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Information Outlook November/December 2015

Special Libraries Association

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

TACKLING TRAINING

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

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Members Urged to Develop 'Vault' of Educational Offerings

SLA members and industry partners are being invited to submit proposals to develop and deliver conference-type sessions, Webinars, and multi-module courses covering topics that are relevant for information professionals.

The proposals, which will be evaluated and approved by a working group appointed by the SLA president, are being sought to help SLA develop a "vault" of learning materials that can be disseminated to members through various channels. This vault has its genesis in the recommendations developed earlier this year by two change consultants hired by SLA to position the association for the future and put SLA on a more solid footing.

Proposals can include the development of educational materials and/or the delivery of them, along with commitments for updating the materials and keeping them fresh. Proposals should fit within a topic matrix that illustrates the framework for the desired content. Proposers should clearly indicate the specific cell(s) in the matrix for which the proposed content is intended.

LEVEL	Technical/Subject	Business	Management/Interpersonal
Learn	Tech A	Bus A	Mgmt A
Do	Tech B	Bus B	Mgmt B
Direct	Tech C	Bus C	Mgmt C

The *Learn* level corresponds to understanding. Content presented here is intended to provide overviews and introductions to familiarize audiences with the topic at hand.

The *Do* level corresponds to executing. Content at this level is intended to enable audiences to perform the activity or function or discuss practical details.

The *Direct* level corresponds to leading. Content developed for this level is aimed at professionals who are leading teams engaged in, or managing projects involving, the function or activity in question.

Additional information about the proposals is available on SLA's Website at https://www.sla.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/RFP-Content-Commissioning-3-Dec-2015.pdf. SLA members are encouraged to share the request for proposals with interested individuals and organizations, both inside and outside SLA.

Teams, Individuals Honored with Presidential Citations

Several committees and task forces, two consultants, and a longtime champion of cataloging standards are being honored for their service to SLA in 2015.

SLA President Jill Strand announced in December that she will be presenting citations to these groups and individuals in the coming weeks. SLA Presidential Citations are given to SLA members for notable or important contributions during the year that enhanced the association or furthered its goals and objectives.

The citations are being given to the following groups and individuals:

The **Advocacy Task Force**, which was charged with developing a toolkit to help SLA members communicate their impact to stakeholders in their organizations. The task force has created resources on five different topics—benchmarking, dealing with disengaged management, metrics, developing vision and mission statements, and storytelling—and is posting them to the SLA Website. The task force's members are Chris Vestal (chair), Lois Ireland, Raymond Maxwell, Doug Newcomb, Toby Pearlstein, Stephen Phillips, Karen Reczek, Bethan Ruddock, and Carolyn Sosnowski.

The **Committee on Association Governance**, which was tasked with reviewing the charges of all SLA committees and councils and making recommendations to the board for any changes. Notwithstanding the broad scope of the assignment, the committee completed its task well before the end of the year. Committee members are Annette Haldeman (chair), Marilyn Bromley, Linda Broussard, Susan Fifer-Canby, Bethan Ruddock, Kama Siegel, and Kim Silk.

The **Building Subcommittee**, for its assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of putting the SLA headquarters building up for sale, selecting a realtor to manage the listing process and monitoring the realtor's efforts, then concluding that it was in SLA's best interests to take the building off the market and instead seek rental tenants. The subcommittee's members are Kate Arnold (chair), Marilyn Bromley, Jill Hurst-Wahl, Natasha Kenner, Brent Mai, Doug Newcomb, and Carolyn Sosnowski.

The **Bylaws Committee**, for working with SLA's attorneys to update the association's bylaws to comply with recent changes in New York's Not for Profit Corporation Law (SLA is chartered in New York).

The **Competencies Task Force**, for its efforts to update SLA's *Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century*, which was last updated in 2003. The task force hopes to release a draft document for member feedback early next year and submit a final document for board approval before the SLA 2016 Annual Conference.

The **Finance Committee**, which has helped SLA navigate financial challenges and ensure that the association remains on sound financial footing.

The **Transition Committee**, which has

Continued on page 3

INTERNET USE · COGNITIVE COMPUTING

Half of Americans Use Internet for Personal Reasons While at Work

Technological advances have helped today's workers become far more productive than their parents and grandparents, but they are also making it easier for workers to become *less* productive.

A survey of 1,000 American adults by FindLaw.com, a provider of business development solutions for small law firms, found that half of respondents admit to using their employer's Internet connection for personal reasons while at work. Of those who do, roughly 30 percent say they're bored or are avoiding work, while 20 percent don't have the patience or willpower to wait until after they leave work and return home.

Professional Time, Personal Use
(Why workers use their employer's Internet connection for personal matters)

Bored/avoiding work	28%
Didn't want to wait until after work	21%
Better Internet connection at work	13%
Not enough time at home	8%
No Internet connection at home	3%
Wanted to hide activity from family	3%

SOURCE: FindLaw.com 2015

Workers are most likely to use their employer's Internet connection to check their personal e-mail account, browse news sites, or visit their Facebook page. While these activities may take only a few minutes and seem harmless to workers, they can account for considerable time and productivity lost when multiplied across an entire workforce.

Using an employer's Internet connection for personal reasons can also draw unwelcome attention to employees if their computer use is being monitored.

