Information Outlook, September 2009

Special Libraries Association

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SLA members (left to right) Von Totanes, Norah Xiao, Miguel Figueroa, Cindy Hill, Reece Dano, and Lassana Magassa gather on the steps of the Library of Congress during the SLA 2009 Annual Conference & INFO-EXPO.

Photo by Mark Reinertson, The Photo Group.
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“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” It is a familiar childhood refrain, but few of us truly believed it when we said it. Words can and do hurt. They hurt feelings, tarnish images, and, yes, even harm careers.

An important objective of SLA’s Alignment Project, an intensive two-year-long research effort, is to identify words and concepts with the greatest potential to hurt or help the careers of librarians and information professionals. Information professionals have always helped position their organizations for success by delivering research and evidence-based information and solutions. Now, SLA can deliver its members a research-based vocabulary that will help you take on the greatest challenge facing the profession: demonstrating the value you add to your organization.

Product marketers have long understood that people buy products because of the benefits they provide. You may think you can live without fabric softener, but do you want to go without “enviable freshness”? Your laundry detergent’s label likely stresses its scent—or lack of scent—or the addition of an added benefit such as whitening; you may, in fact, have a hard time finding the word “detergent” on the label at all.

We all make decisions every day based on the value-added benefits presented by various options available to us, whether we are buying a product, hiring a new staff member or deciding where we can cut back on spending. So what “can’t live without it” value-added benefits can information professionals use to sell themselves in the marketplace?

Our Alignment Project research shows that promoting the information professional’s connection with a culture of continuous learning, knowledge sharing, and the use of innovative technology is a winning proposition among both info pros and, importantly, the people who hire them. If you can make a case for advancing these concepts in your organization, you will be perceived as more valuable when you are hired—and less expendable when people are fired.

Other concepts that tested very well include providing value-added intelligence, facilitating good decision making, providing insights and identifying trends, creating competitive advantage and anticipating industry changes. These are results that special librarians achieve every day in organizations of all kinds, but the people who run those organizations—and who make budgetary decisions—often are not aware of them.

Concepts that did not test well included anything with the “L word”—librarian or library. Sadly, that includes the name Special Libraries Association. Like detergent, the word “librarian” is an accurate description of function, but not a value proposition. It says what you do for a living, but it does not say what you can do for your organization. Moreover, the research shows that “librarian” is perceived as being dusty and antiquated—two words that should not be connected with either a profession or a professional association that prides itself on being ahead of the curve.

At budget time, a person who “organizes and disseminates information” (another term that tested poorly) is not likely to be viewed as indispensable. But who can afford to give up a “knowledge leader who uses innovative technology to provide insights and identify trends, giving an organization a competitive advantage”—especially when times are tough?

In my view, an academic degree is a credential, not a job. For example, I am an attorney, and my legal education makes me a better CEO of SLA. However, law school was just the beginning of my learning. If I had limited myself to jobs for attorneys, my career path would never have led me to SLA and my most fulfilling job ever.

The term “special librarian” carries great sentimental weight. But just like an overpacked suitcase at the airport, these days that weight is costing us dearly. Research has pointed us to evidence-based conclusions about how to describe the information profession and the association (SLA) that represents information professionals. It is time to practice what we preach and adopt new ways of describing the role of information professionals—and adopt a new name for SLA as well.

The words we use to describe ourselves as professionals can limit our roles, or they can illustrate our contributions to our organization’s strategic priorities. We can be accurate or aspirational. The wrong words can hurt, but the right ones can help us align our skills with successful outcomes. Which words will you choose? SLA
SPIE eBooks Launch in Fall 2009

- SPIE eBooks are offered as collections with perpetual access and unlimited use within the purchasing institution. Three SPIE eBooks collections are available initially:
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‘Ambassadors’ Sought to Promote Alignment Project Findings

SLA divisions and chapters are being asked to nominate ‘true believers’ who will help generate passion for implementing the findings of the Alignment Project, including a name change.

Invoking Seth Godin’s notion of “tribes,” SLA President Gloria Zamora called on chapters and divisions to identify at least one person to help spread the word about the Alignment Project and encourage discussion about changing the association’s name.

“During the conference, I referred many times to Seth Godin’s concept of tribes: leaders connecting people to an idea that they support and communicate to others,” Zamora wrote in a message to SLA leaders on 7 July. “These people are true believers who are committed to the idea and who spread the idea because of their belief in it. With alignment ambassadors in each SLA chapter, we can create tribes that will build the excitement and the passion toward making these changes.”

The alignment ambassadors are expected to do the following:

• Spread the word about the Alignment Project using a Webinar or slide presentation being developed by Fleischman-Hillard in coordination with the new Alignment Portal;
• Identify SLA members with stories about how the Alignment Project has helped them in their job and/or profession; and
• Respond to questions and comments about the Alignment Project and the name change.

The SLA Public Relations Advisory Council (PRAC) is coordinating the alignment ambassadors effort. Names of alignment ambassadors should be forwarded to the chair of PRAC, Jill Strand, at jillstrand@gmail.com.

“Tribes are more organic than the more formal committee structure we are used to using,” Zamora noted in her message. “Tribes allow us to spread the word quickly and to create tribes spontaneously, which will grow as our members come to share our passion. There will be challenges involved in using this new concept, but those will be fewer than the rewards.”

SLA Debuts Television Network at 2009 Conference

Attendees at SLA 2009 were greeted by the usual signs, posters and banners in the convention center as well as by the unusual—television sets, each one beaming the faces and voices of SLA leaders and staff.

The conference marked the launch of SLA’s newest communication tool, SLA-TV, an online video network hosted on sla.org. SLA-TV is designed to further advance the association’s mission to promote and strengthen its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

“SLA-TV is an integral part of how we will connect with you, face to face, regardless of where you are in the world,” says Cara Schatz, SLA’s public relations director. “The site will be evolving and expanding constantly. We encourage you to visit often, share your thoughts on how we can improve this community, and even send us your own videos.”

The videos currently playing on SLA-TV include testimonials about the 2009 awards recipients and presentations by the 2009 candidates for the SLA Board of Directors.

SLA Board Approves Taxonomy Division

The SLA Board of Directors voted 19 August to approve the creation of a new division for information professionals interested in organizing and structuring information and specifically in planning, creating, and maintaining taxonomies, thesauri, authority files, and other controlled vocabularies and information structures.

The new Taxonomy Division will become the 27th division within SLA and the first since the Academic Division was approved in January. Margie Hlava, president of Access Innovations, will serve as the first chair of the division.

The scope of the Taxonomy Division encompasses traditional and emerging cognitive approaches to organizing information and the full range of settings in which taxonomies are applied. Areas of interest include the following:

• Strategies for planning and creating taxonomies, such as analyzing existing vocabularies to inform the creation of new ones and selecting technologies and tools to support them;
• Implementation, maintenance, and use of controlled vocabularies for all types of information and all relevant contexts, such as support for search and navigation;
• Standards, governance, and management of taxonomies and other controlled vocabularies; and
• New and emerging approaches to organizing information, such as the semantic Web, ontologies, and tagging, including relationships between user-generated tags and formal controlled vocabularies.

The Taxonomy Division hopes to attract new members who are interested in this topic who have not otherwise aligned themselves with SLA previously. For example, there are 140-plus people on the Taxonomy Tuesdays list in Washington, D.C., and 995 global members of the taxonomy community of practice discussion list.
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ACS Launches New Print Format for Journals

Displaying two pages of text on each printed page will allow the society to continue providing print copies of its journals to subscribers who want them.

Responding to limited but persistent demand for printed versions of its publications, the American Chemical Society (ACS) announced that most of them will henceforth be printed in a “rotated and condensed” format rather than the traditional size in which they are now printed.

ACS publishes 36 peer-reviewed journals and a weekly news and industry magazine, Chemical & Engineering News, in both print and digital formats. Three ACS titles—the Journal of the American Chemical Society, Chemical Reviews and Accounts of Chemical Research—will remain in their traditional print formats. Chemical & Engineering News, which is distributed to the society’s 154,000 members, will also remain in its traditional format.

