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Special Libraries Association

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

INFORMATION TEAMS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

MAR
APR
15
V 19 I N 02

information outlook

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

LEARNING INITIATIVE · 'ROSIE' AWARD

New Learning Program to Provide Content on STEM Issues

SLA is partnering with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) to launch a new initiative designed to inform, empower and enhance the careers of special librarians and information professionals in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

The SLA & IET Learning Initiative Partnership (L.I.P.) is intended to promote informed conversations about timely and relevant issues, from supporting innovation to publishing large data sets to ensuring information security to offering massive open online courses (MOOCs). Together, SLA and IET will create a steady stream of content designed to engage librarians and information professionals at all stages of their careers, from those just starting their first jobs to seasoned industry experts. The content will provide special librarians with new perspectives and fresh insights, helping them stay current on new developments, techniques, resources and tools that will help them excel professionally.

The initiative, a new benefit of SLA membership, will launch on April 13 with the release of a white paper on research workflows. Over the course of the next 12 months, a series of white papers, Webinars, e-books, interviews, and other information resources will be released and made available to SLA members. Some of these materials will highlight the work of SLA members who are at the forefront of the information profession.

IET is one of the world's largest organizations for engineers and technicians, with nearly 160,000 members in 127 countries around the world. The institution's mission is to inspire, inform and influence the global engineering community and support technology innovation to meet the needs of society.

Nielsen, Vargha to Receive Rose L. Vormelker Award

Two information professionals who actively work to advance the development of their fellow librarians and students will be honored by SLA at its 2015 Annual Conference in Boston.

Thomas Nielsen and Rebecca Vargha will receive the Rose L. Vormelker Award at the conference's opening session on June 14. The award's namesake was president of SLA in 1948-1949 and taught library and information science courses at several academic institutions, including Case Western Reserve University, Kent State University, and Kansas State University.

Thomas Nielsen

Rebecca Vargha

The Vormelker Award is presented annually to one or more mid-career members in good standing who actively teach and/or mentor students or working professionals. The award was first given in 1998.

Tom is the member services manager at the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO), a nonprofit organization that supports libraries and librarians in New York City and Westchester County. At METRO, Tom develops programs that help member libraries and librarians address challenges they are facing; he also markets and promotes METRO to local librarians and library school students, both in person and via social networking venues.

A member of SLA for nearly 20 years, Tom is currently professional development chair of the New York Chapter. He previously served as chair of the Solo Librarians Division in 2013 and past chair in 2014, during which time he developed a Webinar series for solos on professional development. Under his leadership, the Solo Division held its first-ever division-sponsored Webinars.

Rebecca is the director of the library at the University of North Carolina School of Information and Library Science, a position she has held since 2001. In addition to supervising the library's staff, her responsibilities include collection development, teaching, liaising with departmental faculty, and reference and research assistance. She previously worked as a librarian at SAS, a leading business analytics software and services vendor.

Rebecca was president of SLA in 2006-2007 and has served on numerous committees and councils during her 35-year SLA career. She currently is chair-elect of the Knowledge Management Division and a member of the Student and Academic Affairs Advisory Council and the 2015 Annual Conference Advisory Council.

· RISING STARS

Three Info Pros Named 2015 SLA Rising Stars

Two academic librarians and an information architect at a design firm will be honored as SLA Rising Stars at the association's 2015 Annual Conference in June.



Susmita Chakraborty, Christine Coughlan, and Kathleen Lehman

Susmita Chakraborty, Christine Coughlan, and Kathleen Lehman are the latest recipients of the Rising Star Award, which is presented annually to recognize outstanding new SLA members who show exceptional promise of leadership and contribution to the association and the information profession. Nominees must have one to five years of professional experience as an information professional and have been an SLA member for five years or less. They must also have met at least one of the following criteria:

- Performed outstanding work and professional activities on behalf of SLA;
- Developed notable innovations on the job;
- Actively participated in SLA units and association programs; and
- Promoted the visibility of SLA or the value of information professionals.

The three Rising Stars will be recognized at the opening session of the SLA 2015 Annual Conference & INFO-EXPO, to be held June 14-16 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center. The conference is expected to draw 2,000-plus information industry professionals and will include more than 200 sessions, business meetings, networking events, and other activities.

Susmita is an assistant professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of Calcutta in India. Since joining SLA in 2011, she has served as a director and secretary of the association's Asia Chapter, co-presented a poster at the SLA 2014 Annual Conference, and contributed articles to the *Sci-Tech News*, the newsletter of SLA's Science-Technology Division. She will be speaking about knowledge management at SLA 2015 as part of a panel discussion about transforming international science and technology librarianship.

In addition to her master's degree in library science, Susmita holds a master's degree in digital library management, a master's in English literature, and a doctorate in medical informatics. She has presented numerous papers at conferences, written several articles for journals, edited two books and three annual literary collections, and contributed chapters to a few books. She is also the editor of the *SET Bulletin*, which is published by the Education and Training Section of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). During the course of her career, she has visited more than 20 countries to discuss her research and further the advancement of the information and library profession.

Christine is an information architect with the Aten Design Group in Denver, Colorado. After joining SLA in February 2012 while in library school at the University of Denver, she quickly distinguished herself as a leader, serving as president-elect of the SLA Rocky Mountain Chapter in 2013 and president in 2014. While president, she took the lead in planning the Western States Chapters Reception at the SLA 2014 Annual Conference in Vancouver, Canada. She will be helping with the reception again this year at SLA 2015.

Chris is a member of SLA's Information Technology Division and User Experience Caucus, reflecting her interests in information architecture and user-centered design. She has presented on these topics at several events. Through her work at Aten Design, she has led projects for clients such as Human Rights Watch and the World Wildlife Fund.

Kathleen, the head of the Physics Library at the University of Arkansas, joined SLA in 2010 and quickly made her mark, receiving a travel scholarship to attend the association's 2011 Annual Conference in Philadelphia. The scholarship was sponsored in part by SLA's Physics-Astronomy-Mathematics (PAM) Division, of which Kathleen is secretary this year, having previously chaired its Awards Committee and Nominations and Elections Committee.

Kathleen has presented several conference papers on topics ranging from open access to QR codes. She has also submitted articles for publication in library journals; her article "Reviews of Science for Science Libraries: Graphene," published in the February 2011 issue of *Science & Technology Libraries*, was one of the most downloaded articles from *S&TL* that year. **SLA**

PUBLIC TRUST · ENTERPRISE CONTENT

Falling Trust Levels Hurt Acceptance of Technology

Fewer than half the people living in most countries, including established democracies such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan, trust traditional institutions such as government, the media, businesses, and nonprofit organizations, according to an annual survey.