Sneaking a Peek
(How workers use their employer's Internet connection for personal matters)

Personal e-mail	34%
News	27%
Facebook	26%
Online shopping	23%
YouTube/other videos	19%
Sports	13%
Other social media	10%
Online dating	3%
Other	14%

SOURCE: FindLaw.com 2015

"While employees are entitled to some privacy at work, it's important to remember that your workspace and your computer belong to your employer," says Tanya Roth, an attorney and editor with FindLaw.com. "So your employer is generally entitled to monitor your use of their computers. In addition, any activity that is judged to be interfering with or distracting an employee from their duties may not be looked upon favorably. So employees should be mindful of any company rules on use of computers and the Internet."

To learn more about the survey, visit http://www.findlaw.com.

Many Managers Feel Threatened by 'Smart' Machines

Managers have long complained they spend too much time making sure work gets done and not enough time thinking strategically and innovating, but a new study casts doubt on whether they're willing to let go of the routine aspects of their jobs.

A survey of more than 1,700 managers in 14 countries found widespread concern (especially among middle managers and those in front-line positions) that so-called "intelligent machines" will threaten their careers. These machines, which offer cognitive computing capabilities designed to perform the planning, monitoring, and reporting functions that consume much of managers' time, are viewed skeptically by managers and particularly those in high tech and electronics (50 percent), banking (49 percent), airlines (42 percent), and retail (41 percent).

Contributing to these perceptions is the belief among managers that digital and technology skills (42 percent), creative thinking and experimentation (33 percent), data analysis and interpretation (31 percent) and strategy development (30 percent) will be most important for their roles in five years. In fact, "soft" or interpersonal skills—abilities that enable managers to motivate workers and build important connections—are at least as important, and they cannot be performed by, or delegated to, computers. But when asked which skills they will need to be successful in their role in five years, only one in five managers said social networking (21 percent), people development (21 percent), and collaboration skills (20 percent).

The survey, by Accenture, defined intelligent machines as computers and applications that collect and analyze data, make informed decisions or recommendations for action, and learn from experience. To fully trust such machines, managers told Accenture they would need to understand how the system works and generates advice (61 percent), know that the system has a proven track record (57 percent), and believe the system provides convincing explanations (51 percent).

The survey authors recommend that executives help managers hone their interpersonal skills to help them take full advantage of the opportunities that cognitive computing offers. In particular, they recommend taking the following steps:

1) **Sharpen the human edge.** To achieve the right skill levels and capabilities, leaders will need to

revise their organizations' talent development and coaching programs and individual performance criteria.

2) **Rally the troops.** Leaders must present themselves as advocates of change. Managers will be more likely to commit emotionally to the introduction of cognitive computing if they trust the leaders at the helm. Building trust will require clear and honest communications and calls for leaders to involve managers in the change.

3) **Chart a course of discovery.** CEOs should strive to create a union of managers and machines that does more than automate tasks or augment managers' performance. The most successful long-term unions will multiply the value that managers or machines are able to deliver on their own.

To learn more about the survey, visit http://www.accenture.com/CognitiveComputinginManagement. **SLA**

Inside Info

Continued from page 1

helped lay the groundwork for a new future for SLA. Early this year, the committee recommended hiring change consultants to review SLA's current operations and envision how SLA might become more dynamic and proactive; a few months later, the committee recommended that SLA engage an association management company to oversee headquarters operations and provide targeted staff support to implement the changes proposed by the consultants.

The **Volunteer Experience Task Force**, which was charged with creating a member experience toolkit and coordinating with board members who are preparing a new virtual training series for unit leaders. The task force partnered with the SLA Leadership & Management Division this year to launch "Voices of the Information Profession," a new Webinar series.

Cindy Shamel and **Ulla de Stricker**, two SLA members who were hired by the SLA Board of Directors to kick-start the process of re-envisioning a new future for the association. During the first few months of 2015, they created a set of recommendations that initiated a conversation about what SLA is, how SLA does things, and what SLA might do differently. After the SLA 2015 Annual Conference, they worked with the board to develop a "Road Map for the Future of SLA" and an implementation plan with prioritized goals and objectives as well as ideas for engaging SLA members in the implementation process.

Dorothy McGarry, for her long and dedicated service to SLA and especially the SLA Cataloging Committee. A member of SLA since 1971, Dorothy is a recipient of SLA's highest honor, the John Cotton Dana Award (1991), an SLA Fellow (1994), and a member of the SLA Hall of Fame (2000). All the while, she has been a champion of cataloging standards, and her energy and enthusiasm sustained the Cataloging Committee for many, many years. That committee is now evolving and taking on a new focus, making it appropriate to recognize Dorothy's years of service on its behalf. **SLA**

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Tackling Training: Is it For You?

PROVIDING TRAINING IS A GOOD WAY TO MARKET YOUR SERVICES AND SKILLS AND GET TO KNOW YOUR CLIENTELE, BUT THERE ARE MANY CONSIDERATIONS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

BY DENISE CHOCHREK, MLIS

Information specialists wear many hats. I love to go to benchmarking sessions and listen to people in our field talk about their many job responsibilities. Most of us conduct and/or manage research, but beyond that, our job descriptions often vary quite a bit.

One responsibility that often comes up in these discussions is training. *Training* is a broad term that can mean different things depending on the size of the department, the amount of money available, and the resources that can be used to support this function.

Choosing Training Content

The first question I asked myself when I started writing this article was this: Which subject areas are appropriate for information specialists to teach? By clearly answering this question, we can easily rule out subjects we should not teach.

