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Special Libraries Association

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Collaborating Outside the Library

Information professionals can apply their expertise to initiatives and causes that benefit their communities and the public at large.

BY STUART HALES

Building affordable housing. Feeding the hungry. Cleaning up lakes and streams. Finding a cure for breast cancer.

There’s no shortage of good causes for organizations and their employees to support, and more of them are doing so every year. Many businesses feel strongly that social engagement helps them build trust with consumers, so they’re implementing matching gift programs and offering paid time off to encourage workers to donate to, and participate in, volunteer initiatives. These incentives are bearing fruit: employee participation rates in corporate community efforts rose from 28 percent in 2013 to 33 percent in 2015, according to a survey by CECP, an organization that helps companies develop social strategies.

Libraries—especially public libraries—are jumping on the social engagement bandwagon as well. The San Francisco Public Library employs a licensed marriage and family therapist to help connect homeless patrons with community resources. The Pima County (Ariz.) Library hires public health nurses to serve at its branch locations, and the Denver Public Library’s technology specialists regularly visit a local shelter to teach job interviewing techniques and technology skills to homeless and low-income residents.

But what about special libraries? Can they do anything outside the confines of their organizations to help advance the common good?

Yes, they can, as Abigail Grotke explains in her article, “Collaborating to Preserve Federal Government Websites.” The Library of Congress, where Abbie works, has been partnering with other library and information groups since 2008 to document changes to U.S. government websites during presidential transitions. The project, known as the End of Term Archive, receives no outside funding—each institution relies on its own available funding and contributes its expertise as time and money permit. The partner institutions also try to raise awareness of the value of preserving federal websites and, to that end, attempt to engage the public in the project.

“A major aspect of the End of Term project has been to open up the nomination and selection of websites for preservation to the general public,” Abbie writes. “To help solicit nominations from the public, the University of North Texas Libraries created a tool in 2008 that is used by End of Term as well as other collaborative web archiving projects. Interested citizens can use the nomination tool to nominate URLs, provide basic metadata, and view nominations that have been received already.”

Engaging and collaborating with groups outside the library also were central to designing a unit in visual literacy for the Department of Viticulture and Enology (grape growing and winemaking) at California State University, Fresno. The unit addresses the wine-making industry’s need for employees to be proficient at creating and interpreting visual information to help market its products and services.

“The design of the unit illustrates that the interests of the department’s faculty and those of the wine industry align with the principles underlying visual literacy in the sciences and in the agricultural sciences in particular,” writes Britt Foster, a public services librarian at Fresno State, in her article on page 19. “As a discipline, agriculture requires practitioners to use visual information to perform their work—e.g., synthesizing observations from the field and lab to increase yield. In addition, those in agriculture must communicate visually with the general public, which is deeply interested in agricultural production, resource use, and food preparation methods.”

Even within an organization, libraries can bring people together to share and collaborate on projects that may have a bigger purpose than simply improving the bottom line. Brian McCann, the subject of this issue’s member interview, says that writing programs are a natural fit for libraries of all stripes because of their historic association with books and words.

“I would point us to look at how a lot of libraries are incorporating makerspaces,” he says. “Libraries are becoming places not just to consume literature or materials, but to create and engage. Writing fits in really well with this.”

More of Brian’s insights, plus articles and columns on competitive intelligence, making better decisions with data, and creating persuasive visual presentations, are in this issue of Information Outlook.
New Features Breathe New Life into Annual Conference

Phoenix may have reached temperatures of 119 degrees Fahrenheit, but that didn’t keep attendees and industry partners alike from having a fresh, thought-provoking, and all-around unforgettable experience at the SLA 2017 Annual Conference.

The conference got off to its official start at the opening general session on Sunday, June 18. After dancing her way onstage, 2017 SLA President Dee Magnoni advised conference-goers, particularly first-timers, to fully immerse themselves in SLA 2017. Her advice didn’t end there, though—Magnoni and SLA Executive Director Amy Lestition Burke urged attendees to take that level of excitement and engagement and “experience SLA for career success” all year long, through virtual and in-person participation in networking and programming at the unit and association levels.

The highlight of the opening session was a rousing presentation by Lulu Miller of NPR. Emphasizing the importance of serendipity in the research process, the Peabody Award-winning science reporter and *Invisibilia* co-founder took attendees on a riveting murder mystery- and discovery-filled journey with surprising twists and turns.

One such unexpected turn was the advent of a proud new identity for SLA members—born of a phonetic mix-up but firmly rooted in the realization that information professionals routinely “slay” lies and bad information as part of their occupational quest to guide others to the truth. After acknowledging this job requirement, Miller challenged attendees to take that one step further by making a concerted effort to routinely disobey the established rules in the profession.

The buzz from the opening general session was amplified at Monday’s general session (a new feature at SLA 2017), a “Dream Jobs for Info Pros” panel presentation moderated by 2017 Annual Conference Advisory Council Chair Brandy King. After their presentation, the panel members—Rosie Lindquist from The Hershey Company, Brendan Thompson from Uber Technologies, and Robin Dodge from the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising—fielded questions from the audience about the organizations they worked for and offered career advice. One key takeaway: information professionals need to stop undervaluing themselves.

At the closing general session on Tuesday, Dr. Moriba Jah—currently of the University of Texas at Austin and formerly of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory—described the daunting task of tracking “space junk.” His presentation created quite a stir among attendees, several of whom expressed interest in working on an ontology like this.

At each of the three general sessions, SLA recognized members for their dedication and contributions to the association and the information profession at large. Awards were presented to the following:

- **John Cotton Dana Award**: Doris Small Helfer
- **SLA Hall of Fame**: Lawrence Guthrie and Leigh Hallingby
- **SLA Fellows**: Khalilah Gambrell, Richard Huffine, Debal Kar, Tara Murray, and Sara Tompson
- **Rose L. Vormelker Award**: Kim Dority
- **SLA Rising Stars**: Chrystelle Browman, Marie Cannon, and John Kromer

To help attendees release some of the excitement generated by the three general sessions and awards presentations, SLA 2017 offered both high-energy and low-energy options. For the high-energy crowd, three organized health and wellness activities—yoga, water aerobics, and the November Project—were offered. For those who preferred to take a breather, two new attractions, Main Street SLA and The Park, became prime locales. Main Street featured exhibits that enabled attendees to learn more about various SLA divisions, chapters, and caucuses, while The Park was a place for attendees to let loose and play some games in between other con-
Top Paper Makes Case for Providing Research and Analysis

A case study about one company’s transformation from an information-based organization into a business that relies heavily on competitive and market intelligence—and the implications of that transformation for the company’s information center—was named the best contributed paper at the SLA 2017 Annual Conference in Phoenix. “From Information to Intelligence,” by Dhanashree Date and Ayesha Mallik, describes the growing involvement of the information center at Tata Consultancy Services in competitive intelligence—a process that included building new competencies, incorporating embedded services, marketing the center’s new capabilities, measuring user perceptions, and communicating return on investment.

“What companies really need to succeed is intelligence, not merely information,” the paper’s introduction states. “Intelligence is primarily data-driven and needs to be derived from useful information. Emerging terms

Dhanashree Date (standing) and Ayesha Mallik present their contributed paper at SLA 2017.
such as ‘data economy’ and ‘infonomics’ only suggest that data is traded for bits and bytes of wealth . . . Data can offer managers a wealth of information, but processing it holistically to drive effective business outcomes is the expectation.”