The most recent "Trust Barometer" conducted by Edelman, a global public relations firms, found that the events of 2014—the disappearance of a Malaysian Airlines jet while flying over Southeast Asia, data breaches at private businesses and in government agencies, foreign exchange rate rigging by large banks, among others—had eroded public trust to levels not seen since the height of the Great Recession in 2009.

Edelman found that the decline in trust has even begun to shake confidence in new technologies. According to the survey, half of respondents believe innovation is happening too quickly, and only a quarter feel new technologies are making the world a better place to live. Two-thirds of respondents said they think business growth objectives are driving new technologies, and 55 percent feel businesses are not conducting sufficient testing on their innovations.

"The pace of change has never been faster, and innovation has become an even greater imperative for business success," said Richard Edelman, president and chief executive officer of the firm. "Innovation should be a trust accelerator, but today it is not. To invent is no longer enough. There must be a new compact between company and individual, where companies demonstrate that innovations are safe based on independent research, provide both societal and personal benefit, and are committed to the protection of customer data."

The survey also found that nearly half of respondents favor stronger regulation of business, but many have little or no faith in policy makers to develop and implement such regulations.

Edelman's 2015 Trust Barometer is posted online at www.edelman.com/2015-edelman-trust-barometer/.

Study Identifies Best Practices for Connecting People with Content

How do leading organizations manage enterprise content and deliver information and knowledge to employees and other stakeholders when and how they want it?

APQC, a member-based nonprofit organization focused on business benchmarking, best practices, and knowledge management research, partnered with a consulting firm to answer this question. The study resulted in a list of 20 best practices and a "Maturity Model" that describes how organizations connect people to content.

To conduct the study, APQC asked 500 business professionals from several organizations about the content management programs where they work. Their responses were largely negative—fewer than one in four respondents rated their organizations as effective in surfacing relevant content and enabling workers to find and access what they need, while more than two in five rated their employers as minimally or not at all effective in these areas.

The study identified five organizations that were rated highly by their employees and found that these businesses place great emphasis on understanding not only what *types* of content their employees want, but also how they want to contribute, access, share, and reuse organizational knowledge. From these organizations, the study authors were able to develop a model for connecting people to content.

The study authors also identified 20 best practices associated with enterprise content management and sharing. They organized the best practices into categories, as follows:

Develop a Strategy to Connect People to Content

1. Position content as a strategic asset and tie its creation and use to business goals.
2. Clearly distribute accountability between those who own content-related processes and systems and those who own the actual content.
3. Design the content strategy around stakeholder needs.

Create Content People Want

4. Align the type and format of available content with the intended audience.
5. Create specific roles or processes to identify content gaps.

Manage the End-to-End Life Cycle

6. Establish distinct channels for vetted and unvetted content.
7. For content contributions, balance metadata requirements with the need for a streamlined user experience.

Content Maturity Model

Maturity Stages ▶ / ▼ Characteristics	Ad Hoc	Defined	Developed	Integrated	Predictive
Content consumers	Anonymous	Surveyed	Engaged	Prioritized	Anticipatory
Content suppliers	Unidentified	Disconnected	Organized	Focused	Self-governing
Process	Unknown	Emerging	Systematic	Visible	Unified
Strategy	Disparate	Identified	Connected	Aligned	Monitored
Technology	Absent	Ineffective	Sub-optimal	User-oriented	Optimized

Source: APQC, 2015

8. Maintain strong accountability for content review cycles, and don't hesitate to dispense with materials of questionable value.
9. Use technology migrations as an opportunity to clear out outdated content.

Ensure Content is Findable and Accessible in the Flow of Work

10. Create taxonomies and organizing frameworks that reflect how users think about content.
11. Use scope, metadata, and manual curation to ensure that search functions return the most relevant results.
12. Monitor analytics to enhance search results and content recommendations.
13. Integrate content into business applications and processes.
14. Provide mobile apps to connect people to content through smartphones and tablets.

Integrate Content and Social Channels

15. Use communities and social networks to surface needs, incubate content, and make recommendations.
16. Combine people and content search in a seamless environment.

Manage Change and Evaluate Success

17. Train employees to be better searchers and consumers of content.
18. Measure engagement with content and the user experience.
19. Use metrics as conversation openers.
20. Find a way to measure—or at least demonstrate—the value provided by content.

The study authors concluded that the results and insights they revealed should be seen as "disturbances" that encourage knowledge organizations and workers to rethink their processes and practices. They recommend that organizations begin by using the Maturity Model to benchmark their current state of content connectedness, then proceed by identifying critical content that needs to be surfaced and indicating which stakeholder groups need to be connected to the various categories of content.

For more information about the study and the best practices, download the study report from www.apqc.org/knowledge-base/documents/connecting-people-content-study-overview.

Google, Thomson Reuters among Most Ethical Companies

Search engine giant Google and media and publishing leader Thomson Reuters are among 132 companies in 50-plus industries included on the list of "The 2015 World's Most Ethical Companies" compiled by the Ethisphere Institute, which helps define and advance standards of ethical business practice.

The companies on the list have met Ethisphere's requirements for superior achievement in transparency, integrity, ethics and compliance. Spanning 21 countries and five continents, these companies use ethics as a means to further define their industry leadership and ensure they deliver long-term value to key stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, and investors.

"Companies today are challenged by a complex and often conflicting set of laws and regulations around the world, yet despite the lack of a global rule of law, there's a growing commonality about how to do business the right way," says Timotghy Erblich, Ethisphere's chief executive officer. "More and more, we're finding that stakeholders from employees and customers to executives and investors understand that ethical leadership drives outcomes ranging from operational performance to corporate integrity, transparency and workforce behavior."

To see more information about the list and the companies on it, visit http://ethisphere.com/ethisphere-announces-the-2015-worlds-most-ethical-companies/#sthash.6e80CQz2.dpuf. **SLA**

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Information Teams and Strategic Planning

EACH TEAM MEMBER BRINGS DIFFERENT KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES TO THE PLANNING PROCESS. SUCCESS DEPENDS ON CREATING A COLLABORATIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT TO ENCOURAGE SHARING.

BY BILL SEDGWICK AND ESTHER EWING

Any team in any organization can benefit from strategic planning; by the same token, teams are also crucial to the successful implementation of strategic plans. It's very much a two-way street.