Effective in 2010, ACS will end two discount programs, one for libraries and one for its members, that apply solely to its printed journals. ACS will credit customers who cancel their discounted print subscriptions before 30 September 2009 with a rebate equivalent to 30 percent of their 2009 print purchases to be applied to their 2010 ACS Web editions renewals.

Although the society responds to approximately 70 million online requests for information each year, it continues to receive orders for print subscriptions. These orders typically number in the hundreds per journal title, an ACS official said.

Susan King, senior vice president of the Journals Publishing Group at ACS, noted that the cost reductions associated with the move to the new print format—which will rotate the pages into landscape mode and display two pages per physical printed page, thus maintaining approximately 70 percent of each standard page image—will enable the society to extend the viability of the printed format to institutional customers whose users continue to demand that medium. In order to share the cost-saving benefits of the new format with library customers, ACS has announced plans to keep prices flat on its print journals for 2010.

GPO to Provide e-Mail Alerts of New Products

The U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) has launched an enhanced e-mail alert system to inform the public about new government publications available for sale.

Subscribers to the system can select from more than 100 different subject areas. The new system enables GPO to reach out to other government agencies to get its alert service on their sites.

For example, if someone is looking at NASA’s Web site, he or she can sign up for the e-mail alert for NASA publications sold by GPO. The public can subscribe to this alert service at GPO’s Online Bookstore, available at http://bookstore.gpo.gov/alertservice.jsp.

Elsevier Admits to Publishing ‘Journal’ without Disclosing Pharmaceutical Sponsor

Acknowledging that it had published several compilations of scientific articles in the guise of a peer-reviewed medical journal without indicating that a drug company had paid it to do so, Elsevier announced that it is developing new guidelines for producing reprints, compilations or custom publications on behalf of pharmaceutical firms.

Elsevier, a major publisher of scientific, technical and medical (STM) information products and services, said an internal review revealed that a series of publications produced in Australia between the years 2000 and 2005 carried the name “journal of” but lacked proper sponsor disclosures and were not in fact journals and should not have been titled as such.

The review found that the Australian affiliate of Merck, which makes Vioxx, a well-known arthritis and pain relief medication, paid the Australian office of Elsevier to produce the compilations, which were printed under the

ACS responds to approximately 70 million online requests for information each year, while orders for print subscriptions typically number in the hundreds.
Pharmaceutical companies routinely offer doctors reprints of articles from medical journals that are favorable to their products. Nine of 29 articles in the second issue of Bone and Joint Medicine referred positively to Vioxx, and an additional 12 articles referred positively to another Merck drug, Fosamax, a bone treatment, according to one doctor.

Elsevier and other STM publishers each year produce thousands of reprint products that contain authorized reprints of articles from original primary journals. Elsevier will review its practices related to all article reprint, compilation or custom publications and set out guidelines on content, permission, use of imprint and repackaging to ensure that such publications are not confused with Elsevier’s core peer-reviewed journals and that the sponsorship of any publication is clearly disclosed. SLA

“Bone and Joint Medicine” was the only reviewed STM journals. Electronic journal platform for its peer-

“Australasian Journal” series, are compilation publications, including the in Australia. Customized and reprint products each year produce thousands of reprint products that contain authorized reprints of articles from original primary journals. Elsevier will review its practices related to all article reprint, compilation or custom publications and set out guidelines on content, permission, use of imprint and repackaging to ensure that such publications are not confused with Elsevier’s core peer-reviewed journals and that the sponsorship of any publication is clearly disclosed. SLA

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR SKILLS AND COMMUNICATING THEIR VALUE CAN HELP YOU PURSUE A CAREER PATH OUTSIDE A LIBRARY AS WELL AS INSIDE ONE.

BY AMY MAULE

One of the challenges of being a corporate librarian is that we are often solo librarians, or one of very few. Many large companies have advancement programs for professionals in the company’s core service areas, but there may appear to be little room for advancement for librarians, since we are often the only people who do what we do.

Whether you are ready for a new adventure, want to move up, or are worried about your job dissolving as your company tightens its belt, it’s wise to always be prepared to make a career change. And while polishing your resume and making connections in the library community are great ways to get ready for a job search, there are things you can do within your own company to move up—even if it means moving out of the library.

Much has been written lately about embedded librarianship, and it is certainly a powerful new direction for librarians to explore. Even without a formal embedded librarian program, you can apply your skills more directly to a marketing, strategic planning, or research and development group within your company. Consider adopting the relationship Robert Schumacher (2007) describes as “captive” by establishing yourself as not only a valuable support tool but an active member of a team.

Identifying Transferable Skills

Our profession tends to be very library-centric. We have graduate degrees in library sciences, we call ourselves librarians, and most of us work in libraries. But we might be shortchanging ourselves by describing our skills only in the context of library and research settings.

In a discussion of her own non-traditional career path, Jill Hurst-Wahl (2006) offered this advice to new librarians: “Think about what you can do and not necessarily what the label is.” Consider how many of our skills would be quite valuable in other environments:

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For complete details about the 2009 Recruit-a-Member Campaign, visit www.sla.org/recruit.

New member applications and dues payments must be received by 31 December 2009.
We might be shortchanging ourselves by describing our skills only in the context of library and research settings.

Overcoming Challenges
Armed with these skills and abilities, we can more easily overcome the challenges that come with moving out of a formal library setting. The primary challenges are as follows:

- Proving yourself quickly. There is always risk in taking the road less traveled. When I left my company’s library, I moved into an undefined position and my former position was filled. If my new job didn’t work out, there would be no seat waiting for me in the library. It was important for me to quickly define my role and make a strong contribution to my new team.

- Creating and refining a job description. Since your embedded position will probably be new to your company, you may have the freedom to write your own position description. If the Human Resources Department has already written one for you, consider creating a work plan or “job jar” to help your new manager and colleagues understand how you will contribute to their success. Here are some suggestions:
  - Make a list of the skills you can contribute to your team. Describe the way you will use these skills to advance the team’s goals.
  - Talk to your new manager and co-workers about their expectations. Remember that they might not initially understand how you will contribute to their work. Use your skills list to make suggestions, but listen carefully to their needs.
  - Consider where you want to be in one to five years. If you would like to be more involved in a certain aspect of your team’s work, find a way to tie that into your job description.
  - Be explicit about boundaries. Make sure that your position description does not include duties you do not want to perform, such as technical support or administrative tasks.

Marketing Your Skills
Self-marketing can be a difficult challenge for librarians, but it is also one of the most important. Your new co-workers will probably understand that you are a valuable resource for research, but they may not realize that you can also help them design a database, plan a paper for publication, develop a list of potential clients, or evaluate market research products.

If you simply ask your co-workers how you can help them, you are likely to get a blank stare. Start by creating a written plan for yourself, as if you were marketing a product for a business. Michael Newman’s Basics of a Marketing Plan (2006) is a great starting point. Answering his eight categories of questions will help you determine exactly what you are selling and how to go about presenting your services to co-workers who did not know they needed your skills.

Dennie Heye (2006) recommends creating a services portfolio. This can be published online or in hard-copy form, but it should demonstrate your skills in a way that applies directly to the needs of your colleagues.

Think about how your team members communicate. If they prefer e-mail, compose customized messages outlining what you can offer each person. If they prefer face-to-face communication, find time to spend five minutes with each person explaining how you plan to contribute to their work. Be specific—learn what each person does so you
can address their individual needs. Ask questions about their research interests and current projects.

Follow up with a news item, report or other product that demonstrates your ability and attention to their needs. Stay in touch by sending e-mails, stopping by desks to check in, or meeting for lunch or coffee. Heye explains that fostering relationships with key people who use your skills can lead to referrals as your current clients recommend you to members of their network.

Eavesdropping is also a very useful skill. Working in a cubicle environment makes this especially easy, but asking to sit in on meetings and listening to hallway conversations can also be very beneficial. If you hear someone talking about a project that could use your skills, don’t be afraid to speak up. Most people will appreciate the help or remember your offer the next time a similar situation arises.