Each year, as many as a dozen SLA members present contributed papers at the annual conference. A call for abstracts is issued roughly nine months before the conference; the abstracts are reviewed by a panel of judges, who decide which abstracts should be given the green light to become papers. The judges then review the papers and decide which is the best of the group. The author(s) of the best paper receive(s) complimentary registration to the following year’s conference, meaning Dhanashree and Ayesha will both receive free registration to SLA 2018 in Baltimore. They will also be featured in the member interview in a future issue of Information Outlook.

**Adams, Kirkwood Head Slate of Board Candidates**

Information professionals hailing from three continents and five different types of work environments are vying for seats on the 2018-2020 SLA Board of Directors.

Kevin Adams, information specialist at the Institute of Environmental Science & Research in New Zealand, and Hal Kirkwood, associate professor at the Purdue University Libraries, are candidates for the office of SLA president. The winner will serve as president-elect in 2018, president in 2019, and past president in 2020.

Lois Ireland, business information services manager at Freddie Mac, and Valerie Perry, director of branch libraries at the University of Kentucky, are competing for the office of chair-elect of the SLA Chapter Cabinet, which provides a forum for SLA’s 50-plus chapters to discuss their concerns. (Chapters represent geographic regions, such as a city, state, or country.) The winner will serve as chair-elect in 2018, chair in 2019, and past chair in 2020.

Four SLA members are vying for two open, three-year director seats on the board. The four are as follows:

- Mimi Calter, associate university librarian and chief of staff, Stanford University Libraries;
- Geraldine Clement-Stoneham, knowledge and information manager at the Medical Research Council in the United Kingdom;
- Hildy Dworkin, library director at the New York City Department of Social Services; and
- Amy Jankowski, assistant professor and life sciences librarian at the University of New Mexico.

The election will be held electronically in September 2017. SLA
Collaborating to Preserve Federal Government Websites

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS IS WORKING WITH OTHER LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION ORGANIZATIONS TO CAPTURE AND ARCHIVE CONTENT FROM GOVERNMENT WEBSITES BEFORE NEW PRESIDENTS TAKE OFFICE.

BY ABIGAIL GROTKE

The Library of Congress began archiving the web in 2000 with a pilot program, collecting content related to the 2000 U.S. election, including sites associated with the presidential, congressional, and gubernatorial elections. Since then, more than a petabyte of web content has been preserved in 90-plus collections covering a variety of topics and different types of websites. Many of these collections are available for researching through the library’s website; others are not yet accessible, as they are in various states of processing. All content archived by the library is embargoed for one year.

Through its web archiving, the library builds collections for members of Congress, researchers, and the public and preserves born digital content for long-term research use. Unlike some of our partners and colleagues at other national libraries around the world, we have no easily defined U.S. domain, so we take a selective approach to web archiving. While many of our partners and colleagues at other national libraries around the world can collect their country’s domain comprehensively, the U.S. domain is too extensive to permit us to collect everything. We focus on events and thematic web archives covering a variety of topics selected by recommending officers (the subject specialists who select content for the library’s collections) according to collection development policies and other guiding documents.

Federal websites have figured prominently in the library’s web archives since the program’s inception, but it was not until 2015 that a systematic approach to harvesting federal sites was adopted. In addition to comprehensively collecting legislative websites, the library’s web archiving program now seeks to broadly archive websites from all branches of government. We comprehensively harvest all judicial branch websites quarterly; we collect only selectively from the executive branch due to the large number and size of its websites and the commitments by other agencies (GPO, NARA, etc.) to archive them. As a result, the library focuses its archiving efforts on cabinet-level agencies and the affiliated programs that complement the library’s judicial and legislative collections, as well as a few smaller agencies. We do not archive national labs or the majority of .mil sites.

The End of Term Archive
Since the library began web archiving in 2000, we have had a strong history of collaborating with other organizations on everything from developing tools to discussing and formulating policies and approaches to collaborative collections building. In 2003, we became a founding member of the International Internet Preservation Consortium (IIPC).
and have worked closely with members of the IIPC throughout the years. We are also founding members of the Federal Government Web Archiving Working Group, which is a collection of federal agencies working together to ensure long-term access to historical U.S. government resources through web archiving.

In addition to what the Library of Congress harvests for its own archives, since 2008 we have collaborated to document the changes to U.S. federal websites during presidential transitions through a project known as the End of Term Archive (EOT). EOT seeks to document federal websites prior to a change in administration.

For many years, IIPC members in the United States have been preserving portions of the federal web, depending on their own collection policies. Other than early efforts by the National Archives to preserve.gov content in 2004, no one institution in the United States has attempted to preserve the entire.gov domain comprehensively due to the scale of the effort. Simply identifying all government content on the web is a huge challenge. There is no one list of all.gov domains available for easy reference, and there is much web content produced by the federal government that is published outside the.gov domain, including social media content posted on third-party sites and websites produced by federal agencies on.edu,.mil, and.com.

In 2008 and 2012, the Library of Congress partnered with the University of North Texas Libraries, the Internet Archive, the Government Publishing Office, and the California Digital Library to take on the task of identifying and archiving.gov websites. In 2016, the Stanford University Libraries and the George Washington University Libraries joined the End of Term project. There has been no dedicated funding for this initiative—this is a collaborative effort in which each institution relies on its own available funding, with the work coinciding with archiving efforts that our organizations naturally perform already. Combining efforts on an enterprise of this scale has proved beneficial to all involved, as each partner has expertise in different areas to contribute to the whole.

Partner roles have varied depending on the skills, interests, and availability of staff. There is no one lead institution or person, although the Library of Congress, University of North Texas Libraries, and the Internet Archive typically take leadership and coordination roles. The partners meet and begin planning about six to eight months prior to the start of web crawling, with monthly conference calls continuing throughout the crawling activity and regular communications conducted through a project listserv.

The work is broken out into tasks such as distributed crawling, selection and gathering of seed lists to crawl, nomination tool development, outreach, volunteer recruitment, project management, and access. One early discussion usually involves identifying the parts of the government web each partner might help preserve or what other contributions each can provide (if not crawling). Preservation copies are also stored at any partner institution able to take in a copy of the data, since a goal of the project is to ensure that multiple copies are preserved by various partners, even if access to the entire archive is only provided by one organization.

As an example, the Library of Congress’s EOT contribution has varied over the years. As project manager and team lead for the Web Archiving Team, I serve as the primary contact on the project for the library. Other library colleagues contribute time and resources, including subject matter experts on the collections side and technical staff on my team who manage our crawling and transfer activities.

In 2008, Library of Congress staff participated by helping with project management, volunteer recruitment and coordination, and transfer of the complete archive between partners taking in a copy of the data. In terms of contributing crawling resources, the library performed a more in-depth crawl of congressional websites we were already capturing monthly and contributed that data to the collaborative archive.

In 2012, we again performed an in-depth capture of congressional websites and helped with project management and with volunteer recruitment and coordination. We also helped promote the archive, speaking at events with other partners about the effort to raise awareness and recruit volunteers. Transfer was handled a bit differently in 2012, so we didn’t get directly involved in managing all of the data.

For the 2016 archive, we again served as one of the project coordinators. We worked with volunteers and promoted the archive, helping respond to increased interest by community members and the press regarding the preservation of federal government websites and data. In 2016 we also expanded our crawling efforts, conducting an in-depth crawl of all of the federal government content that we were already preserving (not just congressional websites, but everything.gov that had been selected for our ongoing archives). This contributed an additional 35 terabytes to the effort.

Between late 2016 and early 2017, End of Term partners archived more than 155 terabytes of government websites and data for the EOT Archive. A related effort at the Internet Archive preserved an additional 100TB of federal FTP files.