Appropriate teaching content includes the following topics:

- How to use databases;
- How to use the Information Center portal and other IT tools connected to organizational knowledge;
- Information for new hires;
- An overview of the information team;
- The special competencies within your department; and
- Tips on expanding the research skills of employees.

Teaching employees how to use databases is an easy win. Most of us keep metrics on how frequently our databases are used, so providing database training helps us increase usage while also educating potential users. When conducting database training, be sure to address the following questions: (1) Do you want to conduct the database demonstration yourself, or do you want the vendor to do it? and (2) How will people view the demonstration?

The advantage of conducting the demo yourself is that you control the content and determine the terms that will be used in your examples. The advantage of having vendor representatives conduct the demo is that they know the database in detail and can provide insights and reveal shortcuts you may not know about. Even if you let the vendor conduct the demo, make sure you handle the introduction, then guide the conversation as needed and position yourself as the contact for future questions.

Information professionals are also ideal for training employees to use the organization's knowledge portal and introducing new hires to organizational services and resources. Remember that new hires are being drowned in content when they first arrive, so let them

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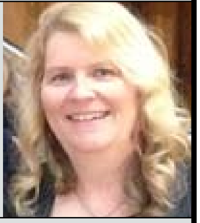


catch their breath before scheduling any training. (I always give new hires at least a week to settle in before setting up training.) I also suggest you reconnect with them a month later to remind them where to go and whom to ask for information.

Sometimes, training can be used to advertise the Information Center. For example, perhaps you have people on your staff who provide competitive intelligence services. Set up a "What is Competitive Intelligence?" session in which you describe the CI services that are available through your office, provide examples, and explain how to procure these services. Schedule additional training sessions to educate employees on the other specializations your department supports.

Another great training opportunity is to provide "How To" sessions on research skills. At PepsiCo, there is a strong learning environment, which my staff and I help foster by making it easy to sign up for training opportunities. We use these opportunities to provide training on topics such as how to search patents and how to be an advanced Google searcher.

Think about your organizational environment for a moment. What tools are employees using to conduct research? Are shortcuts available that would make searching easier? Are employees struggling to find information from government or university sites? Is your company global? If so, do employees know what resources to use (both internally and externally) that are specific to their region?

If you answered *yes* to any of these questions, you have an opportunity to provide training. But training need not always be conducted by the Information Center; other departments, such as Human Resources and Information Technology, can provide training, as can external consultants. If a training topic does not pertain to the Information Center's resources and services, such as managing difficult people or how to use Oracle, it is best to refer the training to the appropriate department.

So, how do you decide whether you should take ownership of training? The matrix below can help you make that decision.

Note that leaving education to other departments or external consultants means that you will not be able to control the conversation. Part of what makes us powerful trainers is that we are familiar with the research needs of our employees, we know where the resources are, and we can direct people to the right services.

Getting Started

When I decide to conduct a training session, I usually begin by determining what should be covered. Be careful not to put too many subjects into one training session, unless you like seeing "glazed over" looks on the faces of your students. Make sure you have a good balance of overview and detail in each session.

In most cases, you will be teaching beginners—people who are new to the subject content. You can teach advanced sessions as well, but no matter what you teach, you must be clear with employees about what they should expect.

Information Center Training: Pros	Information Center Training: Cons
Control of content	Could take considerable time
Great publicity for your group	May require manpower to focus on training
Results in better educated employees with the right material	Could be costs involved depending on format
Able to help shape resource use	Information Center staff may not be familiar with the training topic
Good metrics	

The next step is determining the training format. Will the training be conducted in person? Can employees use WebEx, Skype, or some other conferencing tool to attend the training? Is the training going to be held at a specific date and time? Is this a stand-alone course that employees can take online and complete at their leisure?

When deciding which format to use, it is important to consider who will attend the training. Before joining PepsiCo, I was employed by a small investment firm where everyone worked in one building. It was easy to gather people together in a conference room and conduct a training session. If you work in a large company, in-person training might not be feasible.

When conducting training for a global audience, you must take time zones, international holidays, and work habits into account. When I first started scheduling training sessions at PepsiCo, I learned that coordinating training for multiple countries can be difficult. In some countries, employers don't schedule meetings before a certain time of the day, or workers take afternoon breaks, or the work week might not be from Monday to Friday. There could also be language or technological barriers—employees in some locations may not have access to the same IT tools as employees in other locations. Take time to learn about the customs in countries where your employer has worksites before you start scheduling training.

If you are thinking of creating an online course from scratch, you must address several considerations. First, creating a training course can be costly, as can hiring external vendors. Find out if there is something that already exists in-house that you can use.

Next, you must determine how complex you want to make the session. Sometimes editing software can be enough to add complexity—for example, you can film an employee conduct-

I would recommend classes on how to train and how to communicate if you have never tackled training before.

ing a "search and capture" at her desktop, then put the two actions together. This takes some training and practice to accomplish, but it is a cheaper way to create stand-alone courses.

If you do decide to use an external vendor, make sure you have a very defined scope, a script, and an idea of how you want the training video to look. The more organized and detailed you are, the less you will spend.

Tricks of the Trade

So, how do you make sure your training is successful?