Of course, you’ll want to avoid stepping on toes. There are always people who jealously guard their domain and may feel threatened by your presence in their group. This is where a clearly defined job description will come in handy. Being able to demonstrate where your job ends and their jobs begin (and that you have management support) will relieve much of their stress.

Avoiding Administrative Duties
Librarians are good at getting things done quickly and efficiently. We know who to call and how to make things happen. Unfortunately, these skills make us easy targets for administrative and tech-support work. It’s important not to let your enthusiasm saddle you with tasks that are not commensurate with your abilities.

Before moving into an embedded position, make sure that the team is not bringing you in to fill administrative needs. Be explicit about your expectations during initial discussions and while creating your position description.

Stick to your boundaries. If someone asks you to order food or make copies, connect them with someone better qualified to do the job. Snobbery will discourage people from seeking your help with future projects, but informed redirection will generally be appreciated. By consistently drawing the line, your co-workers will learn to recognize your true value.

It may be necessary to lay down the law if you find yourself regularly being saddled with administrative tasks. Sit down with your manager and explain the problem. Again, try to avoid any suggestion of being too good for administrative or technical support duties. Remind your manager that you would be better utilized in other ways.

**The Rewards of Being Embedded**

Most of us went to library school because we saw libraries as the best place for us to apply our interests and abilities. Some of us started as paraprofessionals and pursued an MLS to advance to the next level; others worked in information-related jobs and saw librarianship as an application of our existing skill set. Regardless of why you decided to pursue librarianship, you might view leaving the library as a step backward or a waste of your education. I believe that applying our skills outside of a library setting can be a step forward.

Many corporate libraries are fairly small, with limited opportunities for advancement. If you work in such a library, you may think you need to leave your company to advance in the profession. If you manage your library, you may feel that there is little room to grow, even with a change of venue.

By stepping out of the library and taking on roles not traditionally associated with librarianship, you may find room to advance in unexpected directions. You may even be able to take advantage of your company’s professional advancement tracks within research and development, management, marketing or project management.

Working in the library, you may only get small glimpses of various projects when people ask you for help. Working on a non-library team, you’ll have the chance to see your company from a new perspective. You may work directly with marketing specialists, scientists, technologists, or executives. You may learn more about how your company functions or how ideas become new products, services or business models.

You also may discover other areas within your company or industry where your skills can be applied. For example, if your company provides services to outside clients, you may be able to apply your skills directly by working on client project teams. Since becoming embedded, I’ve had the opportunity to participate in strategic planning activities, work directly with clients on consulting projects, and help plan sales strategies.

Many companies offer tuition reimbursement or continuing education programs that can assist you in pursuing your goals. By aligning your professional and educational goals with your new position, you may be able to take advantage of these benefits and acquire additional skills and knowledge, which in turn will open new avenues for advancement.

The best part of becoming an embedded librarian or information specialist is the opportunity to shape the job to your own interests. Identify a network of informal mentors or people whose work you admire and find ways to be involved in their projects. You will learn new skills that may lead you to advancement within your own company or to future opportunities elsewhere. If you eventually decide to return to a traditional library setting, you will do so with an unsurpassed understanding of your internal clients’ needs and a heightened ability to provide exceptional library service.

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Taking a Non-Traditional Path

LIBRARIANS’ SKILLS ARE USEFUL IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS AND ROLES, AS A GROWING NUMBER OF INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS ARE DISCOVERING.

BY KATHERINE DUGARM

What distinguishes a librarian from other researchers or information gatherers? For example, how is a librarian different from a scientist? From a paralegal?

“More and more, librarians apply their information management and research skills to arenas outside of libraries—for example, database development, reference tool development, information systems, publishing, Internet coordination, marketing, Web content management and design, and training of database users,” states the U.S. Department of Labor’s Occupational Outlook Handbook (2008). “Entrepreneurial librarians sometimes start their own consulting practices, acting as freelance librarians or information brokers and providing services to other libraries, businesses, or government agencies.”

The paths from traditional to non-traditional librarian are probably as varied as the people who take them. This article describes the paths taken by four librarians working outside traditional library settings: the author, a business analyst with Ramsey County (Minn.) Community Human Services; Ann Treacy, a Web 2.0 trainer and developer; Lynn Strand-Meyer, a researcher in consumer trends and business; and Michele Crecca, a patent information specialist. Each found a new way to apply her research and customer service experience to a specific subject area, as a special librarian sometimes does in a library setting.

Continuing to Use Library Skills

Most of the non-traditional librarians interviewed for this article opted for a flexible work schedule of information brokering while their children were young. For example, Lynn Strand-Meyer started out wanting to be a school librarian so she could synchronize her work schedule with her children’s school schedule. An internship led her to a research position in the consumer market. Now she is expanding her work as a researcher, moving out of the school library and into an environment where she conducts primary research on consumers.

Lynn’s experience is typical of many non-traditional librarians in that she continues to use her research skills, training skills, reference interview skills, and customer service orientation even though she no longer works in a physical library. In my own career, I wanted the opportunity to use search tools more frequently.
she developed an interest in database retrieval. Classes based on the principles of information science and techniques of information storage and retrieval were keys to her education.

Once in the working world, Michele continued to feed her interest and develop her own approaches to database searching. She is particularly interested in what she calls “the back end” of a database because she feels that having a clear understanding of the scope of the data and how the data are organized and indexed is vital to knowing how to retrieve the data.

Michele credits library school with instilling a “bit of bloodhound” in her. She derives a feeling of enjoyment from following an information trail—researching databases and finding facts or sources that will please her client.

**Adding Value Outside Libraries**

Like Michele, Lynn Strand-Meyer combined an interest in another subject area—in her case, anthropology—with a library degree to open doors to a non-traditional career. Anthropology is the study of human behavior, and its guiding principle is that any detail of behavior can be understood better when it is seen against the backdrop of the full range of human behavior.

Lynn uses her passion for understanding human behavior and her skills as a librarian to learn how and why consumers do what they do. Understanding consumers is related to reference interviewing—both require the researcher to figure out what people want when they can’t quite articulate what they want.

In my own work as a business analyst, I frequently call on my skills in reference interviewing. When I begin a project, I am often asked to find a solution for a problem. Asking a series of questions generally elucidates the real problem I am being asked to fix. In many cases, the initial problem is actually a symptom of something much bigger.

Michele Crecca combines a desire for customer service work with the ability to look at a problem through different lenses in order to provide the best information possible to her client. Michele parlayed her graduate library degree and library experience and her undergraduate degree in science into a position as a patent examiner and, later, a patent information specialist.

Michele is now a senior business and intellectual property information specialist with IBM. She spends most days culling through electronic databases, applying her expertise to intellectual property issues, competitive intelligence, and other areas for projects involving corporate acquisitions, IP licensing and sales.

Michele was in library school when

“I can work anywhere and anytime, which has allowed me to travel for extended periods with my family. We just returned from two months in Ireland.”

-- ANN TREACY

“I spent several years as an independent patent searcher. It was during this time that I learned the importance of keeping a few professional colleagues near with whom you can ‘talk the talk.’”

-- MICHELE CRECCA

“It’s an enormous leap of faith in yourself to take on the role of an independent information professional. Now that I’ve jumped off the cliff, I’m soaring.”

-- LYNN STRAND-MEYER

“I can work anywhere and anytime, which has allowed me to travel for extended periods with my family. We just returned from two months in Ireland.”

-- ANN TREACY
Lynn is just one example of a growing shift in the information profession away from traditional library settings and toward embedded or independent work environments. As the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2008) noted, “Jobs for librarians outside traditional settings will grow the fastest over the decade. Non-traditional librarian jobs include working as information brokers and working for private corporations, nonprofit organizations, and consulting firms. Many companies are turning to librarians because of their research and organizational skills and their knowledge of computer databases and library automation systems.”