User access to the 2008 and 2012 EOT Archive is provided by the Internet Archive and the California Digital Library.
through the main End of Term portal. Access to the 2016 archive at that site is still to come, as preservation was the primary focus of the project until recently. That said, every web page the Internet Archive has archived for the recent project is accessible through the Wayback Machine. The Internet Archive has also posted some preliminary statistics for its crawls, which can be found on the End of Term (EOT 2016) summary statistics page. That information and additional data are served by a public EOT 2016 statistics API, and the Internet Archive is making data sets available on its site for broader research use.

With respect to the End of Term data that the Library of Congress is preserving currently, the library has a preservation copy of the complete 2008 EOT archive and portions of the EOT 2012 archive. The library is planning to take in a preservation copy of the 2016 web crawls in fiscal year 2018.

**EOT Outreach and Volunteer Efforts**

One of the goals of the End of Term project has been to raise awareness of the importance of preserving federal government websites, and one way we do that is by involving the public in the effort. A major aspect of the End of Term project has been to open up the nomination and selection of websites for preservation to the general public. The project relies on gaining access to available bulk lists, and while more sources were available in 2016 than in prior years, there are still challenges in identifying all federal government web content. To help solicit nominations from the public, the University of North Texas Libraries created a tool in 2008 that is used by End of Term as well as other collaborative web archiving projects. Interested citizens can use the nomination tool to nominate URLs, provide basic metadata, and view nominations that have been received already.

In 2008, we primarily targeted government document subject experts for assistance and received about 500 nominations. In 2012 we enlisted similar types of people to help and expanded our target population to include students at Pratt University, who identified social media content for the project. In all, about 1,500 nominations were submitted.

In 2016, with increased press about the project as well as more public interest in the importance of preserving websites, the nomination tool processed almost 11,400 nominations. Through the EOT’s collaboration with DataRefuge, the Environmental Data and Governance Initiative (EDGI), and other efforts, a total of 100,000 webpages or government datasets were nominated by citizens and preservationists for archiving.

This increase in public interest was wonderful for the project and exciting to see, but it also challenged our EOT model of the tasks required to conduct the project. Partners scrambled to manage press requests and answer questions from the public. We developed FAQs and other information resources to help spread the word about the project and set up a new listserv for outreach purposes. Meanwhile, partners from Stanford, the Internet Archive, the University of North Texas, and the Library of Congress fielded questions on a regular basis during the project period. All of this came on top of our other duties to ensure the preservation process proceeded as planned.

**How to Get Involved**

The End of Term project has offered the Library of Congress a unique opportunity to collaborate to build collections of federal web data that greatly exceed what we might be able to build ourselves. Collaborative web archiving efforts such as the End of Term Archive offer opportunities to share library resources and expertise with partner institutions, raise awareness of our activities and web preservation in general, and enhance our own collection efforts. While the practice of web archiving has matured and become more of a regular activity for many libraries, archives, and other cultural heritage institutions, the amount of data produced keeps expanding, presenting corresponding challenges for preserving and accessing the archives.

Even as the End of Term partners work to make the entire 2016 archive available for research use, we are beginning to reflect on lessons learned and thinking about ways to improve the project in 2020, including ways we can engage other organizations and enthusiastic individuals to help in this effort. We encourage those interested to contact the EOT project team with any inquiries. You may also want to follow related data rescue efforts and the work of the Libraries+ Network, which has formed as a result of continued interest in the topic of preserving federal data.

And while the specific 2016 End of Term collection has closed, the Internet Archive has continued efforts to preserve the government web. Working with the University of North Texas, the Internet Archive has launched a Government Web & Data Archive nomination form so the public can continue to nominate government websites and data for archiving.
The Role of Information Professionals in CI Practices

INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS TYPICALLY PLAY A SUPPORTING ROLE IN COMPETITIVE INTELLIGENCE PRACTICES, WHICH MAY LEAVE THEM VULNERABLE TO BUDGET CUTS AND CLOSURES.

BY TAO JIN, MLIS, PHD

In their 1993 article “Blow Up the Corporate Library,” Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak explored two paradoxical phenomena: In an information age, why were so many corporate libraries being left behind and playing merely a marginal role, and why did few chief information officers (CIOs) come from library and information science (LIS) backgrounds? Nearly 25 years later, it would appear that these vexing questions remain.

We are now witnessing the coming of age of the so-called digital natives, who are more skilled at handling information and possess a higher level of digital literacy than the Millennials. Their migration into the workforce may possibly spur a new round of questioning the value of information professionals.

Value is a central notion for many, if not most, specialized information centers that are sponsored by their parent organization. They must prove they provide a certain amount of worth or usefulness to justify their existence and funding. Therefore, it is important for such information centers to constantly gather information on whether their customers see them as valuable.

But what value can information professionals bring and/or add to their organization? What roles do information professionals play in their organization, and what roles can they play? These are enduring issues facing all specialized information centers.

The traditional paradigm for addressing such issues is that information professionals play a supplementary, supporting role in the success of their parent organization, particularly in the areas of research and development. In this role, information professionals build and maintain various collections, organize information and resources so as to facilitate access and usage, provide reference assistance, and do everything they can to fulfill their organization’s information needs.

Does this traditional paradigm still fit? Probably not—it may not be thorough and powerful enough for today. The term supplementary connotes something additional but not essential, while the term supportive implies providing assistance but not issuing directives. Such role positioning limits information professionals’ social opportunities and development potential and may lead to mistrust and discord from top management and peers.

In this article, I would like to revisit a research study that was conducted a few years ago on the role of information professionals...
professionals in competitive intelligence practices. That study reinforces my thesis that information professionals, as an integral part of any organizational learning effort, truly ought to be more proactive and confident in collaborating with (not simply supporting) other professionals in the organization to make it smarter and better.

Study Overview
In 2010, the Special Libraries Association (SLA) awarded a research grant to fund a study, “Understanding the Value of Corporate Information Agencies in Competitive Intelligence Practices.” The purpose of the study was to develop a baseline understanding of how useful information professionals and corporate information centers are perceived to be in the context of competitive intelligence. The data collection and preliminary data analysis stages of the study lasted about 12 months and were completed by the end of 2011.

Competitive intelligence (CI) is the process by which an organization legally and ethically acquires information from public domains and crystalizes it into actionable intelligence to help the organization’s decision makers better understand the competitive landscape and anticipate possible industry changes. CI also (and often) refers to the product of this process. Since its debut in the early 1980s, the practice of competitive intelligence has grown rapidly, and many organizations now have specific units or teams to perform this process.

The term corporate information center here represents a specialized, in-house unit managed by information professionals and offering various information services to meet the information needs of the organization. Corporate information centers have been operationalized as corporate libraries, information centers, knowledge centers, or their equivalent whose employees frequently are members of SLA.

The study was designed to include two questionnaires. One questionnaire was administered to a cohort of CI practitioners, exploring whether they used any resources and services provided by the corporate information center in their organization and, if so, how they perceived the usefulness of these offerings. The other questionnaire was administered to a cohort of information professionals, examining how they identify themselves in relation to CI activities, the extent to which they participate in such activities, the degree to which they interact with CI practitioners, and how they perceive the usefulness of what they offer to CI practitioners. Basically, the first questionnaire aimed to collect perspectives on how CI practitioners see information professionals, while the second was intended to reveal how information professionals see themselves within the CI context.

By CI practitioner, I mean those analysts, specialists, managers, and other business professionals who are hired to be fully committed to strategic and competitive intelligence analysis and production activities. By information professional, I refer to librarians, information specialists, information scientists, or information/knowledge managers who work in a corporate information center.