One of the best tools for ensuring success is a pre-training survey. This can be a formal written survey, or you can interview potential attendees. The goal of the survey is to learn what trainees already know, how they currently conduct research, and what kinds of information they typically seek. With this information in hand, you can ensure that your training is customized to your customers.

Communication is key. Make sure the message is catchy; don't be verbose. A long e-mail will lose your audience. Remember to focus on what's in it for attendees—how they will benefit from the training. Make sure the date, location, time, and format are clearly communicated.

Also, be sure to include contact information on all communication materials. I often receive e-mails from employees who can't attend a session but are very interested in the topic. This is a great opportunity to reach out and make a personal connection. Perhaps you can record a WebEx session and send them the link after the training; if not, schedule a one-on-one meeting to train them yourself. This may seem time consuming, but it is a great way to build relationships with your clientele.

The follow-up is also important. I have already mentioned the need to follow up with new hires, but you should consider doing this with all training attendees. One way to follow up is by sending attendees a feedback form. Ask whether the training was useful and whether they have used the new skills or knowledge they learned. If they can provide examples, you can incorporate this information into future training communications.

If attendees report they have not used their new skills, find out why not. Was the training not valuable? Are they confused by the information they learned? If so, you have a great opportunity to correct that problem. By reconnecting with attendees, you bring the tools or services you discussed back into focus.

Simple takeaways can be very effective. When I conduct database training sessions, I give my attendees a one-page document that reminds them what the database is for, how to sign on to it, and how to perform basic searches. If they forget what they learned in the class, this one-pager will help remind them. As always, make sure your contact information is on this document so users can reach out to you if they have questions.

Training vs. Library School

How does on-the-job training differ from what library students learn? The real difference is that training in library schools tends to be more general in nature. I teach a business research course at the University of North Texas in which I discuss public companies, SEC forms, and industry research. This is a great first step.

When these students get hired by a company, university, or other institution, they have to conduct research in a specific field. The requirements of their job are much narrower and deeper than in a classroom. Suddenly, they don't know which databases to use, what the best resources are, or how to find information internally in their new organization. This is why the Information Center is perfectly suited for bringing new hires, even in our field, up to speed.

Learning is a never-ending part of our job. We constantly need to learn to succeed in our jobs; it is critical if we are going to train others. I would recommend classes on how to train and how to communicate if you have never tackled training before.

If you are a junior member of your team, make sure you tap the experience of those around you who have conducted training sessions before. I also suggest you spend some time learning about your training topic. There is nothing worse than teaching a subject and not knowing the answers when your audience asks questions. This does not mean you have to know all the answers—if there are one or two questions you can't answer, write them down and make sure you follow up later.

Finally, make sure you practice before you conduct any training. You will feel more comfortable and be able to make sure you have timed the training session correctly. And don't forget to smile. Training can be a tense experience, but don't let your audience know that. Take a deep breath—you can do this! **SLA**

Creating Connections through a Collections Review

LIBRARY, ARCHIVES AND MUSEUM STAFF HAVE CREATED NEW RELATIONSHIPS AND ENHANCED EXISTING ONES WHILE CONDUCTING A REVIEW OF THEIR SEPARATE COLLECTIONS.

BY SARAH KENNEDY, MLIS

The Royal College of Surgeons of England is a professional membership organization and registered charity that exists to advance surgical standards and improve patient care. It was established by Royal Charter in 1800 and has a unique heritage that is well demonstrated by its museum, library and archive collections. These collections have their genesis in various human and animal specimens prepared and/or collected by the late John Hunter, a well-known surgeon and anatomist.

The English Government bought Hunter's collection in 1799 and gave it to the Company (later the Royal College) of Surgeons. Over the years, Hunter's specimens have been supplemented by the works of other anatomists as well as by donations of medical instruments and artwork, resulting in an interesting and immensely varied collection. Despite suffering a direct hit during the bombing of London in World War II, approximately 3,500 of Hunter's original specimens survived and remain in the museum collection today.

The college's library was established to support the staff working with the Hunterian collection, with the first librarian hired in 1828. Soon after, its remit was expanded to support Fellows, members and trainees of the College, and it became known as one of the finest medical libraries in Europe by the end of the 19th century. During the 20th century, the library continued to collect materials related to the fields of surgery, dental surgery, pathology, physiology, and anatomy, though in recent years the emphasis has shifted toward the core subjects of surgery and dental surgery.

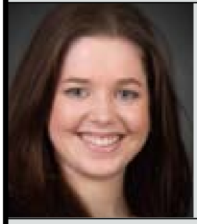
Today, the library collection contains everything from antique books to modern e-journals. The archive has developed in a similar manner and now contains a vast and diverse collection of Hunterian- and college-related materials as well as deposited items (such as personal papers of curators and surgeons) and other organizational records.

Reviewing the Collections

In 2013, Arts Council England recognized the national and international quality and significance of the college's collections by awarding them Designated status. Subsequently, funding was obtained from the Arts Council's Designation Development Fund for a pan-domain review of the collections.

This is an innovative and exciting project, as it aims to review the multimaterial collections using a single methodology. Its success depends on a great deal of collaboration between staff at all levels across two different departments, Library and Surgical Information Services and the Museum and Archives.

The project is being co-directed by the department directors and managed by Beth Astridge, a qualified archivist. There is also input from collec-



SARAH KENNEDY is a qualified librarian working as a collections review assistant in the Royal College of Surgeons of England. She can be contacted at skennedy@rcseng.ac.uk.

tions managers in the library, museum and archives and a steering group with members from a variety of backgrounds.

