production.

If you cannot include the CEO, at least try to include the executive assistant, or someone close to the CEO. The more visibility you can achieve with senior management, the better. Also make sure that you include people who probably do not use your services or resources. They may not be using them because they do not know of their existence, or because they are not valuable to them. Some people are just not aware of what documentation or information within an organization can now be made available, so you may have to guide them.

After the interview, prepare notes and send them to the interviewee for comment, asking for anything that he/she may have left out during the meeting. Based on these interviews you will have a better idea of how to design the survey instrument. You may well have to prepare more than one survey depending on the nature of your users. In the association world, the requirements of management and staff are very different from those of members. Remembering also that you will receive a better response rate if the survey is short, you may want to have more than one.

If you have a second survey, it gives you a chance to add questions based on the results of the first survey. I am not dealing with the design of surveys at this time, but I do recommend that you have someone independently review the survey instrument to make sure that questions are easy to understand and that it does not use unclear terminology that only information professionals understand. Also try to avoid too many open-ended questions, as they make analysis of the results difficult and time-consuming to assess.

Once you have received the responses and analyzed the data, the fun part is deciphering what it all means, and what to do about it. This may require discontinuing services and products, or upgrading or adding services and resources. It will almost inevitably lead to changes in the forms of delivery due to advances in technology, assuming that you can afford them. For new users of your resources or services, it is certain to require some user training.

"It is said that information added with the addition of intelligence transforms into knowledge, and that knowledge with the addition of imagination becomes innovation."[1] We certainly know how to use our competencies (intelligence) to add value to information to transform it into knowledge. It is then up to the imaginative user to convert it into innovation.

[1] Sultan Kermally, "When Economics means business: the new economics of the information age." 1999.

John R. Latham is the director of the SLA Information Center. He can be reached at jlatham@sla.org.

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SLA is stronger today though the efforts of the SLA President's Club, who recruited new members during the 2005 Membership Campaign.

SLA President's Club

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*Recruited multiple members.

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Susan Brewsaugh, President, Southern California Chapter, recruited 5 new members

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