CI practitioners and information professionals share some common territory. For example, both of them serve as components of the organization’s “radar system,” which tries to detect any signals that could be useful or detrimental to the well-being of the organization. Also, both are intensive information seekers and processors who interact with various information sources.

While these commonalities suggest that CI practitioners and information professionals may have a good basis for working jointly on projects, they blur the boundaries between CI practices and some conventional services provided by corporate information centers, such as tracking and alerting services and issue management. This ambiguity is exacerbated by the coinage and frequent use of the term CI professional, which has become an umbrella term to describe anyone who undertakes CI-related job duties. While some information professionals would like to identify themselves as CI professionals, others would not.

To complete the sampling and identify potential participants, I followed a series of procedures. First, I developed operational definitions of CI practitioner and information professional. I determined that a CI practitioner must hold a membership in a major CI-related trade association in the United States and must not be an information professional. An information professional, meanwhile, must be a member of SLA.

Next, I defined the geographical scope of the study as the United States. This decision led to the compilation of a list of U.S. organizations identified in the membership directory of the leading CI trade association. The list of organizations was then cross-checked with the SLA membership directory to screen out organizations without information professionals.

Finally, the list of organizations was contrasted with both of the membership directories to identify individuals I wanted to study. This process created a sample of 214 CI practitioners and 358 information professionals. These individuals were then invited by e-mail to voluntarily participate in the study and answer an online questionnaire.

The two questionnaires were administered between August and November 2011. Highlights of the questionnaire results follow. Details of the results are available in research articles published in two academic journals (Jin and Ju 2014a and 2014b).

Survey Results: CI Practitioners
From the 214 CI practitioners surveyed, 63 complete and valid responses were received and analyzed. These respondents represented 51 organizations in 14 industries. The analysis produced the following results:

Education: Roughly 85 percent of the respondents held at least one advanced degree. An MBA was the most common degree (38 percent), followed by a doctorate (18 percent). Notably, eight of the respondents held an MLIS degree.

Awareness of information center: Nine of every ten respondents acknowledg-
edged they were aware of the corporate information center and the information professionals in their organization.

**Use of information center:** Almost 90 percent of the respondents indicated they had used information resources, services, or products offered and managed by their corporate information center, but 18 percent (11 of the 63 respondents) indicated they rarely or never used their corporate information center. Of these, nine selected “I can find any information that I need by myself” as a reason, while six selected “I am not satisfied with the information center’s services” as a reason. Three respondents expressed concern about the quality and depth of the information received from their corporate information center and indicated they preferred to conduct research on their own.

**Interaction with information professionals:** Roughly 80 percent of respondents had interacted with information professionals in their organization on projects; slightly more reported that they maintained (mostly through e-mail) regular contact with information professionals in their organization.

**Use of information products and services:** Fee-based/subscription databases and electronic collections were the information sources that respondents said they used most frequently; alerts, updates, monitoring/tracking reports, and subscription management and/or content licensing services were the most frequently used information products and services. General reference services and project research services were less popular.

More than three-fourths of the respondents agreed that using the corporate information center in their organization could enhance their work productivity and efficiency. This perceived usefulness could be an important factor in influencing CI practitioners’ behavior in using the corporate information agency in their organization.

**Survey Results: Information Professionals**

From the 358 information professionals surveyed, 86 complete and valid responses were received and analyzed. Key findings from their responses are as follows:

**Education:** Seventy-two respondents (84 percent) held an MLIS degree, and seven held both MBA and MLIS degrees.

**Awareness of CI professionals:** Nearly nine in ten respondents were aware of the existence of CI unit(s) in their organization, and two-thirds personally knew CI practitioners in their organization.

**Professional identity:** Seven in ten respondents had been involved with CI projects for more than two years, and 62 percent indicated that CI is a part of their job requirement. None of the respondents, however, identified themselves as a “CI professional only,” while two-thirds described themselves as either an “information professional only” or an “information professional more than a CI professional.”

**CI involvement:** Three-fourths of the respondents described their overall involvement in CI activities in their organization as none, low, or moderate; only 16 percent of the respondents indicated they have frequently been integrated into or embedded in CI projects in their organization.

**Interaction with CI professionals:** A moderate-to-low interactivity level was observed between the responding information professionals and CI practitioners in their organization (mean=2.52/5.00; standard deviation=0.88).

**Use of information products and services:** The questionnaire asked information professionals to rate, based on their perceptions, how often certain information resources, products, and services were used by CI practitioners in their organization. They rated electronic collections and fee-based/subscription databases as the information resources used most frequently by CI practitioners; this is similar to what the CI practitioners reported, although the order is reversed. Interestingly, the information professionals perceived general reference services as the information product or service used most frequently by CI practitioners, which may suggest dis-similar standpoints and value systems between the two groups.

**Survey Results: So What?**

This study looked not only at how CI practitioners saw information professionals, but also at how information professionals saw themselves in the context of CI practices. From the study, I did obtain empirical evidence that CI practitioners perceived corporate information centers and information professionals as highly relevant and useful. However, the high usage of fee-based databases and subscription management and/or content licensing services by CI practitioners may suggest that they found these information resources more valuable than the others offered by their corporate information center. If CI practitioners can one day directly access these resources by themselves, they may assign less value to their corporate information center.

Among the 86 responding information professionals, I observed low levels of self-identification with the term CI professional as well as shallow involvement in CI activities, but a high degree of awareness of CI practitioners. These findings may imply that, although many information professionals are involved in CI work, their involvement could only be rudimentary—and not all of them are capable of doing a “deep dive” into CI practices.

All the above suggest that information professionals play a supplementary and supportive role in CI practices. While this is not surprising when one considers the conventional roles that corporate librarians have played for decades, it reflects a vulnerability of information professionals and corporate information centers to budget cuts and even closures. Therefore, information professionals may have to engage more often in team playing and improve their financial and business competencies.

According to John Prescott (1999), during the 1960s and 1970s, an early form of CI was “primarily a library function.” Thus, the evolution of contem-
Teaching Employees to Make Better Decisions with Data

RAISING THE LEVEL OF DATA LITERACY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN PAY SIGNIFICANT DIVIDENDS, BUT IT REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST CONDUCTING A TRAINING SESSION.

BY MERYL BRODSKY, MLS, MBA

Many employees routinely misuse data to respond to pressing business questions because they aren’t data literate. The cost of a missed sales forecast, a mispriced product, or an overabundance of inventory can have real consequences for a business. IBM estimates that in 2016, U.S. companies lost $3.1 trillion due to poor data quality (IBM 2016). This figure relates to big data, but bad small data is problematic as well.

Although information professionals can’t correct all of the bad data, we can help our employees become more data literate. Data literacy is the ability to interpret, evaluate and communicate statistical information (Beauchamp 2015).

Raising the level of data literacy within our organizations poses some challenges. For example, employees are pressed for time, so how can we get them to make time to attend a data literacy training session? And once we get them there, how do we make the training valuable?

This article offers 10 implementable suggestions for data literacy instruction so that employees learn to ask the right kinds of questions when evaluating data and know where to find accurate market information. These suggestions are based on work I performed in my previous position, where I was part of the market research group. When we realized our fellow employees were having problems with data, we decided to make data literacy part of our mission.

Don’t call it data literacy. Data literacy is not a term that is familiar to most people. In fact, hosting a session on data literacy might imply that attendees are somehow illiterate. Instead, call your session “How to improve your presentations with data” or “Using data for strategic decision making.”