At the beginning of the project, three collections review assistants were hired, one from each of the three different domains. When the review assistant from archives left the project early, she was replaced with someone from a library background who is knowledgeable about archives, due to the far greater number of library units to be reviewed.

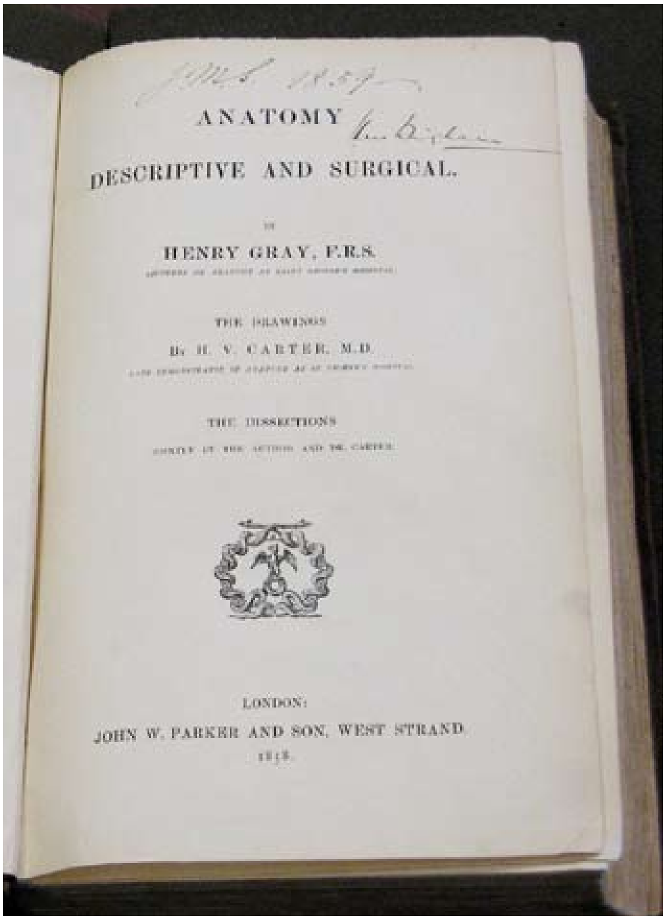
The review methodology is based on *Reviewing Significance*, which was initially developed by consultant Caroline Reed and a team from University College London and is currently available online through the Collections Trust (Reed 2012). Initially developed for the museum sector, the methodology has since been adapted for use in archival collections; however, this is the first time it has been customized for use in a library setting and across different domains simultaneously. Essentially, we are reviewing specimens, books, journals, manuscripts, art, furniture and many more items using the same tools.

The review is being conducted on a unit rather than an item basis, with units being anything from a shelf to a box to a single item, depending on the level of detail required. The tools are in the form of rubrics, which are used to score units in two distinct areas: collections management and usage. Collections management scoring takes into account aspects such as documentation or cataloging, condition, environment and storage. Usage scoring assesses the units based on their importance, their relevance to the collections, and user access to them and also takes their potential future use into account.

To keep the review process standardized and to ensure consistency, the assistants who are tasked with reviewing the collections communicate regularly. Calibration exercises are also scheduled to occur throughout the project to confirm that the rubrics are being interpreted in a uniform way.

Reviews of this type are perhaps more common in the museum and archives sectors, although usually they are confined to one domain. Quite often, collections reviews in libraries have more defined goals or a specific purpose, such as to identify items for de-accessioning. In contrast, this review is broader, aiming to take a high-level overview of the entirety of the collections and use the data gathered for future strategic planning.

It quickly became apparent that there are additional benefits to conducting the review in such a collaborative way.



The museum of the Royal College of Surgeons of England has specimens created by Henry Gray, author of *Gray's Anatomy*, while the archives holds "India proofs" of illustrations by Henry Vandyke Carter (left) made for the first edition of *Gray's* and the library has a copy of the first edition of *Anatomy: Descriptive and Surgical* (right), a forerunner of *Gray's*.

For example, the review is highlighting links between the collections, thereby allowing collection managers and other staff to pool their skills and resources. Rather than stressing the differences in practices across the domains, the review is showing that the divisions we erect can sometimes be quite arbitrary, especially from the point of view of the user. In reality, our work is very similar in that we want to protect and manage collections effectively while also providing the best experience for our users.

Making Judgment Calls

Two of the main aims of the project are to flag issues and highlight good practices. Once the issues have been clearly identified, plans can be put in place to address them. One example of this is the way in which the review is highlighting un-cataloged material.

At the college, as in many similar institutions, a number of retrospective cataloging projects have been running over the past several years. There are still, however, some items across all three domains that have been cataloged incorrectly, missed completely, or perhaps not yet identified as in need of an online catalog record.

For the most part, records are available onsite, but it is crucial that they be accessible online for items to reach their highest potential for use. In the library world, for example, we know anecdotally that many researchers use integrated search platforms rather than individual catalogs. Therefore, library items should be available through the college's own online catalog as well as through platforms such as Copac and WorldCat. Without this review, it is very unlikely that resources would have been made available to identify non-cataloged items across the three domains, thus limiting their accessibility and potential for future use.