**Maintaining Their Passion**

Ann Treacy is another example of this trend. Like Lynn, she is self-employed, though as a Web consultant. She sees her business, Treacy Information Services, as a service that helps build community and give people in rural Minnesota a voice.

Ann helps her clients with search engine optimization, metatags, and Google keyword ads. As a librarian by education and training, she is familiar with keywords and searching from her use of indexes and research databases.

Ann blogs on the topic of broadband communications in rural areas. She scans resources to gather information; she also acts as a blog coach for her clients. Coaching, training and research are skills often used by special librarians, and they transfer to non-traditional roles as well.

Ann is frequently called on to help organize Web sites or SharePoint sites. Librarians are experienced at organizing information for ease of use by our customers. Whether the information is on paper or in electronic form, we can organize it or, knowing how the information is organized, retrieve it.

Like Michele and Lynn, Ann found a calling that appealed to a personal interest and applied her library education and training to help her explore it from a different perspective. Although their paths have taken them away from traditional libraries, all three women still maintain a librarian’s passion for researching a puzzle over and over until a solution reveals itself. Whether giving voice to people in rural areas, finding facts and sources to help clients do their jobs, or adding value by analyzing research, these non-traditional librarians offer the best possible information and service to clients. **SLA**

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Making the Transformation to Sharing Knowledge

MAKING CHANGES IN THE MISSION AND OPERATIONS OF THE LIBRARY WAS THE FIRST STEP IN PROMOTING A CULTURE OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITHIN AN ENTIRE ORGANIZATION.

BY KEN WHEATON, MLIS

From 1994 to 2007, I managed a traditional corporate library for Kalsec, Inc., a food ingredient manufacturer in Southern Michigan. I had a strong local network of other corporate librarians in the automobile, pharmaceutical and food industries. Their primary purpose was to manage periodicals and books, file internal reports and provide literature searches.

During my years at Kalsec, changes in the global economy created many challenges for the American industrial model. The cost of labor to manufacture goods could not compete with that of overseas labor. Many companies collapsed or merged to form large conglomerates. Quality was sacrificed to cut costs.

As these and other changes occurred, many corporate libraries had their funding cut or were completely eliminated. I began to see that the traditional corporate library was becoming irrelevant in an increasingly competitive economic climate. It was, by its own nature, a silo and not part of the organizational knowledge flow.

I also noticed that Toyota seemed to have learned very well from the mistakes of the American auto companies and was doing much better than they were. As a matter of fact, Taiichi Ohno’s book, *Toyota Production System*, clearly stated that Henry Ford’s *Today and Tomorrow* was the basis upon which Toyota built its success. Toyota learned how to become more efficient and produce better products by listening to its customers, working with its suppliers, learning from the competition and creating an organizational knowledge architecture. Toyota emphasized teamwork rather than individual achievement and built a continuous improvement culture rather than one committed to creating new project after new project.

I studied and learned from Toyota myself, since Toyota is very open about sharing its knowledge and processes. Overall, I could see that the market was beginning to force businesses and workers to change, whether we liked it or not. I knew that I must change as well or be left behind.

My goal was to see how I could best support the mission of our organization. My hope was that if I made successful changes in our corporate library, it could be used as a model for the whole organization. What really needed to change, I realized, was the librarian’s role in the organization.
Transforming Yourself
The best place to begin such a transformation is with your Human Resources Department. Most HR departments have a number of self-assessment tools, and I recommend taking full advantage of them. Remember, HR departments have an interest in maintaining the necessary talent and preventing knowledge from walking out the door.

As you learn more about yourself, learn about others as well so you can better understand your similarities and differences. Once you identify your strengths, try to build on them; when you learn your weaknesses, seek out others with strengths in those areas. Human resources professionals can assist you in many other ways, such as with change management techniques and training.

You will also need assistance in looking for change leaders to “sponsor” you and help you through the transformation process. I was fortunate that my supervisor was my sponsor and was also on the executive management team.

Transforming Your Organization
As I looked at companies in the area, I noticed that most of them had top-down reporting structures and company cultures that resisted conflict and hid problems. Employees were given a list of tasks to complete and were expected to finish them by whatever date or time their boss considered reasonable.

Most departments were separated by function and worked independently on projects approved by departmental leaders. Most staff had separate offices with doors, to allow for privacy. Knowledge hoarding was common and was seen as critical to acquiring and retaining power and job security. Team decisions were rare, and you dared not challenge the status quo.

I needed to see the library and its role in the dissemination of information within the company from the perspective of others in the organization. I decided that a company-wide information needs assessment was necessary, and I was able to get management support for it and move forward. The assessment showed a lack of information sharing between departments, duplication of effort on projects, and a large disconnection between the library’s work and the company’s goals and objectives.

Following are some of the tools I used to help identify problems in the corporate library and begin creating a foundation for a knowledge management culture. I chose proven scientific methods over theoretical ones to establish a good standard against which to compare my progress over time.

Problem solving. Toyota uses a method called the A3 Problem-solving Report to identify the root causes of problems. It is designed to create a collaborative environment and provides visualization to maximize learning. The basic steps of A3 are as follows:

- Background: Identify a goal or objective that is not being met.
- Current condition: Illustrate and measure the knowledge gap.
- Root cause analysis: Determine the root cause by asking “Why?” again and again.
- Countermeasures: Utilize countermeasures and evaluate them using the Plan-Do-Check-Act process:
  - Plan to bring about improvement;
  - Do implement a change;
  - Check the impact of the change and ask what has been learned; and
  - Act to adopt the change or go back to planning again.
- Target state: Describe new ways of doing things to close the gap.
- Follow up: Review the measures of change and determine who is responsible for ongoing measurement on a regular basis.

I needed to see the library and its role in the dissemination of information within the company from the perspective of others in the organization.
Objective (in our case, knowledge management) to break down barriers of communication. Team decisions hold a lot more weight than individual decisions.

My first team was a cross-functional knowledge management team. I formed this team on my own, with only my supervisor’s permission. The team’s initial purpose—creating an awareness of the organization’s goals and objectives—led to performing audits to monitor progress toward those goals and objectives. There were lots of knowledge management nuggets in the goals and objectives to capture, share and apply.

**Value stream mapping or process mapping.** Toyota uses mapping to identify the process flow, beginning with the current state. The future state is then planned and implemented. Excess time and waste are eliminated, making the process more efficient. Process knowledge is created here as well.

**Visual management.** The main purpose of visual management is to allow anyone to come into a workplace and quickly comprehend the current situation. (Just go to a football or hockey game to see an example of visual management—the scoreboard keeps everyone focused on the measures that are important.) In our library we used a white board to make processes more visible and help us determine the status of any process at a glance. This made it easier to identify problems early and helped focus attention on solving them. For us, visual management created a shared vision and highlighted the contributions of our team.

**Project management.** A project is an activity with a life cycle, objectives, conflicts, and time and money constraints. The Project Management Institute advocates using standard concepts and tools to facilitate the completion of projects. The following concepts and tools are recommended:

- Scope: Plan deliverables and added value;
- Planning: Develop timelines, milestones and requirements;
- Execution: Collaborate and delegate;
- Control: Measure, audit and test; and
- Closure: Identify lessons learned.

**Cross-functional teams.** Teams consist of small groups, have common goals and objectives, are mutually accountable and have a diversity of strengths. A team is a group of staff members from various departments who focus on a certain objective (in our case, knowledge management) to break down barriers of communication. Team decisions hold a lot more weight than individual decisions.

My first team was a cross-functional knowledge management team. I formed this team on my own, with only my supervisor’s permission. The team’s initial purpose—creating an awareness of the organization’s goals and objectives—led to performing audits to monitor progress toward those goals and objectives. There were lots of knowledge management nuggets in the goals and objectives to capture, share and apply.

**Brokering Critical Knowledge**

The transformation of our traditional corporate library into a catalyst for sharing knowledge across the entire organization was just beginning. The next step involved looking closely at the data from the needs assessment and aligning the library to support the organ-
What really needed to change, I realized, was the librarian’s role in the organization.