Don’t fight Google. If your company uses data that employees are finding through Google, create a list of websites where good information is available. Teach them how to search Google more effectively to obtain high-quality information, such as by date searching, limiting by domain (.edu, .gov, .org, etc.), and using the image search to find charts and tables. List the best websites for the types of data they need—for example, data on private mortgage insurance, inflation rates (in other countries), exchange rates, and professional associations and special interest groups—on your company’s intranet. Invite employees to contribute websites to this list.

Make good data findable. Use your organization’s intranet to publish current data on market size, mar-

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ket growth, competitors, and industry trends. Employees will use company-sponsored data if it’s readily available, in a format they want, and up to date. If asked questions, respond with links to the data to reinforce that this is the place where the data is maintained. At my former organization, we were tasked to develop market analyses with “one version of the truth” because we didn’t want our executives to report market growth rates that differed from those the product managers used in press releases. Good data should be consistent, non-redundant, and centralized (Hogenboom et al. 2011).

Post best-in-class examples on your intranet. Posting effective visuals and PowerPoint slides on your company’s intranet for employees to copy or borrow helps propagate best practices and rewards those who developed these best-in-class works. If employees put a lot of time into developing a slide deck, they will feel they’ve made a significant contribution if the visuals are used more than once (Ryan 2015).

Teach infographic creation. Employees are impressed by infographics, but few know how to create them. Prepare a few basic infographics (with or without the help of a graphic designer) about, say, the size or growth of the market, then take the employees through the process of developing them. Explain that an infographic actually tells a story and has a point of view, so you must be selective about the data you present. Identify the data components to highlight and sneak in the data literacy instruction.

Host data boot camps. If your company has a business intelligence group, data boot camps can be run internally. Start with instruction in internal business intelligence tools, then move on to SQL or R or classes in modeling and presenting data. The goal is to make sure employees understand the data available to them and the kinds of questions the data can answer (Burns 2015).

Teach forecasting. There are three basic forecasting methods, which you can teach or hire an expert to teach. Show what actually happened (to sales, inventory, market growth rates, the economy, and so on) compared to what was forecast, then discuss how to update the forecasting model. Record this session so employees can watch it at their leisure. Send links to the video if employees ask questions about forecasting (Chambers, Mullick, and Smith 1971).

Host a data open house. Post charts, tables, and other infographics in large posters around a room and invite employees (including your boss and his/her boss) to attend. Provide “tours” of the infographics to highlight company-approved data. Use sticky notes for questions; offer snacks. Ask for data contributions—new data that a unit in your company regularly uses that you may not know about. The goal is to introduce employees to the data you have, make them aware of it, teach them how to find it, and invite them to question it—in sum, to have a conversation about data. This is sometimes difficult to do when employees are navigating a website (James 2015).

Make office hours available for presentation help. Help employees who are working on presentations by allowing them to practice their presentations while you watch. Ask them probing questions. Check the source of their data and learn when and how they updated it. Let employees critique each other’s work if multiple people show up during the help session. Ask a graphic designer (or someone who is good at design) to participate and offer suggestions for combining charts, color coding, feedback, and making slides more meaningful.

Develop a class on making presentations to managers. Many employees don’t realize that managers need an analysis of a question or problem, not just a compilation of data. To engage employees, make sure this class uses active learning techniques (Bhagava and D’Ignazio 2016; Freeman et al. 2014). Consider including these elements:

- Slide critiques;
- Forecasting exercises with three scenarios;
- Infographic tool instruction—provide data to small groups and ask each group to create a graphic by showing them an easy-to-use tool (e.g., Tagxedo, Wordle, or Infogr.am) or Excel (for charts and graphs); and
- Explanations of charts (when to use which type and how to best show your data).

REFERENCES
10 Questions: Brian McCann

THE TRANSITION FROM MINISTRY TO LIBRARIANSHIP FELT NATURAL TO BRIAN MCCANN, WHO ENJOYS ROLES THAT ALLOW HIM TO HELP MEET PEOPLE’S NEEDS.

BY STUART HALES

Two of Brian McCann’s favorite hobbies are writing fiction and running obstacle courses, both of which are solitary pursuits. But what matters most to Brian is bringing others closer to what matters to them—which explains why he was once a minister and why he’s now a librarian.

“I think a common thread in most things I do is that I want to connect people to things that matter,” he told Information Outlook. “So if that means writing books that show struggles and victories we face, or mediating conflicts—I have training in that, too—so people can restore relationships, that’s great. If it’s connecting them to books or tax forms or engineering standards that they need, that’s taking people to the things that matter to them. And in the realm of librarianship, that’s a vast area to explore, so I’m quite happy there.”

For Brian, SLA provides a bridge between the solitary and the social—between the challenges he faces as an engineering librarian and the company of others who face similar challenges. SLA also provides him with opportunities to develop leadership skills and enhance his membership experience.

“I really like the peer group that I get to connect with,” he says. “It’s very difficult for those of us in specialized libraries to find people who face the same issues and have the same responsibilities that are different from a large portion of librarianship. I love getting to interact with them and work with them.”

Information Outlook interviewed Brian soon after he attended Planet Comicon in Kansas City, where he got to experience the joy of watching fiction and reality collide.

Although you share a name with a well-known major league baseball player—Brian McCann of the Houston Astros—you’re easy to find online, thanks in part to your social media activity and your writing career. Are you looking forward to the day the ballplayer retires and you become the more prominent online presence, or would you rather publish a best-selling book and leapfrog him in popularity?

I haven’t met the baseball player; I did once meet a Broadway actor with my name. I’m glad to know there are several of me out there, and that some of them have been successful. I think that takes the pressure off of me. Brian McCann the ballplayer has already achieved success, so that means I can do anything I want.

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Your career journey has taken some interesting twists and turns thus far, with stops in a book club, a couple of churches, and a series of libraries. Do you get bored easily, are you the type who’s always looking for new challenges, or are you just gathering more stories for your next book?

Ministry was my first choice. I did that for more than 10 years—I got my first master’s in theology and spiritual formation. It was a useful, fruitful time that kind of came to its own close, which was fine.

I’m a person with varied interests and abilities, so I like doing jobs that have different things to engage me every day, where I get to learn and interact and explore a lot of different things. Libraries are a great fit for people like me—people who have a lot of interests and hobbies. So, for me, librarianship was a fairly natural transition.

I’m still pretty impressed by how much language is shared between libraries and churches. They have a similar vocabulary—they’re always talking about outreach. “There are people out there who don’t know what we have to offer, and we need to bring them inside our building. And we need to go out and meet them where they’re at.”

For both libraries and churches, it’s about meeting people’s needs and helping folks out. To me, they’re pretty seamless.

Speaking of language and vocabularies, you’re an advocate of establishing writing programs in libraries, and your Twitter handle is @writerbrarian. With more and more information available online and the library becoming less of a physical space and more of a virtual service, are libraries still a good fit for writing programs?

I think writing programs are a terrific fit for libraries, and I might even contest how much libraries are disappearing. They are certainly transforming a lot.

I would say that writing is an activity that is largely performed in solitude, so people who write need to gather together and learn and share and encourage each other. Which makes writing a great fit for a library, because where else would they meet if not in a temple of the written word? Of course they’d meet in libraries. So, to me, it’s a natural fit.

I would point us to look at how a lot of libraries are incorporating makerspaces. Libraries are becoming places not just to consume literature or materials, but to create and engage. Writing fits in really well with this.

So I think the library fits naturally as a place to generate content. And even if libraries are shrinking and going more toward e-books, they’re still going to have a physical footprint and they’re still a community center, which is a really important role.

