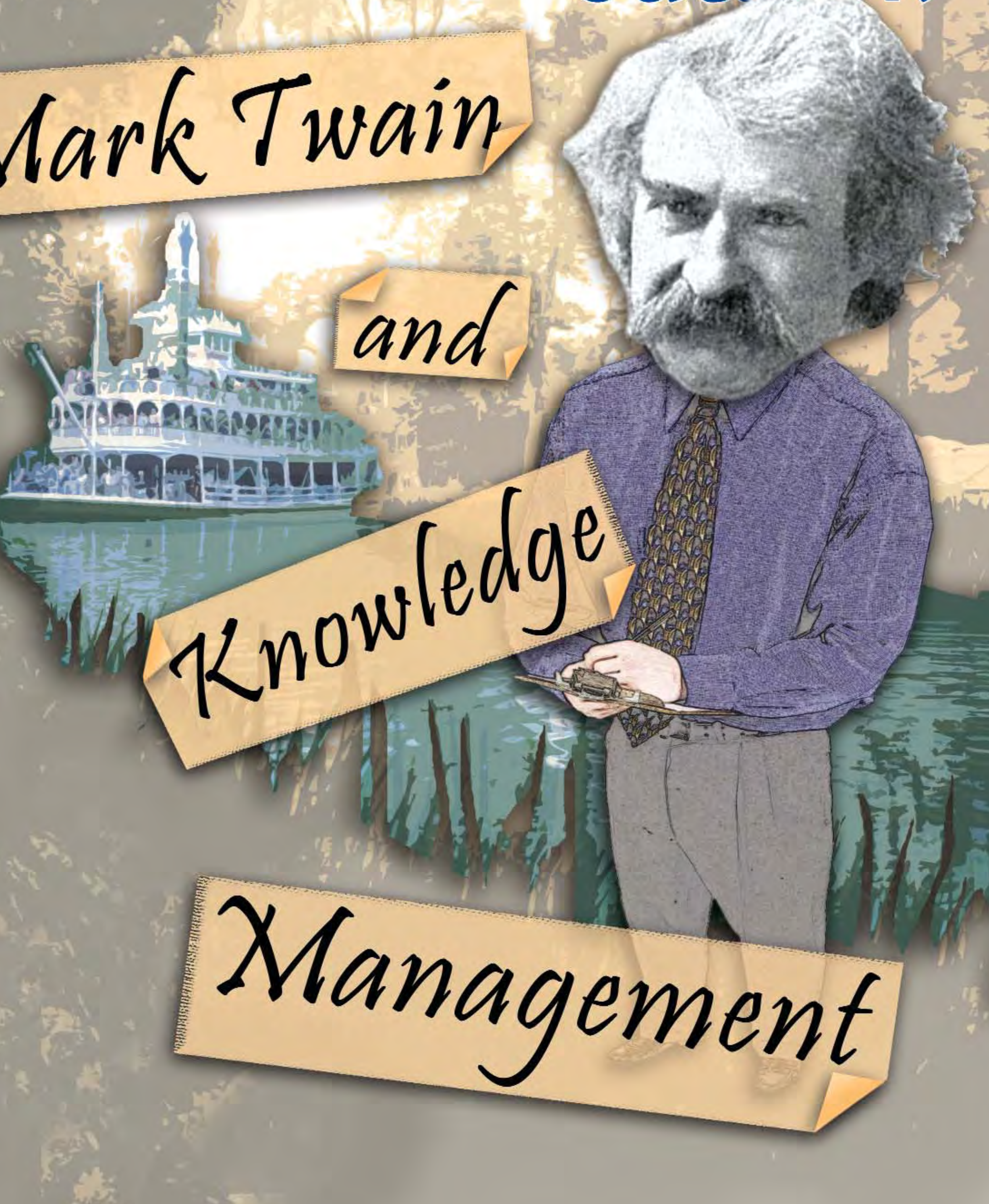
9-2006

Information Outlook, September 2006

Special Libraries Association

information outlook
vol. 10, no.9
September 2006
www.sla.org

Mark Twain and Knowledge Management

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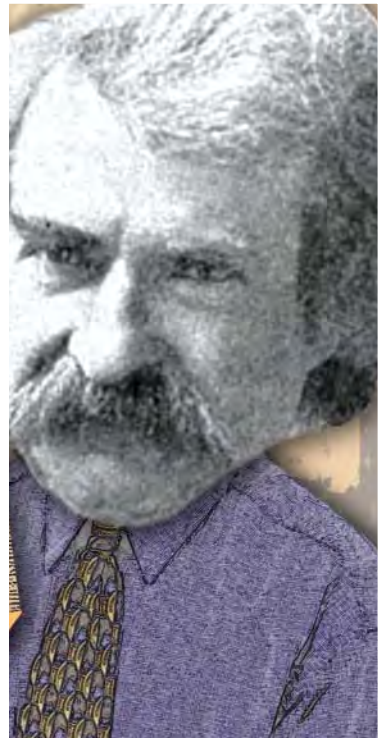