At Big Tree Strategies, we have conducted a lot of research on what makes great teams, and we have found that truly outstanding teams need four key elements to work together:

1. A clear sense of direction, and the knowledge that what they do is important to the organization and to all of them as individuals.
2. The involvement and commitment of everyone in a leadership position to tell the story of the team and build a motivating narrative. This narrative should engage the team, reinforce the fact that what they do is important, and explain how they will accomplish their goals.
3. A commitment by all members to improve how they operate as a team and continuously learn how to be a better team.
4. A team culture in which respect and trust are the foundation of a team-wide commitment to performance and accomplishment.

The Intent of a Strategic Plan

A well-crafted strategic plan weaves through all four of these elements. A plan developed by a team in an open, involved manner can become the fuel for commitment and accomplishment. But what is the intent of a strategic plan? Again, there are four considerations at play.

Purpose and direction. A strategic plan is all about focusing and clarifying the roadmap for the organization to follow. We tend to think in two buckets: the first one is "business as usual" and involves those activities that keep everyday work flowing, and the second refers to "change items" that will keep the organization relevant in the future.

Strategic planning is mostly about the second bucket—knowing what we need to do in order to change. The challenge for most teams is that they are already overloaded with business-as-usual items. This means that finding the time and energy to commit to, and deliver on, the change items is a crucial aspect of the planning process.

A forum for dialogue, learning and agreement. Top-down planning may be appropriate in highly regulated, command-and-control structures, but it is

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seldom the right approach for professionals from diverse backgrounds who have fluid business challenges to conquer. Dialogue leads to learning, and learning allows for shifts in perspective.

The voice of reality. Strategic planning is not a free-form exercise. All plans are created within a context that may involve market needs, competitive moves, or changes in the environment. What's more, they are subject to similar rules (budgets, schedules and legislation come to mind). It's not unusual for many team members to spend time focused on their own work and role, but being reminded of the larger context is always valuable.

A launch pad for action. A strategic plan is a call to action. For a team, it should provide a playbook on what needs to happen over a defined period of time. It should bind people together and clarify who will do what and when.

We think of a strategic plan as a collection of project plans. The structure looks like this:

1. A statement of intent with metrics of success.
2. An outline of the phases of the work.
3. A "drill down" into the actual activities required for the first couple of phases. This should include details of the activities, duty assignments (who will lead and who will contribute), timelines showing when activities will begin and end, and lists of resources that will be required for the effort.

Producing a Strategic Plan

What does it take to produce a good strategic plan? For starters, consider these important factors:

A collection of valid intelligence. We are often told that knowledge is power, and this is very true in strategic planning. In fact, collecting pertinent information from a variety of sources is crucial for a robust plan. But this is where knowledge intersects with power—teams are composed of people with different viewpoints and experiences who bring their insights to the table, but only if *invited* to do so. Collaborative planning in a team environment brings these two elements—knowledge and power—together.

Engaged leadership. Establishing conditions for successful planning is the responsibility of the team leader. Being intentional about the type of engagement and involvement of team members will result in getting the right type of plan.

Sometimes the full engagement of everyone is not necessary. For example, if a crisis has occurred and immediate reworking of the plan is required, gathering many perspectives may be too time consuming. However, there could be times when involving a number of team members makes complete sense—for example, when thinking through the impact of a societal trend, such as how using electronic readers affects reading habits. Getting a handle on a subject like this may very well require many perspectives and responses.

We once worked with the internal audit team of a bank that was going to perform some planning. The team leader arrived with a binder under his arm. When asked what it contained, he replied, "The plan. I worked all weekend on it." As things turned out, his team was disengaged throughout the entire exercise. Their (correct) impression was that he had already made up his mind about the "right answer" and expected them to fall in line and implement the plan he had come up with. This wasn't planning at all—it was command and control.

The promise of collaborative planning is engagement and inclusiveness. The leader must set the conditions for this, and how the leader prepares for the process and the manner in which the team is engaged are crucial. Hiring a facilitator who helps construct the process and then leads the group through it allows both the leader and team to participate fully. They know someone else is thinking about the best way to get the job done.

Truth and honesty. Strategic planning, poorly conducted, is a waste of time and effort. Worse than that, it turns people off the process and makes them cynical about planning. Planning processes provide a valuable time for leaders and team members to be truthful about the topics they are covering. If resources are slim, this is when to mention it; if time is tight, the team can be challenged to find creative solutions; if the challenges are large, people can rise to the occasion. But all of this takes a commitment to telling the truth.

Few areas of focus. Nothing kills the successful implementation of a plan like having to focus on too many areas. As the plan is implemented, the energy generated by coming up with great ideas can result in too many candidates for action items. Trimming down the list of potential focus areas is critical so the team won't be overwhelmed by the sheer number of action items. We advise teams to identify a handful of focus areas, with three the magic number (this is a noble aspiration, but seldom accomplished). The more common number seems to be about five.

The importance of limiting the number of focus areas becomes obvious when the team starts thinking about detailed actions that must be undertaken to accomplish a particular focus area. Consider this scenario: let's say you have five focus areas with four phases apiece, and there are five actions per phase. That gives us 5 x 4 x 5, which equals 100 discrete actions to perform. Each of these actions needs to have an owner, people to work on it, a budget, and time to complete it. Of course, not all actions are equal, but it is clear that the more focus areas your plan has, the more activity you will initiate.

Tight/loose process. Planning is all about opening, narrowing, and closing. *Opening* is the free-form consideration of possibilities and ideas. *Narrowing* is about applying criteria and finding a short list of pertinent ideas for fuller consideration. *Closing* is about finalizing and making decisions. A team that works through these stages in a disciplined manner will do a thorough job and bring the best information to the table. The team will then be able to consider this information and make decisions that will have the greatest positive impact.

The most effective planning process for a team is both tight (disciplined and structured) and loose (with flexibility built into it), so the team can pause and explore areas that need more thought. Without this combination, even the most carefully planned strategic planning process can be thrown off the rails by the introduction of new information or by a topic that initially appeared simple but then became complex and required more thought.

Clear documentation. Without a clear record of the process you have followed and the conclusions you arrived at, all you end up with is strenuous conversation. A strategic plan is the story you tell yourself about your business or organization. It should be able to show your assumptions, the logic of your argument, your hypothesis, and your conclusions. It should also act as a catalyst to action, communicating clearly what success will look like and how the team will reach the goal. Ultimately, a plan is a communication tool, and must be clearly written as such.