Artists and writers are fantastic for getting together. I was at a gathering recently for a bunch of artists who came to Kansas City for a fantasy art convention. And artists, like writers and librarians, are extremely collaborative and encouraging and helpful. They’re not cutthroat—they just want to build people up and help people out. They’re fantastic. I think artists in general, along with writers and librarians, make a fantastic pairing.

While we’re talking about libraries, what’s your earliest memory of one, and what made you decide to become a librarian?

My earliest memory was my mom taking us to the library as kids—not when I was really young, like four or five, but after that. I don’t remember ever taking a picture book out of the library; I’m woefully behind in the realm of picture books. I have favorites now, mind you, but at the time I never read them. Instead, I would go one section up, check out a stack of books that were at least an inch thick, and maybe make a dent in one of them before they had to go back. I am notoriously the slowest reading librarian on the planet. I am really slow.

But, yeah, I spent a lot of time at the library. I got through all of the Hardy Boys and Encyclopedia Brown and Three Investigators books, and plenty more. It was terrific.

As far as deciding to become a librarian, like I said before, it was a pretty seamless transition. I was in ministry and that was winding to its conclusion, and I got a part-time job at a library and I realized, this is the perfect fit for me. I get to do different things and interact with people and do things on my own. And it really just took off from there.

I think a common thread in most things I do is that I want to connect people to things that matter. That can mean writing books that show struggles and victories we face, or mediating conflicts—I have training in that, too—so people can restore relationships. If it’s connecting them to books or tax forms or engineering standards that they need, that’s taking people to the things that matter to them. And in the realm of librarianship, that’s a vast area to explore, so I’m quite happy there.

You worked in an academic library, later took a job in a public library, and now work in a library for a construction engineering firm. In what way are they more alike than you would have
expected, and in what way are they more different?

Before taking my current role, I was the assistant manager at a public library branch for about eight years. Probably the main difference in coming to a private, corporate library was privacy. If someone asks me now who has a book checked out, I can tell them, and it’s okay. Also, because I work in a building that requires a badge to get in, there are no homeless people in my workplace, I don’t have to plunge toilets, and I don’t have to break up fights in the men’s room (I’ve done that). And I really appreciate these aspects of the workplace.

The upside of working in a public library is that you get to put Nancy Drew into the hands of a kid, and their eyes light up. You get to help people find things that get them jobs or change their lives. And at a private library—and I tell this to library students when I get the chance—sometimes it’s more of a stretch to find that sense of purpose and meaning. I don’t impact lives as directly now, but I still do, because I help engineers build clean water plants for societies. So you have to reach for it, but it’s still there.

Working in the public and private sectors, I’ve gotten to learn about different avenues of librarianship in the last few years. Here at Black & Veatch, I’ve learned a lot about user experience and web design, so I spend a lot of time putting myself in other people’s shoes and imagining what they might need and how they would find it. Building websites is a fun part of my job—I renovated the entire library website on our intranet, and apparently I did it well enough that I’ve been asked by other departments to renovate their pages, so I’m working on that now. It’s fun—it’s a job I enjoy that I didn’t get to do at the public library.

We recently had “Take Your Child to Work Day” here at B&V, and my kids came to work with me. One of the things we did was build a sample website on the intranet and talk about user experience principles. The site was about robots and horses and robot horses. It was actually great as a promotional tool—I was able to share a link to that page with the company to show the kind of fun side that we have and how we do things and engage personally. So it was a decent promo piece for us as well.

When did you become aware of SLA, and what do you get out of being a member?

I learned about SLA toward the end of my library program. I missed the course on special libraries because it isn’t taught very often—in fact, it hasn’t been taught since I graduated, although I’ve offered—but I contacted the teacher of the course, Lu Dayrit, who at the time was president of the Kansas/Western Missouri Chapter.

Every chapter should have somebody like Lu. She is an unstoppable force; you cannot say no to Lu. She tried to get me into chapter leadership right away. I was still working in a public library, so I was able to postpone it until I started working in a corporate library, and then I became membership chair for a while. Later I went on to expand my skills and help out a little bit more by becoming president.

As far as what I enjoy most about being a member, I really like the peer group that I get to connect with. When I was at a public library, I was in a system with 30 branches. I was an assistant manager, and all of the assistant managers would get together every so often for a book club or happy hour or whatever. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with people who were facing the same situations as you and maybe answering them in different ways.

I really enjoy that about SLA. It’s very difficult for those of us in specialized libraries to find people who face the same issues and have the same responsibilities that are different from a large portion of librarianship.

So, for me, the benefit is largely the peer group. I love getting to interact with them and work with them. For example, our current chapter president, Eryn Campbell, is a delight to work with. We’re presenting together in Phoenix at SLA 2017, and we’ve presented together at some conferences before. It’s just a great community to work and learn with and share with all of them.

You were president of the SLA Kansas/Western Missouri Chapter last year, and instead of taking a breather, you’re serving as chair-elect of the Engineering Division this year and will be the chair next year. Was it a conscious decision on your part to take on these leadership roles back to back, or were you simply unable to say no?

I like to keep busy, and I like to do big-picture things and grow my skills. I was actually having a hard time picturing not being involved in SLA other than as a member.

Also, I haven’t had an opportunity to work with many other engineering librarians. Even in my chapter, I’m pretty much the only one. So I wanted to see what that community is like and how I could contribute, and other people seemed to agree. I like getting to help out.

Just as your career has taken some twists and turns, your exercise routine has done likewise—you’re a fan of running obstacle courses. How did you get interested in obstacle courses, and what are your favorite and least favorite obstacles?

I’ve liked obstacle courses since I was a kid, but they weren’t a popular thing then. They kind of entered my radar again, gosh, maybe 10 years ago, when Wipeout, the TV show, came on. I loved that show—it was ridiculous to watch, and the commentary was terrific. I would joke with my kids about auditioning.

Then, a few years later, when the Rugged Maniac and other obstacle courses were growing and came to Kansas City, I really didn’t have any excuses. I wanted to see if I could do it, so I set myself a course, and I trained, and I ran one. Actually, the first summer, I ran four of them, with varying degrees of difficulty. They’re tough—you have to work out...
Brian tackles the monkey bars at an obstacle course in Kansas City.

for them. But they’re mostly about perseverance. You just have to not give up. If you don’t give up, you win. It’s really that simple.

My favorite obstacle is on the Rugged Maniac Course where you crawl down a tube, probably about three feet in diameter, into a mud pit. You swim through the mud under a barbed wire netting, and at the other side you pull yourself up by a rope through a tube. It is completely filthy and difficult, and it is different from anything else in my life that I encounter. And it is really fun.

My least favorite obstacle is the first part of the course—you have to run up a mountain for two miles, first thing. It is really grueling. It’s a killer way to begin.

You recently attended a Planet Comicon convention in Kansas City. Do you secretly aspire to write comic books, and what’s your favorite comic book or strip?

You know, kind of like picture books, I was never into comic books too much. They didn’t speak to me very well—I don’t know why. Now I appreciate them and recommend them to people all the time. I do own a copy of the *Moby Dick* graphic novel that Marvel put out. It’s terrific, by the way. I won it at a workshop recently.

I enjoy some of the strips. *Get Fuzzy* might be my favorite—a guy and his cat and dog. It’s beautiful.

Comics aren’t exactly my thing, but I like going to events like Planet Comicon, for a couple of reasons. One is that it’s just a load of fun. You get to hang out with people who are enthusiastic about a lot of things; many of them are the same things you’re enthusiastic about, but a whole lot of other things, too. And they get to take it to the next level and dress up and take pictures and bring props, and it’s really fun. People get to share their passions, and that’s terrific to bring about.