Organizational goals and objectives. Many library services were either automated or made virtual; some were eliminated. These decisions were made by appropriate teams and based on solid budget and usage data.

We also looked at the company’s vision, mission and values to make sure the library supported them. A vision statement looks at the long-term goal; a mission statement is more short-term in nature, explaining why the company exists; values are shared beliefs. Make sure your library is aligned with all of these.

We then tried to identify opportunities for library staff to help promote knowledge sharing throughout the organization. For example, most corporations have a situational analysis team that looks at the company’s current situation and how it got there, pictures the ideal state, and maps out goals and objectives. Situational analysis involves looking at products, markets, competition, suppliers, regulations and the overall global economy. A librarian with competitive intelligence experience is invaluable on such a team.

Strategic planning is the process of looking at what an organization does best, who its customers are, and what its strengths are. Many times this process follows from the situational analysis. This is where you want to make sure that knowledge management is one of the directions the company supports and will follow. Ask to participate in this planning cycle and sell your skills.

You will also need access to an organizational chart to see how knowledge flows within the organization. Determine the type(s) of knowledge each department possesses and needs, then interview key people in each department to learn how they get the information they need to do their jobs. Be sure to ask them how they communicate with colleagues and preserve information when a staff member leaves. Build a strong relationship with the Human Resources Department, as its staff can assist you with aligning the flow of critical knowledge to support the organization’s goals and objectives.

Breaking Down Barriers

As the library became less of a separate department and more strategic in nature, the library assistant and I were moved to a more strategic location, sharing my supervisor’s office. The move allowed us to better collaborate as we worked on interdepartmental projects. The office contained several large white boards for sharing A3’s and discussing the organization’s goals and objectives. We had a private “war room” next to our office for discussing the execution of these goals and objectives with the executive team and project managers.

In effect, the library had become more of a learning environment with the creation of many new social networks. The library had transformed itself from a department that provided resources based on individual requests to taking the lead in creating a knowledge management team focused on steering the company along a course guided by its goals and objectives.

As part of the transformation, the corporate library at Kalsec eventually was phased out along with most of the routine work of delivering conventional services. Library tasks were eliminated, streamlined, or absorbed by other departments, and library personnel were provided with opportunities for advancement in their area of skill within the organization. The books and other library resources were given to appropriate subject experts to manage.


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SLA MEMBER PROFILE

Margot Williams sizes up the competition—free news, which is driving some newspapers out of business and prompting the layoffs of many librarians.
10 Questions: Margot Williams

A 24-HOUR NEWS CYCLE AND COMPETITION FROM OTHER NEWS OUTLETS KEEP MARGOT WILLIAMS BUSY HELPING REPORTERS AT THE NEW YORK TIMES MEET THE PAPER’S HIGH STANDARDS FOR ACCURACY AND THOROUGHNESS.

BY FORREST GLENN SPENCER

Margot Williams has been part of the changing media landscape pitting newspapers against the Internet and other online influences. She is a database research editor with The New York Times and for the last five years has been part of a computer-assisted reporting team at the Times’ city desk.

Ten years ago she won the Pulitzer Prize for public service at The Washington Post for an investigative team project on the deadly force shootings of civilians in Washington, D.C. Her work in helping the Post report on the war on terrorism led to another Pulitzer for national reporting.

Margot graduated from the City College of New York and received a master’s degree in library and information science from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. She is the co-author of two books: Great Scouts! CyberGuides for Subject Searching on the Web (1999) and Cuba from Columbus to Castro (1981). She is a member of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE).

Q: Tell me about your Pulitzer Prizes.

The Washington Post won the Pulitzer Prize board’s Gold Medal for public service for a November 1998 five-part series examining the unusually high rate of police shootings in the District of Columbia. According to the Post, “The series, the result of nearly a year’s work by a team of 15 reporters, computer analysts, graphic artists and editors, produced a swift and intense reaction. The Justice Department was called in to investigate the handling of the local shootings, and D.C. Police Chief Charles H. Ramsey ordered new firearms training for all 3,500 members of the force.”

I was one of two researchers involved in the story, the other being Alice Crites.

My major task on this project was creating a database of D.C. Superior Court cases involving the civilian victims of police shootings. The data were collected through a joint team effort at the courthouse that required pulling and reading hundreds of cases. The information from the cases was entered, compiled and ultimately used for research and analysis. I was also involved in a variety of research assignments relating to this project for almost a year. It was a great privilege to work with these superb journalists.

I was also on a team that won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting of the war on terrorism. In this effort, I was a member of a team that included

FORREST GLENN SPENCER is an independent information professional based in Baltimore. He can be reached at fgspencer@gmail.com.
Bob Woodward. I have to say that every prize that I have ever been involved with has been a team project, so it’s not like the Pulitzer Prize is in my name. In order to get recognized, you have to have your name on the story somehow when it appears in print. In all my years in news librarianship, we’d have to fight to get credit on a story. That’s the first step, and that’s how it came about that researchers became part of Pulitzer Prize-winning teams.

Q: Now you’re at The New York Times. What’s a day in your life like?

I sit in the metro section, known as New York. I sit with the reporters, near the editors of the city desk, and I work on projects around the newsroom. I’m not in the research library—I’m a member of the computer-assisted reporting team. In every other job I was in the news library, but in a lot of newsrooms, people are extending their skills to fit into various news-gathering practices. I made an effort to extend my skills to incorporate the tools of computer-assisted reporting, using software tools like spreadsheets and database management. I can organize news information so that it can be used in storytelling and news reporting.

Q: Could you give me an example?

The computer-assisted reporting team has eight reporters, and most of them are highly skilled, but the kind of thing we do is obtain databases directly from government agencies and analyze them ourselves rather than take reports the government provides and accept their statistics and conclusions. We take the raw data and analyze the information ourselves. For example, when the passenger plane crashed in the Hudson River, we had the Federal Aviation Administration’s database on service difficulty reports and could look to see what kinds of accidents that type of plane had been in or what kind of problems it had had before.

We use databases whenever they are involved in a story. We typically obtain data with something in mind, but we gather all sorts of data, bring it in house and massage it so the reporters can use it to look things up. Part of our job is negotiating with government agencies—what they’ll release to us and in what format. Of course, in some cases, they don’t hand over some parts of the information and we have to fight for them under the Freedom of Information Act.

Q: It sounds as though you’re working on multiple projects at any one time.

Our role—both that of the library and the computer-assisted team—makes it necessary to work with various teams and people throughout the newsroom. I may have four or five projects that I’m working on with different people, so I try to manage my time, check in with them to see where we are on those projects, and check in with my own team, because I am a manager of a very small team of one computer-assisted reporter in the Metro section and another in the Washington bureau. It’s a concentric circle with my people and my own research for stories.

What makes this the most exciting job is that you may have to drop everything because something is breaking, like when a plane suddenly lands in the Hudson River. Whatever you’re doing just goes away and everyone jumps on it and works as fast as they can. In the past, you would work as fast as you could until the hour when the paper went to press, and then you could stop. But today we update constantly on the Web, so there can be things to do after the press deadline, or early in the morning, or any time of the day.

Q: You have new competitors now because of the Internet.

That’s right. The news cycle doesn’t end as it used to because we’re competing with other news outlets. We also have journalists coming up who were taught to use technology compared to those who came up many, many years ago, so we do a lot of training on electronic research tools. We have to. We also show people how to use spreadsheets and databases, such as internal databases, or we have them look on Facebook or use Twitter.

We are asking ourselves, What are the new sources of information? We have a lot of ongoing training, teaching reporters to do things they have never done before, such as creating PDFs from Word documents. We still have researchers at The New York Times—six or eight—but we are moving away from our book library toward electronic resources that can be distributed and shared on our network.

Q: What was your job at The Washington Post?

I was research editor—the head of the researchers—and I was there 14 years. I moved out to the Metro desk as research-
er and coordinator of resources and then went back to the library as library director and research editor. I then moved to The New York Times because New York is home, and I’m happy to be home.