Assessing the usage and potential usage of the collections has been a difficult process. Judgment calls need to be made regarding the potential usage of a unit; however, we have found we can manage this by examining the relevance of the unit to the rest of the collections, referring to subject knowledge, and assessing the rarity of items relative to other U.K.-based collections. While determining the actual usage of the collections, we have noticed that there is not a set process through which staff members identify and record usage across the three domains. Each domain uses its own techniques, and each maintains data in various spreadsheets and databases and in other documents. Although information is available, it is not easy to access or manipulate.

This finding has paved the way for collection managers and others to investigate whether an agreed-upon integrated approach would be of benefit. This may turn out not to be the case, but the project has certainly opened the doors for discussion and will ensure that good practices can be identified and replicated.

Through the process of evaluating the usage data, patterns of use have been identified, and this could be of huge benefit to users. Patterns can draw attention to high-use materials, forcing us to consider whether these and related types of materials could be made more accessible (for example, through digitization or in e-books) or whether we have other items that could supplement them. Usage patterns can also highlight items that are seen as noteworthy but are being under-used, prompting us to question if these items are easily accessible to users and how we could do more to promote them.

Creating Links between Items

Early in the review process, we realized the importance of promoting the work of the project and, in turn, promoting the items in the collections that we were discovering (or re-discovering). As we had no social media channels of our own, we went to the Hunterian Museum, which already had a Twitter account in place. They were happy to allow the review assistants to tweet about the project and the items from the three domains. Similarly, when the library developed a blog, its staff encouraged posts from their colleagues in the museum and archives. By sharing these resources, we are publicizing items to more diverse audiences and creating more opportunities for people to engage with the collections as a whole.

A view of the library of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Creating links between items in the collections has been one of the standout benefits of conducting a collaborative project of this type. This benefit has been strengthened by another aspect of the methodology—significance assessments. These assessments are conducted on an item or group of items to develop a more in-depth understanding of their value or importance. During these sessions, which usually last about three hours, collection managers and invited external experts share their expertise to help staff learn more about the items, prepare for exhibitions, or make collection management decisions.

Identifying links between the collections means that those involved in research can now be made aware of significant items in the other domains that might enhance their research experience. There is also the possibility for more cohesive exhibitions featuring items from across the three domains to create a richer contextual representation of the subject matter.

For example, one significance assessment examined medical models held by the museum. The assessment brought to light important archival material that related not only to the acquisition of the models but also, in some cases, to the personal papers of their makers. The library also holds some very relevant texts regarding the creation of models (such as corrosion casts) and many others related to the surgical techniques (e.g., plastic surgery) and diseases (e.g., skin diseases) being illustrated by them.

It is easy to see how identifying these linkages could benefit researchers studying the medical models or curators preparing an exhibition, as it would allow them to include items from all three domains to add value. The fact that we can create these links means we can set ourselves apart from other institutions with similar collections (i.e., other libraries with similar holdings but no museum).

A New Way of Working

It is very clear that by undertaking this review and working together, staff in the college are seeing the benefits of a more collaborative approach to their work. Practicing good communication, sharing resources, and creating links between the collections will allow staff to use their time and resources more efficiently. More important are the benefits to users: noteworthy items will be prioritized for retrospective cataloging and made more visible through social media channels, exhibitions can be enhanced with further contextual material, and research visits can be supplemented if possible.

In a world where evidence-based practice and key performance indicators are the norm, the data being compiled and analyzed will provide the library, museum and archive with a baseline on which they can build further. Not only will this assist in prioritizing projects such as cataloging, it will also provide a bank of evidence for future funding applications or to get buy-in from stakeholders when trying to justify various activities.

In the beginning, the aim of the project was to provide data and give an overview of the collections. What it has achieved is not only the creation of such an evidence base but also a new way of working collaboratively, creating and enhancing working relationships across the domains for the benefit of both the collections and those who wish to use them. **SLA**

RESOURCES

Reed, Caroline. 2015. *Reviewing Significance 2.0*. Accessed 9 October 2015 at http://www.collectionstrust.org.uk/collections-link/risk-management/pest-management/item/1196-reviewing-significance-2-0.

10 Questions: Lois Ireland

BRIEF STINTS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES NURTURED A CUSTOMER SERVICE ETHOS THAT HAS SERVED LOIS IRELAND WELL DURING HER LONG CAREER IN GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE SETTINGS.

BY STUART HALES

Many organizations have eliminated their physical libraries and information centers in recent years, and some have done the same to their switchboards and call centers. Lois Ireland is the rare librarian who has managed to survive the former and benefit from the latter.

Not long after being hired at Freddie Mac, where she is director of Corporate Business Services, Lois was assigned to oversee the replacement of the corporate switchboard with an automated call attendant. She used her knowledge of cataloging and controlled vocabularies to make sure the automated system could properly route calls to Freddie Mac's employees and its many corporate offices, including the library. Although the physical library no longer exists, Lois and her fellow library staff at Freddie Mac have developed a reputation for being a "knowledge hub" for the organization.

Information Outlook interviewed Lois recently about her stints as a public librarian, her involvement in SLA, whether she would encourage a college student to consider a library career, and why she never left her job to become a seamstress or professional dancer.

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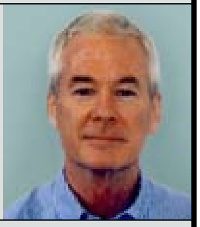

You entered library school right after you graduated from college. Did you go to college knowing you wanted to be a librarian, or did something happen during your college years that turned you on to a library career?