The other reason I love Comicon is that they bring fiction into reality. You get to see real storm troopers and the real Ecto-1 car from *GhostBusters*, and you get to see people wearing T-shirts that they wear on your favorite TV show. You can find Blue Sun T-shirts from *Firefly*, and it’s fantastic. You can get yourself a sonic screwdriver and a fez.

So this year I got myself a T-shirt from *Warehouse 13* that they wear on the show. It has Rheticus’s compass on it. And I got to meet one of the actors from the show, so for me it was fiction and reality colliding, which I love.

That’s also why I started a blog called “Today in Fiction.” I coordinate a team of librarians who put fictional events on a real calendar, so things like Bloomsday from *Ulysses* by James Joyce, where he walks around Dublin one day, is on the calendar. The day that SkyNet goes active in *Terminator*—we’ve got that one, too. If it occurs in a book or a movie or a TV show, we try to commemorate it and have it on a calendar so we can celebrate it.

In 2015, you co-presented a session titled “They Don’t Know We’re Here” at a state library conference. In that presentation, you recommended that librarians have an “elevator speech” handy. What’s your elevator speech at this stage of your career, and what do
Negotiating Better License Agreements through Mindfulness

Negotiating license agreements is a task that many librarians and information professionals are thrown into but often do not want (or have the education or training) to perform. The word negotiation can be scary—it implies arguing, being in conflict with the other party, and asserting oneself—but, as with everything in life, there are various ways to approach it. The right approach can lead to a pleasant experience, resulting in a licensing arrangement that really helps your library and organization.

I submit that practicing mindfulness will make you a better negotiator of license agreements for your digital periodicals, journals, and databases. Mindfulness is a new buzzword we hear everywhere and in relation to everything we do. It is about better focus and awareness, and it is important both at work and in our personal lives.

Following are five ways you can start incorporating mindfulness into your digital license negotiations right away.

Start with a pause, and keep on pausing. Mindfulness is about slowing down to speed up. It’s about pausing before taking the next step to ensure you are moving in the right direction, thus saving time you would have spent doubling back and starting over.

Begin the task of negotiating licenses for your e-resources by taking time to pause and visualize the outcome you desire. Throughout the negotiations, stop yourself from rushing to decisions and making careless mistakes by periodically taking a moment to pause and reflect on how things are unfolding. Think about the information you have received from the other party and ask yourself if the progress being made is bringing you closer to—or pushing you further away from—your initial goal.

By slowing down and checking in with yourself periodically, you will better keep your negotiations on track and in perspective.

Maintain self-awareness. Being aware of oneself leads to better decision making. When you pause to reflect on whether the negotiations are proceeding in a way that brings you closer to your goals, you should reflect as well on how the negotiations are making you feel and how you are reacting to the other party.

If you find you’re beginning to feel defensive, remind yourself that you’re representing your library and do not have a personal stake in the negotiations. This will help you focus on being assertive about your library’s needs without becoming personally aggressive. Some people find they become overly aggressive when presented with a conflicting point of view; others feel intimidated and tend to back down too easily. By maintaining self-awareness, you can remind yourself that you have a right to expect cooperation in negotiations and to ask for items on your “want” and “need” lists.

Be present; remove distractions. What if, during your license negotiations, you could be present and focused at every moment, fully applying your negotiating talents and knowledge of how the content will be used? Unfortunately, being present is easier said than done. Today’s librarian is bombarded with distractions and pulled in many directions.

Give yourself the opportunity to focus on negotiating by removing distractions from your workplace prior to commencing. Consider turning off your phone, replying to urgent e-mails, and tackling the project during a lull in the day. You’ll find that the fewer distractions that surround you, the more present you are able to be. Another approach is to find a room outside your office (or even outside the library) where distractions are at a minimum, then undertake the negotiations in that spot.

Practice mindful listening. Mindful listening is the act of listening without judgment and with kindness. Listening with openness can bring the spirit of collaboration to negotiating and promote a win-win outcome.

The first step in mindful listening is to stop talking. Don’t interrupt the other party—instead, when the other party is speaking, try to stay in the moment by reflecting on what they are saying to you rather than distracting yourself by mentally formulating your rebuttal. When you listen mindfully, you will be more likely to pick up on information and cues that you can use to your advantage, such as which elements of the contract are their priority and where they may be willing to compromise.

To listen with openness, avoid making assumptions about the other par-
ty’s motives. It’s critical to take in the information you are being given with the intent of understanding the other person’s point of view. If you’re unsure about something, ask for clarification to avoid misunderstandings. Don’t read something into what you are hearing, and don’t fill in gaps.

Approach the negotiations with optimism. As with mindful listening, taking an optimistic approach to negotiations can help foster a collaborative (rather than competitive) relationship with the other party. This is because mindful optimism is focused on interpreting and responding to circumstances through a positive lens, making it easier to overcome and bridge differences.

To be clear, the intent of mindful optimism isn’t to mask an offer that wouldn’t be in your library’s best interest with a cheerful veneer—it’s to put yourself in a frame of mind to see opportunity in negotiation rather than conflict. By seeing the common interests in an offer rather than only the shortcomings, the process of aligning both parties’ interests becomes far easier and less stressful.

You will find that a constructively optimistic outlook will also help calm pre-negotiation nerves. Rather than gearing up for a conversation that feels like a tug of war, you’ll be preparing for a discussion that ultimately will benefit both parties.

Bringing it all Together

It will take practice to master mindful license agreement negotiations, so don’t be discouraged if it is difficult at first. In time, you’ll find that removing yourself from distractions becomes second nature and that staying focused on your goals rather than being sidetracked by your feelings is far easier. Your negotiations will have a collaborative rather than competitive energy to them. Finally (and most notably), mindfulness will help give you the ability to fully apply your skills to the important task of negotiating and do your absolute best work for your library and patrons. SLA

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you hope it will be someday?

My recent tagline has been along the lines of “The library connects you to the information you need to succeed in your work and save you time and money.” That usually gets to the point for most people in the company—apparently, time and money are important in businesses. Who knew? (laughs)

The reason Eryn Campbell and I created that session was that a lot of us who work in companies are largely forgotten. I work in a company with more than 10,000 people, and most of them don’t know there’s a library to serve them. So it’s about promoting yourself and getting your word out as soon as you can.

Going forward, for this library and this company, that tagline will probably stay the same for a long time. We get them what they need. Sometimes we grab the articles or the standards for them and deliver; other times we just teach them to use the database and let them make their own connection. That’s fine, too. But either way, we’re gonna’ connect the dots for folks and show them they don’t have to duplicate information. There’s a lot of that going on.

If we can do that, we’ll be saving them time and money and helping the company grow. And we’ll be making a difference. SLA

The Role of Information Professionals in CI Practices
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porary CI can be seen as a process of gradual detachment from the corporate library and a transformation into a field of its own. Regaining this lost territory may be impossible, but information professionals can at least learn from this history. They must become more proactive in reaching out, and they must learn new skills by collaborating with different user groups, such as CI practitioners. These changes are particularly necessary given that organizations are increasingly moving toward a flatter, more participative and decentralized structure.

Finally, let’s come back to Davenport and Prusak (1993), who had predicted the unsustainability of the warehouse model of corporate libraries. They called instead for an expertise model or a network model to shift the old paradigm and move forward. After a quarter of a century, this call remains relevant. For information professionals in today’s digital era, a supporting role is not enough. They must augment themselves significantly and reach out to collaborate. SLA

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How often have you attended a meeting where a PowerPoint screen was shown that contained complicated sets of data? How long did it take you to understand the structure of the data and the content? Were you too busy struggling to assimilate the information—say, the years of coverage and the scale of the changes in the data over time—to recognize any trends in the changes, let alone the deeper meaning and implications of the changes?