Q: What you’re doing at the Times is revolutionary and becoming commonplace.

We now have a newer team, which has been putting up these great databases and other cool things on the Web site. They’re software engineers and journalists. My particular niche is creating smaller databases of research-based information, in particular about terrorism suspects, detainees in the global war on terror, and so on.

For example, one of my databases on detainees at Guantanamo is online, and we were able to convert all our documents that were released to the public. Some 16,000 pages that were in unsearchable PDFs were converted into searchable text, and we connected them to each of the detainees. I put all that information in there, and now it’s aggregated and can be displayed in a number of ways that the public can view. It’s part of our competitiveness.

Q: You have no choice but to do things like that. Newspapers are dying. You need to reach the mobile user.

That’s part of the experiment with the business model. For me—and I care about the business model—I can vouch for how I put that information out there. There are others who do the same, like Wikipedia, but I think ours is better and sourced. We are held to standards.

All that we have is our credibility. We try very hard to get things right, and that’s why we still have researchers in the library. Our bosses know they need to have people get things right. Our researchers know how to check themselves out.

Q: How did you get involved with SLA?

I joined SLA in library school. I went to Pratt, which is a library school. People were learning legal librarianship and medical librarianship, etc. But then I went to my first conference, in 1987, and that’s when I was with Time, Inc.

research. I know I haven’t been a member the entire time. I’m also a member of IRE. A lot of members of Newslib are members of IRE.

The SLA News Division is a great division, with many programs that are a lot of fun. My friend Nora Paul is an active member, and we wrote a book together, Great Scouts! CyberGuides for Subject Searching on the Web, 10 years ago.

Q: What are the hot topics today among news librarians?

The most active discussion is about the fact that our membership is dropping because our members are losing their jobs from cutbacks. So many news libraries are closing or have closed, such as The Wall Street Journal research library—it closed in March, if you can believe that. And newspapers themselves are shutting down and moving to the Web, but that shouldn’t keep them from having a library.

What is happening now is that people think they can do the research themselves. For me, the precision has to be right. What we’re seeing now is broad-scope searching—there’s so much information available that you can find. But the fact is, search engines have not gotten the precision down, and that’s what it’s about for me.

The other hot topic is the organization of information; it’s not that organized. It’s just out there, but available only in keyword searching. But subject organization is falling by the wayside, and that’s where special librarians’ strength lies—in organizing information and the value in having an archive that will be there in the future. We are also good at collaborating with people in providing a service, and often information is not provided as a service but considered a quest or something.

Postscript: As this issue was going to press, Information Outlook learned that Margot Williams was leaving The New York Times to join longtime investigative journalists Sue Schmidt and Glenn Simpson in their new consulting firm, SNS Global LLC, as director of research. The company provides intelligence-gathering, analytic and strategic advisory services. SLA colleagues who wish to stay in touch with Margot may contact her at margot.williams@snsgloballlc.com.
The library industry has largely evolved from the days of the Dewey Decimal System. Librarians today are faced with an increasing amount of content to catalog, as well as growing collections of data. More content is coming from outside the library’s walls in the form of articles, reader comments and reports, independent reviews and market overviews. In addition, more libraries are sharing information and research through interlibrary programs, thereby rapidly increasing the amount of information available for library users and employees.

As the volume of content has increased, the rise of the digital, online era of data has changed the face of today’s libraries. More newspapers and publications are being forced to go completely online, and blogs are opening the door to more experts and enabling an increase in potentially useful data. The Web is not only a mere provider of information, but now an avenue for two-way communication by soliciting personal “i-reports,” reader comments and discussions. Ultimately, content consumers are becoming content producers, not only increasing the amount of information that needs to be analyzed but complicating how that information is identified and used.

As the Web continues to evolve, user-generated content will grow more and more important to the business of today’s libraries. The intelligence needed to keep an organization profitable and relevant will filter in from the outside—straight from the mouths of users, competitors, market researchers and more.

So, how does one identify and prioritize all of this Web-based information and data? The Web’s reach is boundless and social media text is quite unstructured, thus making it impossible for a typical search to uncover everything of relevance. With this in mind, how can librarians and research experts sift through all of the social media noise—the ruminations, the misfindings, the insignificant rants—to find the true gold nuggets of information that hold value for users and researchers alike?

BY UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT IN WHICH WORDS ARE USED, SEMANTIC INTELLIGENCE CAN HELP LIBRARIANS AND THEIR CLIENTS FIND BETTER INFORMATION MORE QUICKLY.

BY J. BROOKE AKER

SEMANTIC INTELLIGENCE

BY J. BROOKE AKER

BROOKE AKER is the CEO of Expert System USA, a semantic technology firm. He frequently speaks and writes about competitive intelligence, knowledge management and predictive analytics. Aker is a serial entrepreneur, having formed both Acuity Software and Cipher Systems, and was a member of the Intelligence practice at The Futures Group/Deloitte Consulting. He wrote the Competitive Intelligence magazine column titled “100 Ways to Beat Your Competition.”
The Answer: Semantic Search

Locating and analyzing this unstructured data can only be carried out with a different kind of business intelligence solution—one we call semantic intelligence. Semantic technology is ideal for solving cases of ambiguities because it is based on a true comprehension of the text, thus determining the correct meaning of the words.

In the English language, the same word can take on various meanings. For example, a user could be trying to locate relevant and accurate information on airplane aerodynamics and architecture. However, a keyword search of “planes” will contain results about flat surfaces, sailing, tools, and trees. Go ahead, Google the word “plane” and see how many different meanings appear in the results.

Not only can semantic analysis find the true meanings of terms used in a search, it associates the correct connotation with the appropriate words in the sentence. The retrieval of such information is not limited to recognizing key words, as typical Web searches do; instead, semantic technology uncovers the meaning the words express in their proper context, no matter the number (singular or plural), gender (masculine or feminine), verb tense (past, present, or future), or mode (indicative or imperative).

Semantic technology can also help organizations address the challenge of cataloging and locating information that is available. There is a wealth of data and information stored within the confines of any one single library, let alone across networks of public libraries, private libraries and specialized research centers. As data and accessibility increase, so does the amount of time it takes for a user to sift through and locate necessary information. As branch locations, satellite libraries and inter-library programs become the norm, control over how data are organized and cataloged dissipates. The result is inconsistencies among locations and partner sites and, ultimately, lost time trying to locate relevant information cataloged in varying ways.

Semantic technology not only allows organizations to identify and locate appropriate information outside their walls, but also enables libraries to streamline this information internally for more intelligent content management. Today’s semantic solutions have the ability to automatically tag and catalog data and information through automatic comprehension of words, sentences, paragraphs and whole documents. This technology can be applied to documents, publications, books, journals and research papers to more accurately identify where relevant information can be found.

In addition, semantic technology can identify and adapt specific jargon and wording associated with different industries. This is crucial for catalog-
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Semantic technology enables librarians to focus their efforts on analyzing and packaging crucial information for users.

Alleviating Time Constraints

Tagging, filing and cataloging the growing amounts of data housed in libraries require hours of manual input. For the most part, data and other resources are tagged with basic keywords, meaning each search will identify multiple resources, forcing users to analyze resources to determine which ones best meet their needs.

With semantic technology, information is analyzed and cataloged immediately and consistently. This ensures that cataloging across several library sites and partner institutions is uniform, and that users can find information in the same manner across several resources.

By maximizing productivity and efficiency and alleviating the time constraints associated with manual cataloging, tagging and filing, semantic technology enables librarians to focus their efforts on analyzing and packaging crucial information for users. This allows them to make sure they are easily and rapidly able to find pertinent information and spend time analyzing data to provide robust packages.

With so much time currently being dedicated to cataloging, semantics will certainly be a game changer for today’s institutions. Many of today’s corporations are already deploying semantic technology solutions to reap the efficiency and productivity benefits. But the value of semantic intelligence should not be enjoyed by corporations alone. Given the large amount of data and information stored within libraries and research centers, these institutions should leverage semantic intelligence to enable full use of these resources and help the library industry evolve, save time, and better identify and categorize important information.  