Implementing a Strategic Plan

All plans need to be implemented. Planning without implementation is like a mirage—you think you have something material, but it only turns out to be a dream of success. So, what does it take to implement a strategic plan? Two approaches we encourage teams to adopt are (1) creating projects and (2) 90-day milestone meetings.

Creating projects. Focus areas and action plans within a strategic plan are, in effect, project plans. Their implementation moves across time—as one action is completed, another one starts, until the goal is accomplished. Project management discipline is essential to ensure success. The planning activity, done right, not only gives the plan form, but defines the phases that the work will follow. By being clear about resource requirements and the duration of activities, the leader and the team should have a reasonable level of confidence about their ability to deliver on their commitments.

90-day milestone meetings. Quarterly team meetings are a fundamental tool in keeping close to the strategic plan. By scheduling these ahead of time, for a year, the team commits itself to staying in touch with the plan and its execution. The pull of day-to-day work is so strong that it's always easy for a team to revert to doing the familiar, business-as-usual work rather than the change work contained in the strategic plan. We encourage teams to structure their 90-day milestone meetings with the same level of care as used in the original strategic planning. That means having a clear agenda, a facilitator, and documented outcomes.

Any exercise in strategic planning should involve the whole team; a team without a plan lacks direction. Having a facilitator can be a good idea, but make sure that person isn't the team leader. The leader is a member of the team and cannot effectively contribute as a member if he or she is also the facilitator.

So, what should you do? Bring in an outside person who is part of the larger organization to be the facilitator, reach out to your professional association and ask for advice, or hire an outside facilitator to assist. If you are a solo library or information center manager, don't forget about the internal clients you serve. If you can involve a few of them in your planning exercise, they will give you valuable advice and buy in more warmly to a plan they helped develop.

Finally, it's evident that a great team draws synergy from the collective effort of a group of individuals. This is just as true in carrying out a strategic plan as it is in creating the plan. And the same forces are at work in a team during the execution as in the planning—individuals are accountable for their own piece of the work, and mechanisms need to be in place to encourage team functioning.

The plan is what provides a strong motivation for collective action. So make a good plan, ground it in reality and honesty, execute well as a team, track your progress, and celebrate your success. **SLA**

Know Your Users to Make Information Visible

BY LEARNING HOW YOUR CUSTOMERS SEARCH FOR, FIND, AND USE INFORMATION, YOU CAN TAKE STEPS TO MAKE IT MORE VISIBLE AND ENABLE YOUR CUSTOMERS TO GAIN MORE VALUE FROM IT.

BY ROBIN NEIDORF

From January through March 2015, FreePint's editorial and research units focused on the topic of making information visible. We wanted to understand the variables that contribute to users being able to find and utilize the most useful information at the point and time of need. We also wanted to better understand what contributes to "visibility" and what gets in the way of it.

We began with the hypothesis that visibility is the result of three interrelated components: the right technology, the right content, and the right user behavior. As we investigated—through case studies, interviews and communities of practice discussions with customers, and a survey—we learned that information professionals have varying degrees of expertise and comfort with each of these three components.

Visibility is often defined in organizations as a function of the technology used to deliver information (e.g., discovery systems, search, big data, visualization, and aggregation), and this is often an area in which information professionals feel they have minimal access to the decision-making process. Managing content to achieve visibility, on the other hand, is often an area of strong confidence for information professionals—this is their core professional expertise, as well as the place where they have the most control.

Meanwhile, the component of user behavior is one where information professionals told us they have low but growing confidence. Users often don't do what information professionals want or expect, but it is getting easier to influence them in the right direction. So perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that the area of user behavior offers the greatest opportunity for leaps forward in efforts to make information more visible. With some practical, low-investment approaches, you can make enormous progress in helping users get maximum value from the content you provide and the supporting technology.

Assess Your Knowledge of Your Users

Why is it so essential to understand users? Because information does not

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Component	Notes	Status Rating*	Difficulty Rating**
Existing tools of influence			
Prioritization of users/user groups			
Knowledge about priority users/groups			
Prospective tools of influence			
Access to usage data			

*Status rating: 0 = not developed; 10 = fully developed
**Difficulty rating: 0 = easiest; 10 = most difficult

FIGURE 1: User inventory, developed for Communities of Practice: Needs Assessment for Visibility (http://web.freepint.com/go/sub/community/2474)

exist in a vacuum—its value to the business comes through users and how they interact with it. Without understanding the thinking and habits that underlie those interactions, it's very difficult to make progress toward improving users' ability to see the most useful stuff.

Most information professionals, however, have barely enough time to handle their current responsibilities without adding a major project like deepening user knowledge. Even in a small organization, there might be dozens of different information users, each with his or her own needs and preferences; in a large organization, there might be thousands of users to consider.

To break it down into manageable pieces, it helps to conduct an inventory of your knowledge about users. Figure 1 shows the format FreePint uses for a basic user inventory.

For every row in the table, you use the "notes" section to describe, in as much detail as you can, what you know about that element of your user group(s) with regard to their information needs and consumption. For example, in Row 1, you describe the tools—newsletters, training sessions, videos, social media, and so on—you have at hand for influencing user behavior.

Then, in the "status rating" column, you rate how well you can describe that component. Are you confident in your description? Do you have the information you need to make recommendations, or do you need to conduct more research?

Finally, you use the "difficulty rating" column to capture how easy or hard it would be to improve your status for a given row. For example, it might be relatively easy to add tools of influence to your tool kit, so you would give that row a difficulty rating of 1 or 2. On the other hand, it may be quite difficult to gain access to valid data about user pathways, searches and document access, so you would give that row a difficulty rating of 9 or 10.

With such a simple tool, it's easy to adjust it to the needs of your organization—simply add or remove rows as you need, and make other changes accordingly. Regardless of whether you make any adjustments, the key is to write your inventory down. Many of us tend to keep way too much information in our heads, and it's only when we get it out of our heads and onto paper that we can start managing it effectively.

The purpose of the inventory is to evaluate your current status so you can make decisions about where to devote your limited time and resources. As a rule, we recommend that you pick the easy ones first: try to make progress on the elements over which you have control, then tackle the harder ones as you see improvement.

We also recommend revisiting and reworking the inventory at least quarterly. This does not need to be a time-consuming project; it might mean something as simple as committing to progress on a single row every 90 days. Small steps, taken regularly, move big projects forward.

Tactics for Gathering Information

It's easy to succumb to the temptation to try to start influencing user behavior before you understand it. In fact, understanding and influencing happen in tandem. The more you learn about users' assumptions, biases and behavior, the easier it is to influence them in a direction you know will be more effective, satisfying and productive for them.