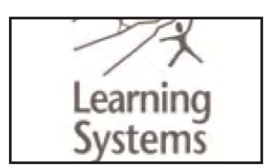

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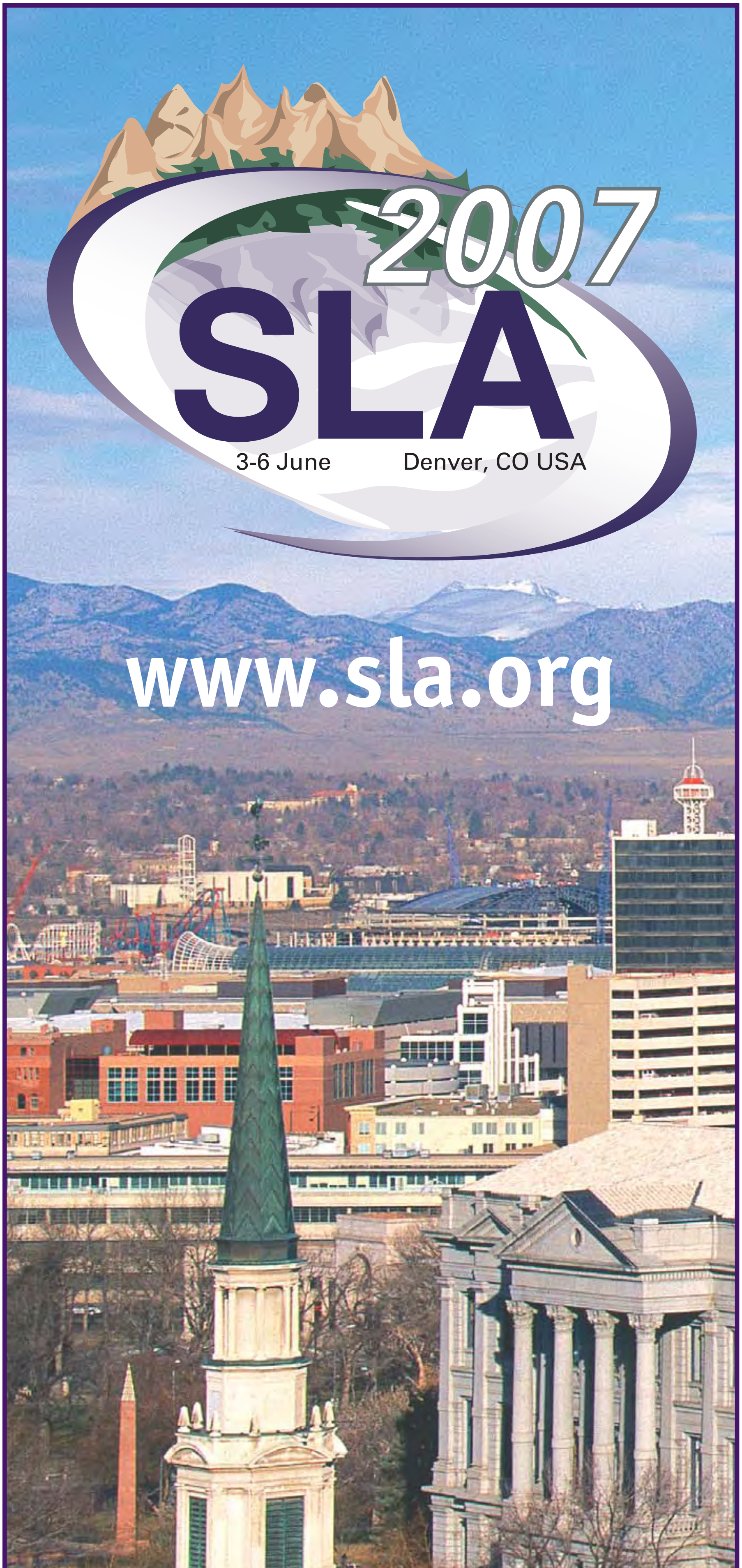

information outlook

www.sla.org

The Monthly Magazine of the
Special Libraries Association
Vol. 10, No. 9
September 2006

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Information Outlook®
(ISSN 1091-0808) is the monthly, award-winning publication of the Special Libraries Association, 331 South Patrick Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, magazine@sla.org. (703) 647-4900

2006 Subscription Rates:
Annual subscription, $125 (U.S. and International). Single issue, $15. Please report missing copies promptly to publications@sla.org. To ensure continuous delivery of *Information Outlook,* please notify SLA promptly of address changes by writing membership@sla.org. When submitting address changes, please include all the information on the mailing label. Changes may not go into effect for four to six weeks.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to Subscriptions, *Information Outlook*, Special Libraries Association, International Headquarters, 331 South Patrick Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3501, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Alexandria, VA, and at additional mailing offices. Canadian Publications Mail Agreement #40031619. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to: P.O. Box 1051, Fort Erie, ON L2A 6C7.

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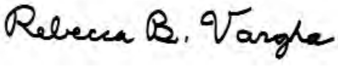
Late Summer Thoughts: Connections and Innovations



The rituals of summer are complete and autumn is almost here. By the time you read this column, we will be underway with the fall season and temperatures in North America will begin to undergo seasonal adjustments. The summer season is a perfect time for rest, re-energizing and changing your perspective.