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This issue’s theme is “The New Librarian.” As I noodled on this topic, I asked myself a few questions:

1. **Is there a core set of skills and competencies that every librarian must have to be accepted as a professional?**

2. **Has librarianship become largely a technocratic profession?**

3. **What will today’s (and tomorrow’s) information professionals need to be wildly successful and respected and, more importantly, what competencies and attitudes will have the most beneficial impact?**

At about the same time as I wrote this column, I had the opportunity to participate in a panel discussion sponsored by the American Library Association’s Committee on Accreditation. The session was called “ALA Accreditation: Employers Speak,” and I was to represent the special librarian/information professional market as well as vendors that employ librarians. SirsiDynix, like many library-focused vendors, employs several librarians—we have more than 200 full-time librarians on staff and have had from 10 to 200 librarians on contract hire at any time for special projects. The librarians in our company span the spectrum, working in sales, customer care, and development and as executives, testers, content creators, designers, and trainers. I personally have been involved in hiring librarians for many vendors as well as for special libraries I’ve managed.

I brought the SLA perspective to the panel by highlighting the work on our document, *SLA Competencies for Special Librarians and Information Professionals in the 21st Century*, as well as some of the insights from our Alignment Project research. I also noted that our perspective as SLA members and as a segment of the library profession is informed by the results of the “BR’s” library human resources study conducted in Canada and continued in the United States by the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences in partnership with SLA. (To read more about the 8R’s study, visit [http://www.cla.ca](http://www.cla.ca) and click on “CLA at Work.”)

So, what about my three questions?

**Is there a core set of skills and competencies that every librarian must have to be accepted as a professional?**

I know there are many people who believe that the only true path to professional librarianship is through an MLS, with a foundation of required courses like cataloging and reference. I disagree. I may be a heretic, but I think you can be a perfectly excellent library manager without ever taking either course or any specific course (I took both). I think many of the core courses teach skills that could be better and more efficiently performed through collegial effort or by technical and clerical staff. I think an understanding of theory and practice is absolutely necessary, but front-line, minute detail is unnecessary for a generalist or manager.

What we really need is more diversity of perspective in our teams in librarianship. Why? Well, in the Canadian 8R’s survey of thousands of library workers, a significant majority of respondents indicated they are not seeking supervisory or managerial positions. We also learned that the vast majority of position openings in the next two decades—not just in Canada, but in the United States and many other countries—will be leadership positions in libraries. That’s a confounding, complex contradiction.

Those who hold leadership positions, both now and in the future, will be challenged by the massive transformations in our society and field wrought by so many economic, technological, social and demographic changes. These forces are affecting new professionals entering our field as much as they are influencing society as a whole.

How do we prepare new librarians for these changes, and how can those of us with significant career trajectories...
in our future adapt? The answer comes down to a philosophical question: Do we all get better at technological competencies? Will excellence in managing metadata, technology, intranets, search engines, portal design, and more mark the one true path to success? Hence my second question:

Has librarianship become largely a technocratic profession?

I believe that in the past few decades we have veered toward a technocratic positioning of information professional skills. We are good, even excellent, at many of these skills, and that’s great. But will they get us all the way through this century? I don’t think so.

Now is the time to rebalance our skill sets and reposition ourselves in the minds of employers and educators. Indeed, interviews with C-level executives (conducted as part of the Alignment Project) show that they are ready for us to step up to the plate and assume leadership roles in developing information and intelligence strategies. We need to add value through more than just technical skills—we need to deliver strategic advice. This is a unique opportunity, and we have no idea how long this window will remain open. Which leads me to my final question:

What will information professionals need to be wildly successful and respected in this century and, more importantly, what competencies and attitudes will have the most beneficial impact?

This is the hardest of the three questions. In this case, I’m not thinking just about new graduates but also about those who need to reinvent themselves in this transformational employment environment. Basically, that’s everyone in our field.

Following are the five assets I believe “new” librarians must have for lifelong success. Each one is heavily influenced by technology and rapid change, but all five are planted firmly in human behavior.

Leadership skills. The next few decades will offer an amazing opportunity for information professionals with library training to influence society in a positive way. We need to develop a cadre of professionals who have—and use—their leadership skills to make a difference. We must move beyond supervision and management alone to grasp this ring.

Advocacy skills. Concomitantly, we have to find our voice. Advocacy can be taught, and the confidence to achieve our role in society must be instilled and encouraged. We must project confidence with content.

Interpretation skills. One of the key challenges of the coming decades is the contextualization of technology and its place in human endeavor. The librarian’s and information professional’s perspective on the intersection of people, service and technology in everything from user behaviors to search-assisted decision making is critical to enterprise success. We must improve the communication and influencing skills of our profession on every level.

Empathy skills. We used to call this reference interviewing, but it is really about understanding clients and their contexts. Across all sectors of librarianship, there is an increasing need for this most human of skills. We can no longer afford to shy away from developing deeper relationships with our communities of users and management and providing them with intelligent advice.

Imagination, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurial skills. The world is changing irrevocably, and it’s not fated to change for either the better or the worse. It’s up to us to create the changes and future we want to see. This will require us to learn the skills of innovation and change management. These can be learned, and we can learn them. The alternative is facing a future that we neither want nor took part in creating.

We’ll need flexibility, a sense of humor, and the ability to deal with ambiguous signals and situations. I don’t know if these can be taught, but I do know they can be recruited by schools and employers.

Creating a Glass Box

How do these attributes relate to the ALA accreditation process and standards? I’m not sure. My opinion is that the accreditation standards are somewhat retrospective and encourage and measure what was needed rather than rewarding a variety of educational paths and a mosaic of options. I feel the standards are conservative and lag in their understanding of the future and their potential role in leading and encouraging L-Schools and iSchools to create professionals for the information- and knowledge-based society. I worry that they create a glass box around the opportunities within an information education.

I know there are good people out there who are working on these issues in schools, our association, and ALA. I know there is no single right answer or a true shining path, and I know that we won’t win this race if we only focus on those just entering the profession. All of us must look deeply and honestly into our own personal and career profiles and decide for ourselves what skills, both soft and hard, we need to develop (there are easy places, like SLA’s Click University, to start).

On the highway of life, continuous learning is the way we retread our tires. Happy traveling! SLA
Ensuring the Legal Use of Images

When using images from various sources and in various situations, libraries need to follow certain copyright rules and principles.

BY LESLEY ELLEN HARRIS

Most uses of content in libraries are of text, whether in print or digital form. More and more frequently, however, we are using images to enhance text-based documents, annual reports, Web sites and blogs, and other media.

As a rule, most images are protected by copyright laws, and permission is required to use an image or adapt it. Let’s look at some of the specifics surrounding this general rule.

Defining images. Images may be described in several ways. Under the U.S. Copyright Act, images are categorized as “pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works.” These works are defined to include “two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of fine, graphic, and applied art, photographs, prints and art reproductions, maps, globes, charts, diagrams, models, and technical drawings, including architectural plans.”

The full range of rights attaches to owners of these works, meaning the copyright owner has exclusive rights to do the following:

- Reproduce, and authorize the reproduction of, the images;
- Prepare new images based on the original images;
- Distribute copies to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending; and
- Display the works in public.

Using book covers. Using images of book covers in catalogs and bibliographies is a common occurrence in libraries. Is it permissible to scan the cover of a book for these and similar purposes? What about saving a copy of the cover from the publisher’s Web site? Would these practices be considered fair use?

As fair use is based upon the circumstances of each particular case, you would have to analyze your own use of book covers and determine whether each use would qualify under the four fair use factors. Many organizations are comfortable applying their own interpretation of fair use, whereas others want to be 100 percent certain that their uses are within the law.

If you fall into the latter category, approach the book publisher and determine whether the publisher or the creator owns the copyright, then request permission from the owner to use the cover image.