Before creating the next training program, writing the next newsletter item, or posting the next update to your intranet, make sure you are focusing just as much energy on gathering information from and about your users, using your priorities as your guide. Not sure where to start? Even if you have limited resources, the following tactics will help you gain more knowledge about your users very quickly.

Lurk and listen. If your organization has internal social tools for members of user groups to connect with each other, start "lurking" in those environments to listen in on the discussions. You'll learn how users frame business challenges, become acquainted with the vocabulary they use to discuss their work and needs, and understand the problems they encounter in their work flow. Dedicating 10 to 30 minutes a week (depending on how many user groups you target) to monitoring these conversations will result in invaluable insights into users and their needs.

Join project teams. It's becoming more common in many organizations to place information professionals on operational project teams. If your organization enables this staffing structure, take advantage of the project team environment to gain insights into the mindset, information awareness and information needs of your colleagues.

If the culture in your organization does not enable you to participate in project teams, organize your priorities in terms of key user groups. Can you identify a project in which your target users are involved that you could make a good case to join? If not, could you get access to project meeting notes, updates, or other intelligence to help you peek behind the information curtain?

Conduct face-to-face visits. One of the most fruitful tactics for gaining knowledge about information users is to schedule and conduct informal observations and drop-ins. Select a department or segment of the business you want to understand better, then conduct a 30-minute visit in which you walk around and talk to users in their environment. Ask them to show you what they're working on; ask them if they have any questions about how to use the information tools at hand. Be sure to have one or two fresh tips to share to help get the conversation started.

The information professionals who have tried this approach report remarkable and valuable results. Their observations include the following:

- Even the busiest workers generally appreciate face-to-face contact. If they can't talk with you during your visit, they are still more likely to think of calling or e-mailing you the next time they have a question.
- There are invariably niggling things that bother users but don't seem important enough to bring to the information center. You will learn a lot about users' assumptions, biases, and levels of information savviness by hearing these questions.
- You will gain new insights into work flows and the thinking that prompts a user to use an information product. You will also learn about the alternative approaches users employ to gather information when they find information products too complex.
- You will learn what users think of the library, information professionals and information resources. Many of them are intimidated by you, embarrassed by their need to ask you for help, and/or unaware of the full scope of support you can provide.

You can't visit everyone, of course, so you have to focus on the user groups that are most important to your strategy. If you conduct just two visits per month, you will learn more in a few short months than you may believe possible.

Make virtual visits. Of course, it's not always possible to conduct in-person visits. When trying to learn about the information behaviors of remote users, try a virtual drop-in. Shared-screen technology and Web-based meetings enable you to get a personal view of what's happening on the desktops of remote users.

Other approaches to building knowledge about remote teams or workers include the following:

- Ask for 10 minutes on the staff meeting agenda for a remote team. Set up a shared screen to support the meeting, walk them through one new information use tip, and encourage questions. After the first few times, the remote meeting technology will become second nature, and you will have expanded your knowledge of the team as well as your ability to influence them.
- Make time for user visits when traveling for business. In town for a conference or a meeting? Carve out 30 minutes for a drop-in session with users you wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to meet.

Position information skills as human resources development. I'm surprised at how rarely information departments work with training specialists in human resources (HR) or training departments, except on large, formal projects. HR departments are responsible for the development of valuable skills within the organization, and information skills should be on the list.

Even if HR does not have information skills development on its radar, this department has expertise in identifying core competencies, skill gaps, and emerging needs and in influencing staff behavior. Identify HR specialists who can help you think about how to better understand your users. They may be able to help you target corporate-wide projects you can "piggyback" on to better understand users and influence their information-related behavior.

Gain access to data. There are often critical gaps between what users say they do, what they think they do, and what they actually do. To truly understand user behaviors around information—to know what they find and how they interact with it—you must have access to quality usage data. Such data might include anything from lists of search terms to usage logs to detailed analytics.

Most of the information professionals with whom I work struggle mightily to capture consistent, reliable user data. When they are able to access data, even for subsets of their content or user populations, it makes all the difference in understanding user behavior and needs and even the impact of supplying content.

The Most Effective Next Step

If you're at an early stage of understanding users, the most effective thing you can do is set a goal to conduct a handful of tasks each month, based on your strategy and priorities. Pick the easy things first—one conversation, one user visit—but do them consistently, and you will very quickly build a new picture of what your users do and how they think. With that new knowledge in place, you can then consider how to influence your users to interact more effectively with information tools and sources.

User behavior is an essential component of what makes information visible or invisible at the point of need. It's equally essential that you develop a deeper understanding of that behavior so you can plan for it, influence it, and work with what works. **SLA**

10 Questions: John Cruickshank

THE CHAIR-ELECT OF SLA'S FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND NUTRITION DIVISION TALKS ABOUT TURNING CRITICS INTO ADVOCATES, WHY HE HASN'T (YET) EMBRACED SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WHY EVERYONE SHOULD READ A MANAGEMENT 101 TEXTBOOK.

BY STUART HALES

Many people, and surely many librarians, can trace their career paths back to a discussion with a friend, mentor or family member. John Cruickshank may be the only person to become a librarian because of a conversation about aluminum toxicity in plants.

Now the librarian at the University of Georgia's Griffin Campus, John was working on a graduate degree in soil science when he underwent a "profound change" while speaking to a plant researcher. That change led him back to school years later to earn his library degree and then to stints at Mississippi State University (as both a science librarian and as branch librarian at the College of Veterinary Medicine) and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography before taking the job in Griffin.

Information Outlook spoke to John about his career in librarianship and what he sees on the horizon, why he joined SLA and why he's still a member, and how a simple request from a faculty member led to an oral history project with a local African-American community.

Why did you become a librarian? Did you sense it was your calling in life, or was it based on pragmatic considerations?

I'm sure that, to a large extent, it was because of the morning when I learned how to use a library. At the time, I was working on my master's degree in soil science, and I was sitting in an office talking to a plant physiologist.

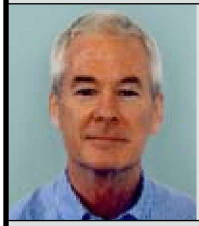
I was taking a graduate reading course in plant physiology because I wanted to obtain a more basic understanding of what I was doing with plants. The course was entirely about how to use a library, and this was long before there was an Internet or databases on CD-ROMS. It really was about how to get information from a library. I had to write a 10,000-word paper on many different aspects of plant physiology as they pertained to my experiments, and I had to find all that information in the library.