I did have an interest in being a librarian when I went to college. I started working in the local public library at 16 as a page, and eventually I was given more responsibility to work on the circulation desk and then the reference desk a little bit. I worked there in the summer during high school and college—from the age of 16 until I graduated from college—and then during summer and winter breaks while I was in college.

I also worked at my college library in the government documents section. So I had the chance to see a public library setting and an academic library setting, and I decided that, yes, this is something I would like to do. When graduation approached, I started looking at library schools and ended up at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Did you hear about SLA while you were in library school, or did you join later?

Lois at her desk at Freddie Mac.

There was an SLA student chapter at Chapel Hill, and I was actually president of the student chapter while I was there. Looking back, it didn't feel like we did a lot, but there was a student group, and I can remember some networking events with other library students at North Carolina Central.

You've worked in special library environments practically your entire career, but you had some early experiences with public libraries. Why did you make the switch, and did you learn anything from your public library experience that has been helpful to you as a special librarian?

I worked briefly at the New York Public Library. It was a function of proximity—the job was available when I came out of library school and moved to that area. Then I worked for an engineering company for almost a year, then moved back to North Carolina and got a job in another public library. It was the same thing as in New York—it was based on proximity.

What I came to value about that job and about public libraries in general is that you're exposed to all kinds of resources. You really have to think on your feet. You never know who's going to be on the other end of the phone—it could be an 8-year-old with a homework question, or a local businessperson looking for a supplier. We had to deal with the homeless and the mentally ill, and we had some shut-ins who would call us nearly every day. This was the late 1980s, pre-Internet, and I think these folks just wanted to be able to talk to someone.

Working in public libraries, your customer service skills get developed in a different way. I think it builds empathy, because the user base is so diverse and the needs are so varied. Public libraries also kind of set the bar for me in terms of being busy. The library in North Carolina was in an urban area, and on weekends during the school year right before science fair season, the phone never stopped ringing. People were standing three-deep at the desk, and my feet hurt when I went home at night. *(laughs)* Yes, we're busy at the libraries where I've worked since then, but it's a different kind of busy.

I think every librarian should work in a public library at some point, just to see how it feels. Public libraries are a real touchstone for the community—they provide a service that is unique.

You've worked in public libraries, on a contract assignment with the Environmental Protection Agency, and for the past 18 years at Freddie Mac, a government-private sector hybrid organization that helps provide access to home financing. Have you developed a "librarian persona" from all of these experiences?

I think of myself as a corporate librarian—the culture here is very corporate. We try to serve information needs across the entity, whether it's IT or legal or the business areas. We're always looking for tools and resources that will help support all of these groups.

That said, with the skill sets I've developed, I think I would be able to move into a new setting relatively easily. I didn't have an environmental background when I went to the EPA, but I picked up a lot of the subject matter on the job. And I knew only vaguely what Freddie Mac does when I started here, but they were looking for someone with overall library skills and management experience, and I was able to learn on the job and teach myself things as I went along.

Being able to ask the right questions makes a big difference. People will come to us and ask for stuff, and we may not know what it is they want, but if we ask good questions we can find it. And I think that goes back to the public library reference interview—you get used to saying, "Tell me more."

So, if I left Freddie Mac, I'd probably be inclined to look for a corporate library position. But I wouldn't rule anything out.

One of your early assignments at Freddie Mac was to do something that I'm sure they didn't teach you in library school—set up an automated phone system for the company. How did that fall into your lap, and what did you learn from the experience?

The library at Freddie Mac is part of Corporate Services, which houses all of the non-IT support services, including the corporate switchboard. During a reorganization of functions, the switchboard came under my direction. The logic was that the library provides information internally, and the switchboard staff provide information to external callers. So that's how I wound up with the switchboard.

As we were converting from onsite personnel to an automated system, it made sense for me to oversee the implementation of the automated phone attendant. I know everyone loves to hate those things, but there's a real art to figuring out how to set one up. There's a logic involved in making sure things point to the right direction.

It's like a combination of Web page development and cataloging. You're building menu structures—you can't just say, "Give me the number for IT" if you've got six numbers for the IT Department, so you have to build out a menu that prompts people to say, "I need software development" or "I need the service desk" or whatever other part of the organization they're trying to reach.

One of the components or functions of the system is that you can include synonyms. So, if someone asks for the library but we're also known as the information resource center, you can put both of those terms in. We had to think of other words people would use to ask for particular functions. So there's your controlled vocabulary. *(laughs)*

There was an engineer with the company that manufactured the phone system who was onsite and was coaching us through the development of the automated attendant. And the onsite phone personnel had their own data set that they were already utilizing. We just took that information and entered it into the automated system.

You've been at Freddie Mac 18 years now, which is a long tenure with one employer by today's standards. What do you consider your proudest accomplishment so far, and what do you think you could have done better?

Well, we're still here. I know of a number of banking and financial services libraries that have closed in the time that I've been at Freddie Mac, but we have not succumbed to that same fate. We've had some brushes with that, but we've managed to avoid them.

When I first arrived at Freddie Mac, the perception was that the library was only there to serve the Legal Division. We put a lot of effort into changing that perception, to getting people to recognize that we are a resource for all business areas within the corporation. I think we have developed a reputation for being a knowledge hub for the company. We regularly get calls from people who say, "I don't think this is you, but do you know who I should talk to about …?" And oftentimes, we do know, or we can at least point them in the right direction. That reputation of being a knowledgeable resource is one that I'm quite proud of—we're known for being a quality resource and service across the company.