Images on blogs. Does the use of an image on your blog require permission?

If the image is part of the design of your blog and/or repetitively used or adapted for your use, you will need permission to use the image. If the image is part of a particular posting in a blog, you will need to apply the fair use factors and determine on a case-by-case basis whether your use requires permission.

Course materials and learning management systems. Learning material is often enhanced by the use of images. In a corporate setting, the application of fair use to images in course materials (especially the repeated use of those materials) would be less acceptable, whereas a one-time/one-semester use of an image in a university course is more likely to be considered fair use.

Those familiar with fair use know that, ultimately, it is up to a court of law to determine its applicability in any given situation. If you need reassurance or are in doubt, it is always best to obtain permission. There are a few circumstances in which you do not need permission—for example, if the image you are using is in the public domain or a U.S. government image (though not all government works are in the public domain), or if the copyright owner has clearly (and reliably) stated that you may freely use the image without obtaining permission.

Also, if a co-worker created the image, it most likely belongs to your employer and you may freely use it during the course of your employment.

LESLEY ELLEN HARRIS is a copyright lawyer who consults on legal, business and strategic issues in the publishing, content, entertainment, Internet and information industries. She is editor of a print newsletter, The Copyright and New Media Law Newsletter (for a sample copy, send an e-mail to contact@copyrightlaws.com), and teaches the Click University seven-course certificate program in copyright management. She maintains a blog on copyright questions and answers at www.copyrightanswers.blogspot.com. The second edition of her book, Licensing Digital Content: A Practical Guide for Librarians, was just published (see www.licensingdigitalcontent.blogspot.com).
Understanding Moral Rights

In addition to the guidelines noted previously, keep in mind that the U.S. Copyright Act sets forth additional rights for the creator of a work of visual art. These rights are called moral rights and allow an artist to have his name on his work and to prevent modifications that may be prejudicial to his reputation or honor.

The Copyright Act defines a work of visual art as follows: “a painting, drawing, print or sculpture, existing in a single copy, in a limited edition of 200 copies or fewer that are signed and consecutively numbered by the author.” The definition also includes “a still photographic image produced for exhibition purposes only, existing in a single copy that is signed by the author, or in a limited edition of 200 copies or fewer that are signed and consecutively numbered by the author.” The definition does not include a “poster, map, globe, chart, technical drawing, diagram, model, applied art, motion picture or other audiovisual work, book, magazine, newspaper, periodical, database, electronic information service, electronic publication, or similar publication,” nor does it include any work for hire (i.e., work made in the course of employment duties.)

Moral rights come into play when you change a photograph from color to black and white, manipulate a digital drawing, or omit the artist’s name from a print or drawing. Under the U.S. definition of a work of visual art, few works used in libraries or corporate settings would have authors who have moral rights. In most countries outside the United States, however, authors of all kinds of works—from photographs to drawings to business documents to computer software—all enjoy moral rights. Thus, when using images in these countries or on Web sites or blogs that are accessible around the world, you should respect the moral rights of attribution and integrity.

Encouraging the New Librarian

Those who are entering our profession are bringing fresh ideas and perspectives that will help ensure a vibrant future for all special librarians.

BY DEBBIE SCHACHTER, MLS, MBA

I have enjoyed participating in leadership positions in SLA over the past few years, as it has allowed me to meet with information professionals at all stages of their careers. One aspect of my participation has been speaking at library and library technician programs, which has given me the opportunity to gain some insights into the desires, interests and fears of new information professionals. I have also had the opportunity recently to work with some new librarians and understand their perspectives as young professionals.

Some of my experiences speaking with MLIS students and recent graduates involve understanding the many uncertainties that affect new graduates from every discipline. The most significant uncertainty for librarians and library technicians is whether they will find a position in their field. Many students from other disciplines, however, have already worked during their academic programs and are often well positioned to begin their job search, with some experience in hand and perhaps a project, contract or part-time position already available to them.

Another uncertainty that is common to new librarians relates to what they can bring to the profession. Many have a desire to offer something new, but they fear that their lack of experience will diminish the perceived value of their ideas or minimize the impact they can make. It is true that, for many in our profession, there is a contrast in attitudes between those who are enthused by new librarians and the different perspectives they bring to their work versus those who feel threatened by the changes that new ideas incite.

Most information professionals with whom I’ve worked look forward to challenges and ideas from new librarians. Many new librarians have significant and diverse work and life experiences, and we need to value these experiences and encourage these new professionals in our field so as to ensure a vibrant future for all of us.

Improving Your Job and Career

In “NextGen: The Start-Up Librarian,” Kyle Jones (2009) focuses on this same theme of opening up opportunities for new librarians. “New librarians—start-up librarians—are arriving at library directors’ doorsteps by the semester with the same kind of fervor and ability that build today’s great technology companies,” he writes. “Can librarians let go of some of their old, restrictive ways to give these new librarians the kind of environment and support that will drive the profession successfully in the 21st century?”

Unlike more traditional environments, information centers and special libraries generally do foster change in their environments. Special libraries lend themselves to providing opportunities for new graduates to share their knowledge of new technologies, new ways of communicating and new methods of working. This is one important way that we stay competitive in our own changing organizations and industries.

New librarians generally have a level of passion for the profession that can have a positive influence on the culture of information centers. Even if a new professional does not know where she wants to be in five years, she may have immediate goals of practicing the specifics of the theories she learned in school. Another new professional may have a more direct expectation of gaining expertise in a particular skill or subject area. Either way, the new librarian seeks opportunities to contribute at a high level and is anxious to put her or his abilities into practice.

Following are some suggestions for new librarians to consider to help improve their jobs and careers:

• Make developing relationships with your superiors and colleagues your first order of business. Learning the work itself is essential, but the working relationships you develop in the first few weeks of your new position

DEBBIE SCHACHTER is director of information technology and collection management for the Vancouver Public Library (British Columbia), where she has responsibility for library systems, technical services, and collection management for a 22-branch library system. She earned a master’s degree in library science and another in business administration and has more than 19 years’ experience in a variety of nonprofit and for-profit settings, including news, legal and social services organizations. She is the president of SLA’s Western Canada Chapter. She can be reached at debbie.schachter@vpl.ca.
Membership in an association also demonstrates a true interest in furthering the profession, which is something else that is valued and appreciated. New librarians provide an infusion of new ideas and expertise that every information center needs to harness. It is the responsibility of our more experienced librarians to transmit their knowledge to our newest professionals and, in turn, to foster an environment that both welcomes and challenges them. For their part, new librarians need to take steps to feel confident about sharing their perspectives and helping prepare our profession for the future.

Outside the work environment, there are other opportunities available for new librarians to increase their development and involvement. Membership in associations, with their many opportunities for board, committee or other volunteer work, is an excellent way for a new librarian to learn about local, national and international library communities. It’s also one of the most effective ways of networking and earning a positive reputation through volunteer work.

Membership in an association also demonstrates a true interest in furthering the profession, which is something else that is valued and appreciated.

New librarians provide an infusion of new ideas and expertise that every information center needs to harness. It is the responsibility of our more experienced librarians to transmit their knowledge to our newest professionals and, in turn, to foster an environment that both welcomes and challenges them. For their part, new librarians need to take steps to feel confident about sharing their perspectives and helping prepare our profession for the future. SLA

REFERENCES

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Promoting Effective Use of e-Resources Using e-Tools
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15 October 2009
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5-7
Tenth International Conference on Web Information Systems Engineering Poznan, Poland
http://wises2009.ue.poznan.pl/

5-8
International Conference on Academic Libraries University of Delhi
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http://library.du.ac.in/oecs/index.php/cal/index

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Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa
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www.dc2009.kr/

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15-18
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Monterey, Calif., U.S.A.
www.infotoday.com/ii2009/

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Amsterdam, The Netherlands
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www.uoc.edu/symposia/incos2009/

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www.mcn.org/conferences/index.aspx?subcat=2206

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Enterprise Search Summit (West)
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San Jose, Calif., U.S.A.
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