That morning, the professor said to me, "Explain to me the mechanism of aluminum toxicity in plants." So I said, "Well, that's very well known. Aluminum simply passes through the cell wall and the membrane and accumulates in the nucleus of the cell and binds to the DNA."

Then he said, "But how do you know that the aluminum gets into the cell in the first place?" And I said, "Well, it's very well documented in the scientific literature."

"What literature?" he asked. "Well," I said, "I have about a dozen papers here I could show you."

"But how do those scientists know that aluminum gets into the cell?" he asked. "Well, they use a very widely accepted scientific methodology," I



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said. "They introduce dye into the cell, and when aluminum makes contact with the dye, it changes the color of the dye."

Then he asked, "But how do they know that it's aluminum that's changing the color of the dye? How do they know it isn't something else?"

At this point, I'm getting frustrated and I'm fishing for an answer. So I said, "Why are you asking me this? What else could it be? Too many scientists have done this to be wrong."

So he said, "Show me the literature where it's been tested." And I'd never thought of doing that.

Then he said, "Well, how *could* aluminum get into the cell? Here's the size of the aluminum ion, and here's the size of the openings in the cell wall. Aluminum couldn't possibly get into the cell."

So I'm sitting there speechless, and then he drew out this really extensive outline of information that I needed to get from the library and put in my paper. It ranged from information on the biosphere right down to the molecular level.

Later that morning, as I was walking out of his office, I knew that I had just undergone a very profound change in my world view. I had a different understanding of science and what it was, of how scientists conduct research and how some of them don't, of what a library is and how it's used, and, perhaps most important of all, of the dire need that an awful lot of researchers had to get help in conducting research and learning how to conduct it.

I didn't exactly swallow hook, line, and sinker what that professor was telling me. To this day, I still don't know if what he said about aluminum was true—maybe he was just pulling my leg. I never bothered to find out, and I couldn't care less. When I walked out of that office, I was thinking, here's a scientist who has a radically different world view of plant physiology than many of his peers and very different ideas about many aspects of plant physiology, but he's very successful in defending all of those positions because he knows how to use a library.

John Cruickshank and a colleague look over unpublished correspondence between Margaret Mitchell (author of *Gone with the Wind*) and the director of the Griffin Experiment Station.

That morning, I sort of lost my appetite for just cranking out data. To me, the world of a librarian was fascinating. I didn't make the connection at that time—it took a few years to begin to realize that this was the domain of the librarian, not the scientist. Yes, there are scientists out there who ask brutal questions, but for the most part, scientists are trained to use tunnel vision. But when I'm doing database searches or reference interviews, I'm asking the kinds of questions that the professor was asking me that morning.

When did you first hear about SLA, and what was your initial impression?

As well as I can remember, I was told about SLA by colleagues at Mississippi State University, where I started working in 1995. They told me it was an organization that was really in touch with its constituency, and I think they turned out to be right.

Why did you join SLA, and why have you remained a member?

Initially, I joined because it was part of my job. I was sort of expected to be part of some library organization, and this was the organization that was recommended to me.

Very soon after that, I was given many reasons to belong to SLA. I was put in charge of running a library that had a history of problems. At that time, I had no management experience and no supervisory experience. So I turned immediately to some of those wonderful, concise SLA publications on how to run a library, and I followed them like a cookbook. I did what they said to do—I even went around and had some extensive, in-depth interviews with a lot of the faculty at Mississippi State, the veterinarians and researchers, in their offices. In some cases I even watched them conduct research. I came out with a gold mine of information about things that needed to be changed at the library.

About a month after I started working at that library, I attended an SLA conference in Minneapolis. I remember attending a counseling session with a lot of librarians from Harvard, advising me on how to interact with a couple of librarians I'd been having problems with. They gave me some wonderful information.

Over the years, I've made a lot of contacts in SLA who have taken me well beyond what you can get out of a management book or journal article. They've often saved my neck and helped me identify significant oversights and opportunities. And you can't get that from a book or journal article.

You started your library career as an academic librarian, then returned to academia in 2013 after nearly 10 years at the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. What changes did you notice when you returned, and what changes do you expect to see in this field during the next 10 years?

There was about a three- or four-year window while I was at the institute when I noticed all of the changes happening in libraries. And the reason I noticed them was that researchers started coming into the institute library and asking for a lot of really old, very valuable data from the 1970s. But there wasn't a trace of that data to be found in the library—there was no documentation on it. There were supposed to be backups of the data at other libraries, but they had gone missing as well.

I started looking into it, and I discovered that this sort of thing was very common—it goes on everywhere, at research institutes all over the nation. So I looked into it some more, and about three years before I left the institute, I embarked on a very intensive research project of my own to learn how I could help scientists with data. I read as much of the literature as I could, traveled widely to conferences and workshops, visited academic libraries and institutes, and talked to data librarians and directors of libraries—no-holds-barred discussions about not just data, but the library world in general.

It was during those three or four years, when I was doing all of this research, that I noticed the changes in libraries. One way or another, I got to see firsthand all of the major changes I was reading about in the library literature. When you see it firsthand like that, you experience it very differently than when you just read about it.

I think Tyler Walters at Virginia Tech, the director of the libraries there, put it very well. He told me it really was the wild, wild west out there in terms of all the different experiments going on with data curation and the blending of the archival and library science approaches to information and other stuff.

As for where academic librarianship will be in 10 years, I think librarians everywhere, in every kind of library, have a serious problem. It has nothing to do with reality; it's a problem of perception. There's a very widespread perception of the librarian being the keeper of the book. And when you're in a world where everyone and his dog is getting information from the Internet—and we all know how bad some of that information is—if the information does the job, that's all people care about. But the mental image that people have of librarians scares them away from librarians and toward Google.

I don't know how librarians are going to get over this. I don't anticipate it will change much over the next 10 years, because I think it's too deeply ingrained. That's why I think all of the experiments going on in libraries with social media are critically important, because that's how you build communities, and building communities leads to greater interaction with people, which is how you change perceptions.

There are other pieces of information going around that feed into this misperception. There's a famous graph from ARL [the Association of Research Libraries] which shows that academic libraries have been losing ground since the early 1980s in terms of total university expenditures going to them. Their slice of the pie is dwindling. Some people think this means libraries are diminishing in importance, but I don't think it means this at all. I think it means that libraries are better at controlling costs than other centers around campus. But it's not the reality that matters—it's the perception.

On the other hand, I look at the things I'm seeing in the new generation of library directors, and I'm very encouraged. I'm seeing a wonderful flattening of the hierarchical structure in a lot of libraries, and it's just brilliant the way librarians are working in teams now. That's critically important.