There's always something you can do better. Some of our outreach efforts flopped, quite frankly, in that we just couldn't seem to increase usage among certain user groups. We might get one or two loyal converts, but the rest of the group just wasn't interested.

Getting back to SLA, you weren't very active for several years after you joined, but ultimately you became president of the D.C. Chapter. What prompted you to become more involved, and how do you think you've benefitted from taking on leadership roles?

I was a lurker, I admit it. *(laughs)* When I first moved up here and was doing contract work at the EPA, my company covered the cost of membership. They were very supportive of belonging to SLA, and one year they said they would pay the cost of attending the SLA Annual Conference if you got a paper accepted. I had submitted a proposal for a poster session and it was accepted, so I went to Seattle in 1997.

That made things a little more interesting for me. Then I moved to Freddie Mac, which is out in Tysons Corner, in the suburbs, so getting downtown for D.C. Chapter events required some effort. I was feeling a little restless and isolated, I guess, and then one year the chapter put out a call for dine-around hosts, and I thought, I can do that. So I hosted a dine-around, and people showed up, and we had a nice conversation. So I did it again, and then I did it another time, and then suddenly I got a phone call from someone in the chapter

Lois and her favorite dance partner (and husband), Pierre Huggins, dance at Glen Echo Park, a former amusement park in the Washington, D.C., suburbs. The park is now an arts and cultural center, but it retains many of the trappings of its former life, including a restored 1921 carousel featuring hand-carved wooden animals. (Top photo by Candace Clifford.)

asking me if I would consider running for sponsor relations chair.

So I did that, and I was elected, to my surprise. That got me on the board, and I did rather well with it, and the next thing I knew, I was asked to run for president. I found that I really enjoyed getting to know others in the D.C. library community. It forced me to get out of Tysons Corner and go into the city for things that I probably wouldn't have attended before.

I've been a manager for several years, so I didn't get more involved in SLA to acquire management skills, which I think is what a lot of younger professionals get out of it. For me, it was a matter of making connections in the local library community and being more a part of that community and the profession.

During your career as a librarian, the profession has been pressured by advances in technology, budget cuts, and a growing sense that librarians are misunderstood and underappreciated. Would you encourage a college student to become a librarian today, and if so, what advice would you give him or her about how to be successful?

I would certainly encourage people to consider a career in library science.

My staff and I have seen a number of areas within Freddie Mac that could have benefitted from having an embedded librarian or someone with those skills. We've been working with one group in particular to set up a research process, and in talking with them, it's been apparent that they could have benefitted from having someone who understands research processes—someone who knows you can't just rely on the computer algorithm to answer every question. We were playing that role for them, and then someone from their group came to the library one day and said, "I've been looking for this piece of information and I haven't been able to find it, and I was hoping you could look for it." The reference librarian found it in about 15 minutes, and they wanted to know how she did it, and her response was, "I have 20 years of experience and a library degree." They were hoping for some kind of simple checklist, I think, but we know there's more to it than that.

There are opportunities for librarians, but they may not be what we think of as traditional library opportunities. I no longer have a physical space—I have a set of bookshelves that hold hard copies of things that are not available electronically, but that we've held onto because they're important to what we're doing. However, we are not in a traditional library space anymore.

It's not about the place, and it's not about the stuff. It's about the service. For someone who's interested in providing that kind of service and has a research mindset and a logical way of thinking about things, this can still be a good profession to enter.

A lot of librarians "follow" other librarians on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. Is there anyone outside the library field you follow—whether through social media or in some other fashion—who offers ideas and advice that are helpful to you professionally?

I have a liberal arts education, and that background taught me to take inspiration from any resource that I can find. So I don't follow anyone in particular—I take inspiration from things that come to my attention, wherever they may come from.

Your Google profile is overshadowed by another Lois Ireland who painted pastoral landscapes in Wisconsin and Minnesota in the 1940s and 1950s. Have you ever secretly wanted to trade places with her, or wished you had made a living sewing or dancing (which are your hobbies) rather than as a librarian?

It's certainly fun to entertain the thought of dancing as a career. It's something I came to in my thirties—I got introduced to couples dancing, social dancing, by a friend, and I loved it. I actually met my husband dancing! But I was at a point where I didn't want to compete with it, so it's just for enjoyment. I am reserved by nature, so the idea of "dance like nobody's watching" is something I have to remind myself of periodically.

As for sewing, I grew up in rural Maryland, on the Eastern shore. We were active 4-H members. We were town children; we didn't live on a farm, so we weren't raising heifers. We were taught to sew and to cook and do other projects that didn't involve animal husbandry. One year I trained our dog, but that was the closest I got to doing anything with animals. *(laughs)*

Introduced to sewing through her local 4-H youth club, Lois still sews in her spare time.

Sewing was something they started you on bright and early. At age eight, we were sewing hand towels together to make beach cover-ups. It's something that has stayed with me—I didn't sew for a while, then I started sewing again in high school, and I've been sewing ever since. I've never wanted to sew for a living, as a business. I don't mind doing things for myself or for loved ones who are forgiving if it's not perfect, but if I had to make something to sell, I think that would drive me crazy! **SLA**