Basically, you were provided with a data dump and left to interpret the information. You were presented with raw data and asked to create knowledge from the facts. This on-the-fly analysis also required you to already know enough about the topic and the particular conditions to make informed assessments and projections.

This type of data dump is not the most effective way to impart information and context, even to those familiar with the specifics of a topic. It is even less effective if the person has little detailed knowledge of the field, in which case the data cannot be quickly related to standard benchmarks. In many cases, it is time-intensive to recognize and evaluate patterns within data. With a simple data dump, you are providing data and information, but you are not providing helpful context and/or added-value insight.

It is much more effective and persuasive to present visualizations that highlight the importance and potential impact of trends found within data rather than the raw data itself. Embedded meanings and implications within data patterns can be instantly conveyed using visual presentations. These images can provide an immediate impact and effectively remove the noise, thereby highlighting the implications. Visualizations can present future projections and thereby warn of negative situations if trends do not change. They can also powerfully demonstrate the consequences of changing organizational actions and/or decisions.

Such visual projections resonate with stakeholders because they make quite clear the implications of inaction, transitional action, or transformational action. Decision makers appreciate and reward those who can recognize and provide them with early warnings of trouble or identify new opportunities for growth or enhancement. You can select appropriate types of visualizations based upon the characteristics of trends you wish to project.

Pie charts allow for easy recognition of relative values across variables. For example, a simple pie chart can quickly show the relative scale of expenditures across disciplines—and do so far more effectively than having to intellectually compare raw numbers in a spreadsheet. The initial visual impression is also more powerful than viewing calculated percentages, although we must remember that spreadsheet numerical value data can be ranked and provide some additional interactive possibilities.

In a more complex instance, side-by-side pie charts can show changes in category allocations on specific dates. This approach can be used to show major changes in allocations over a particular time period. You can also use pie charts to demonstrate initial conditions—for instance, you could visually show the impact of your efforts by presenting a return on investment (ROI) analysis of both a spend-by-discipline on journals and a spend-by-discipline on books. This type of layered pie chart visualization makes it possible to show effectiveness over specific time frames. Pie charts are, therefore, very useful at showing slices of time.

Bar charts provide effective visualizations of continuous changes in variables over time. Bar charts can demonstrate patterns and project trends based on changing (or static) conditions. Visual cues can quickly highlight anomalies and second-level impacts.

For instance, you can provide a yearly bar chart of sales per unit with a line graph of associated profits during those same years. This could quickly show any changes in profit margin over time, which may or may not be directly associated with total unit sales. This could highlight other variables that should be considered, such as economies of scale in production.

Whereas trends and projections are the strength of bar charts, scatter plots can show outliers from normal condi-
Visual Literacy as Information Literacy in the Agricultural Sciences

Including a visual literacy component in an information literacy course helped students better understand the value of visual information tools and analysis.

BY BRITT FOSTER, MLIS

Visual information is a central component of today’s information ecosystem, whether it is used to supplement other formats or as a stand-alone method for communicating. Visual information itself can come in many formats, including graphics, tables and figures, multimedia, and photographs.

Information professionals must be proficient in navigating each of these formats and finding and selecting the resources that best meet their information needs. In addition, they must be comfortable not just using visual information, but also creating it. As the Association of College & Research Libraries’ Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education emphasizes, active participation in the creation of information is an important aspect of information literacy in the 21st century (2016).

At the SLA Food, Agriculture, and Nutrition Division’s April 25 virtual contributed papers teleconference (titled “Innovations and Issues in Agriculture, Food and Nutrition, or Biological/Life Sciences Information”), I presented a paper exploring visual literacy as information literacy and assessing its importance to the agricultural sciences (Foster 2017). I also shared a method for instruction in visual literacy, along with lessons learned from the results of student projects assessing visual literacy outcomes.

Visual Literacy as Information Literacy
The ACRL’s Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2011) defines visual literacy in much the same way as information literacy and describes the importance of finding, using, and analyzing visual materials. However, the standards also emphasize that visual information is unique, with its own considerations for evaluation, creation, and ethical use and sharing.

For these reasons, the faculty of the Department of Viticulture and Enology (grape growing and winemaking) at California State University, Fresno, worked with its librarian to design a unit in visual literacy as part of the department’s information literacy curriculum. The unit addresses the need for students to be able to interpret and create graphs, figures, and tables as well as analyze photos, graphics, and other multimedia images. The unit also reflects the winemaking industry’s need for employees to be proficient communicators—future wine industry professionals will need to both interpret and create visual information effectively.

The design of the unit illustrates that the interests of the department’s faculty and those of the wine industry align with the principles underlying visual literacy in the sciences and in the agricultural sciences in particular. As a discipline, agriculture requires practitioners to use visual information to perform their work—synthesizing observations from the field and lab to increase yield, produce and process commodities, and implement best practices using information collected from government, trade, and peer resources. In addition, those in agriculture must communicate visually with the general public, which is deeply interested in agricultural production, resource use, and food preparation methods (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016). For these reasons, including visual literacy in the information literacy curriculum was determined to be a priority for career readiness.

Visual Literacy Instruction and Assessment
The following sources were used to determine outcomes for the visual literacy instruction session:

• The ACRL’s Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education: This document defines visual literacy for college and university instruction and includes a bibliography of sources for visual literacy literature.

• Faculty and industry feedback: Discussions with faculty revealed the visual literacy outcomes most critical to the discipline.

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• Visual literacy curricula from other libraries and museums: Many other librarians have taught visual literacy in interesting and inspiring ways, and museums also have robust resources for teaching the elements of visual literacy, especially analysis and evaluation.

The instruction session focused on four elements of visual literacy: (1) introducing elements of visuals, such as form and line; (2) analyzing and interpreting visuals; (3) evaluating visuals for accuracy; and (4) ethically using visual information, which included a brief introduction to Creative Commons. Each element was taught through group discussions of examples. The examples were discipline-specific and chosen to be engaging or thought-provoking—for example, what visual message might a low-calorie wine with a long slender label in shades of pink send to the consumer?

To assess their understanding of the four elements, students were asked to create a visual artifact, such as a visual guide to wine analysis procedures or a visual representation of chemical limits in wine by country. The artifacts were then evaluated by a rubric.

The evaluation results indicated that students were comfortable creating visual information, such as using their phones to take and edit pictures for lab techniques. Students were also very comfortable using other tools to create visual information, such as PowerPoint (slides) or Excel (tables and charts). As the Visual Literacy Competency Standards points out, tools like these have made it easier to create visual information, and it is highly likely that students have already been using these tools personally and professionally.

The artifacts produced using these tools demonstrated that the students possessed a strong ability to make choices about creating and communicating visual information. Conversely, they seemed less able to analyze and reflect on these design choices. While creating visual information is likely a common practice, discussing the reasons for and effects of choices may be less common. Students also struggled with proper citation practices. In future sessions, an emphasis on the role of visual information as information may help establish the concept that visual *information* requires ethical use and proper acknowledgement.

The experience of teaching visual literacy in the agricultural sciences illuminated the role of librarians in working with clients and customers to achieve fluency with all information formats. Given that students are already using visual information resources in the classroom today and will continue to do so at their future jobs, including visual literacy in the information literacy curriculum will support both their academic and professional success. **SLA**

**REFERENCES**