Open access is going to be even more important in 10 years. I don't think for a minute that anyone is going to knock commercial publishers off their perch; no one is going to prevent them from making piles of money. But I don't think that's going to matter as much. The important thing is that we have librarians who can compete with them, which means that in 10 years' time, there will be a more mixed economic model.

Ultimately, in the long term, I don't see that it's humanly possible for academic librarians to come anywhere near meeting all of the needs of faculty and students on campuses. I think there's going to have to be some sort of self-serve model, where faculty and students are doing most if not all of the work. But I don't see that happening in the next 10 years.

I think data curation is going to be important to libraries in a couple of ways. One is that it helps build communities around the library. The other way is that, when big business tries to

John Cruickshank lays the groundwork for an oral history project with a local African-American community. (Photo by Ray Lightner, *Griffin Daily News*)

come in and take over—and that day will come—we will have a critical mass of expertise on hand to compete with them. I don't think there's anyone working in libraries today who wants to see a repeat of the early 1990s with journals, where we got nothing but the same old PDFs decade after decade after decade. I think that with data curation, we'll have an infrastructure of experts that will force them to be a little more innovative.

Soon after starting your current job, you began working with a local community group to research the history of the Fairmont District, an African-American subdivision of Griffin. You later reported on that history for the Fairmont Education Prosperity Initiative in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*. What prompted you to tackle this project?

At first, it was simply part of my job, because it started with what I thought was a very straightforward reference question. A faculty member wanted to know how the local African-American high school, Fairmont High School, got its name. Well, obviously, it got its name from the district, from the Fairmont subdivision, but how did that get its name? So I thought, well, I'll just look it up in a book, but it wasn't in any books.

So I started asking around the Fairmont community, but no one seemed to know. Then I turned to the local newspaper, which wasn't indexed, so I had to leaf through years and years of stuff, which took an eternity. I was finally able to narrow down the time frame by going through the land records in the courthouse, so then I went back to the newspaper and took my camera along and photographed all of the relevant information I was able to find.

I fired all of this off to the faculty member who had inquired, and she was ecstatic. She immediately forwarded it to the local branch of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] here in Griffin, and they asked me to give a presentation at one of their meetings. It was a wonderful experience—they were on the edge of their seats.

After the presentation, I talked to a lot of people from the community, and we all hit on this idea of starting an oral history project. So, what had started as answering a reference question as part of my job had become a service to the community and was now becoming an oral history project. I took the idea to the oral history experts at the main campus in Athens and contacted some anthropologists and sociologists there, and they all got in on it and started coming down to Griffin and conducting workshops for us on how to conduct interviews.

Griffin originally was a mill town, and we wanted to hear the stories of the mill workers. But most of the residents of Fairmont didn't have the skills to be line workers in the textile mills, so they were janitorial workers and domestic staff. And this created a vicious cycle of poverty—Fairmont is one of the most persistently poor districts in Griffin, and many of the properties are substandard. All of this has created a feeling of isolation among the residents.

A lot of the older residents remember Fairmont as a good place to live; back in the civil rights era, it was a more prosperous place. Lawyers and doctors and school principals lived among the mill workers. With this oral history project, we're hoping to recapture the lives of those people who lived in Fairmont at that time and see how we got to where we are now. And the library is a really important part of this effort.

You mentioned that the Fairmont project began as a simple faculty request for information. What do you do on a day-to-day basis, and what are the most and least interesting parts of your job?

I'm involved with pretty much all of the aspects of running a library, except for the cataloging and IT operations. I spend a lot of my time doing database searches for researchers in the sciences and social sciences; I field reference questions; and I help patrons in the library. I spend most of my time on projects—I try not to work on more than two at a time. Right now I'm trying to get the oral history project going.

I'm fortunate to have a very good assistant here. She handles virtually all of the circulation work and pitches in wherever else I need help.

What I like best about my work is applying what I've learned over the years about organizational culture. I've studied management through the years and discussed it a lot with experts. There are very specific ways in which I use this knowledge. For example, it's very helpful in dealing with hecklers. You walk into a lab, and a scientist says, "Oh, John, this metadata is all wrong, you librarians don't know squat." And the way you deal with this is to agree with him—"I know, but did you see that scientist down the hall? I can pull up his data in Google like nothing. Can you do that?"

The key, in my experience, is to keep moving. The issue is not who's right or who's wrong—you just keep talking about things you can do for people, and sooner or later you're going to stumble upon something they want, and they'll have to go through you to get it. That's how you can turn them into advocates.

I've often thought that if everyone got their hands on a Management 101 textbook and read it, we'd all be on the same page about 95 percent of the time. That's probably true, but of course very few people do this.

Last year, at a regional library conference, you gave a presentation titled "How can we take the error out of trial and error?" What was the presentation about, and what did you learn from working on it?

I've always found information retrieval to be a fascinating subject. I've been studying the literature on it and attending conferences on and off over the years; sometimes I like to play around with ideas about how to teach it. At one point, a regional conference on active learning came to my attention, and I saw it as an opportunity to explore some of my ideas about information retrieval with other librarians.

My main motive in giving my presentation was to get a better sense of how complete my approach was—in other words, were there glaring oversights that someone could pick up on? As it turns out, all the feedback I got was very positive; nobody made any suggestions about how I could improve it.

Since then, my thinking on this has changed quite a bit. Things have occurred that make me see it in a different way. It's not that what I presented was wrong—I just see things very differently now. So I consider this a work in progress. It's something I do on the side; it's not really part of my job.

You're nearly invisible on social media—your LinkedIn page is largely blank, and there's no sign of you on Facebook or Twitter. Are you consciously resisting being sucked into the social media vortex, or do you mean to get involved but just never get around to it?

For the librarian community in general, I think using social media is critically important. I myself watch social media very carefully, I study it, and I've relied on social media off and on since the 1990s for very specific purposes.

The first thing I did when I came here to the Griffin campus, practically on my first day, was to set up a Flickr account. I got my assistant to scan hundreds of archival photos we have of the campus, some of them going back over 100 years, and post them on Flickr. That got us a lot of attention, and several people got involved in trying to find information about the photographs.

Much of what I've intended to do on social media has been postponed several times, because sometimes an opportunity will come up to engage the community, and it makes sense to put that opportunity first because it's time sensitive. For example, when the question about Fairmont High School came through, and suddenly a simple reference question had the potential to create a community around the library, it made sense to change my plans. And with the oral history project starting, the pressure is on to get some social media going for that.

As for my personal use of social media, I don't think I ever consciously said to myself that I don't have time or that it's not worth it, but I'm not one of those librarians whose career utterly depends on it. That said, my situation is changing—I'm much more involved now in SLA than I have been in the past, and in different ways, so I'll certainly be wanting to share more information. It's just a matter of finding a minute here and a minute there to start working on it.

Speaking of SLA, you're the chair-elect of the Food, Agriculture and Nutrition Division, which doesn't sound like the most exciting group. What passes for fun at FAN meetings, and what do FAN members know that would make other librarians envious?

Well, food, agriculture and nutrition sound pretty sexy to me!

I think fun is a by-product of serendipity more than anything else, so I would suggest that SLA members drop by FAN's science and food sessions at the annual conference in Philadelphia in 2016. Come and hear Dr. Solomon H. Katz. He's an elite scientist—he's on the board of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he's an anthropologist, and he's the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*. So it might be fun to listen to him talk about how beer is responsible for the birth of civilization, or what food has to do with religion and culture. This year in Boston, I think it will be fun to join FAN's tour of America's test kitchens or FAN's discussion of Julia Child's papers at Harvard.

FAN sponsors all kinds of other events as well. But maybe what you need to do is just drop by one of our regular meetings and see for yourself.

You worked with oceanographers at a previous job and assist agricultural researchers in your current position, so you're certainly familiar with the sustainable fishing and farming movements. If you operated a restaurant at your library, what would you serve for the surf 'n' turf special?

Since everyone here on our campus is very, very wealthy, might I suggest Atlantic shrimp, lobster tail, crab legs, ribeye steak, chicken breast, and pork chops?

Of course, the key is where you get it all. If you don't get it from the right place, it's not sustainable. There are people out there who say there's no such thing as sustainable, just as there are people who insist there is. So we have to settle on some definition of what we mean by sustainable, and then figure out where to get the food that will meet that definition. **SLA**

The Information Game: It's All about the Data, the Content, the Strategy—Wait, What?

New technologies hold promise for special libraries and their users, but resources will be needed to manage them.

BY RICHARD HULSER, MED, MLS

I begin this column with excitement and a bit of trepidation. It is an honor to be asked to share my curiosity, thoughts, and ideas related to information management and beyond. As anyone who knows me will tell you, I am not at a loss for ideas and opinions, but it can still be scary and challenging to share them. As with anything new, different, and beyond a comfort zone, one has to stretch in order to grow, so I agreed to give it a try. I hope this column will kick and stretch so it is informative, thought provoking, and otherwise interesting in one fashion or other.

Embarking on this endeavor with me will be Kenn Bicknell, digital resources librarian for the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority Library and Archive. We are partnering so that a variety of ideas and perspectives are put forward. We plan to look at trends and technologies and how they can apply in a practical way to the special librarian audience. Our experiences cross over a wide variety of library and information management environments, but our hope is that you, the reader, will add to the discussion. As time goes on, we want to create many sparks of conversations in this journey and engage all of you in offering ideas, topic suggestions, information others would find pertinent, and more.

So, how to begin? In this column, I will reflect on the March-April issue's theme, "Strategic Planning for Information Professionals," then veer into uncharted territory. Strategy planning can be a great invigorator of ideas and dreams when put into a trajectory with good direction and solid practicalities to reach intended goals. It can position you and your organization to do wonderful things with what you have and to pursue and achieve what you need. The strategic planning process can also be daunting, complex, tedious and otherwise unpleasant—especially when those involved perceive that nothing will be achieved as a result.

As a consultant in a few of my many lives, my focus has been on technology strategy planning. Technology used to be an extra thing to add to the planning process; now it is considered essential, because it is pervasive in everything we do at work and at home. And yet there are many organizations that are just beginning to tackle the "information technology stuff." These organizations look at planning horizons of 10 years and more. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but if technology is not part of their focus, then trouble is but a heartbeat away.

Change is happening ever faster, and disruptive technologies continue to challenge everything we do. Can you remember when social media didn't exist? Now it is an essential element of a multi-faceted communications plan in today's organizations. What about cellphones and smartphones? Or should we say mobile devices, with size becoming a blended concept? Tie such devices to beacon technology, and an easily blended information exchange takes root.

What kind of role will smart watches play as they expand into our everyday world? When the device around my wrist truly does much of what used to require a larger device on a desk or in my hand, will it still even be called a watch?

There are many initiatives under way to tackle the challenge of scarce resources and make technology work toward better and wider access to information.

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What about the concept of printing? Just a short time ago, we were marveling at the possibilities of 3D printing; now it is being used in combination with scanning technologies to perform non-invasive examinations of objects and then reproduce those objects to scale or in multiple scales. In fact, 3D printing technology has already been woven into the storyline of at least one hospital drama on television, as a new but viable way to take information and decision making to a new level. This has helped introduce the possibilities of 3D printing to the general public faster than you can say "public library makerspace." Yes, the objects are printed, but when are they being replicated, as science fiction fans might say? "I'd like Earl Grey tea, please. Hot."

We know about CT scans and their recent use in non-invasive examinations of mummies and other things. Next on the horizon is the practical use of micro CT and nano CT scanning. Scientists at the museum where I work are already experimenting with this technology, and they see librarians and information managers as the key to gathering, organizing, managing and making authenticated scan files accessible. This technology is getting closer to being able to scan fragile materials and reproduce them before they disintegrate before our eyes. It's not there yet, but on its way. Think about the rare documents in archives that are much too fragile to touch (let alone move) before they become dust.

Now, before you think all I'm going to talk about are gadgets and whatnot, let's veer off in another direction. These technologies are all well and good, but resources are needed (say this with me): money to buy the technology, space to put it, people to work with it, and, oh yes, skills to manage it. Collaboration and cooperation help make this happen. There is often strength in sharing of resources, whether they are solid items (such as equipment and money) or soft items (such as people and skills).

The key is to understand what makes sense for your situation. Sometimes a lot can be accomplished even when there are few resources. There are many initiatives under way to tackle the challenge of scarce resources and make technology work toward better and wider access to information. Global projects such as the Biodiversity Heritage Library collaborate in a focused yet decentralized way; others, such as the California Audiovisual Preservation Project, are centralized methods to accomplish similar goals. All of this feeds into the tactical need to get information preserved and accessible before it is lost forever while at the same time building on the strategic vision of global information sharing for the greater good.

So, there it is—a little bit of this and a little bit of that to start the chat. Let's see where this takes us on our journey. **SLA**