The range of activities is as diverse as our membership. Here are a few samples from SLA members I spoke with recently: trips to beaches like the North Carolina Outer Banks, family reunions, seeing Mickey and Minnie Mouse in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, sipping afternoon high tea on Vancouver Island, Canada, or in the Union Square area of San Francisco, or exotic trips like mountain climbing in Peru. One of my personal favorites is taking time to relax with family and friends at home to reconnect.

An excellent number of opportunities for reconnecting professionally took place at the SLA Annual Conference in Baltimore. Our conference was very successful, and participants have wonderful memories of "Charm City." There were more than 5,800 attendees, representing 33 countries, who made the journey to Baltimore, Maryland. The Info-Expo featured 305 companies and 482 exhibit booths. SLA's Click University celebrated its first birthday. We welcomed 71 new exhibitors this year. Our local hosts from the Maryland SLA Chapter provided hospitality and shared detailed knowledge of the city. The days were jammed with excellent programming, including keynote speakers PBS journalist Gwen Ifill and *Wall Street Journal* columnist Walter Mossberg. In his closing keynote address, Mossberg talked about the impact of technology on our society.

After hearing his speech, I began to think about technology and the process of innovation. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines innovation as: "The action of innovating; the introduction of novelties; the alteration of what is established by the introduction of new elements or forms." There are all types of innovators, especially in the area of library and information technology.

One of the most innovative librarians I ever had the privilege of talking with was Fred Kilgour. On July 31, 2006, he died in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. He was 92 years old and a distinguished research professor emeritus at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill from 1990 to 2004. During the first three years of my current job at UNC, Fred was actively engaged in research and used library resources weekly. I always knew when it was Monday afternoon, because he was in our library using the collection. During the last two years, he regularly called in with intriguing reference questions. He had a marvelous curiosity about a broad spectrum of subjects from early photography to trends in information science. On April 7, 2006, I visited Fred at his home one last time and we discussed many topics from current technology to the SLA Annual Conference.

Fred Kilgour became an honorary member of SLA in 1986, and was truly a creative innovator. He could see the impact of technology in access to information. Before personal computers and the Internet, there was Fred Kilgour. By founding and developing OCLC, he began a library consortium that now links 55,000 institutions in 110 countries. His legacy of innovation, creativity, and collaboration is an inspiration for all of us.

The July 2006 issue of *Wired* (pp. 148-53 & 166) contains a fascinating article written by Daniel H. Pink titled, "What Kind of Genius Are You? A New Theory Suggests That Creativity Comes In Two Distinct Types-Quick and Dramatic, or Careful and Quiet." He focuses on a recent book on creativity theory written by University of Chicago Economics Professor David Galenson. The book is titled, *Old Masters and Young Geniuses: The Two Life Cycles of Artistic Creativity*, published in 2006 by Princeton University Press.

In the beginning, the experimentalists get off to a slower start. The experimental innovators have a tendency to peak later in their career path. Over time, the conceptualists hit their peak early. Examples of conceptualists are F. Scott Fitzgerald who wrote *The Great Gatsby* at age 29. Wolfgang Mozart composed *The Marriage of Figaro* at age 30 and Orson Welles created the film *Citizen Kane* at 26.

On the other hand, examples of experimentalists are Mark Twain, who wrote *Huckleberry Finn* at age 50. Alfred Hitchcock directed *Vertigo* when he was 59. Frank Lloyd Wright created the architectural design *Fallingwater* when he was 70 years old. My question to you is: Which are you? Are you a conceptualist? Or are you an experimentalist? Or… are you neither? Professor Galenson postulates that his theory has limits. He talks about a range of behavior…you don't have to be one or the other, and you can change over the course of a career. SLA welcomes all types of innovators as members. Our organization benefits from the unique creativity of all members.

Yours in SLA,
Rebecca

web sites worth a click

By Carolyn J. Sosnowski, MLIS

DocuTicker

www.docuticker.com

The membership of our association is quite broad in character. Members work for all kinds of organizations and research a vast array of subjects. A tool we can all use, regardless of our industry, is DocuTicker, a site that offers one-stop shopping for reports issued by governments, think tanks, and other organizations. Brought to you by the team responsible for ResourceShelf, featured in the December 2004 Web Sites Worth a Click column, the site (really a blog) is updated daily and can be browsed or searched. Categories and sub-categories are applied to each entry, which includes title, link, source, and description of the report, so it's easy to find content that meets your research criteria. Topics range from technology and science to health and careers. Why dash around the Internet, visiting individual Web sites, when you can find just what you need here?

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Book geeks of the world unite. Discussions of LibraryThing are making their way around the Web and print, and I just had to include it here. If you haven't heard, LibraryThing is a way to catalog your books online…and share them with others, if you are so inclined. Once you register, you can create entries for your books by pulling records from Amazon, the Library of Congress, and other libraries. Add subject "tags" to your books, and it's easy to categorize your titles and find similar ones. And, your reviews of books serve as recommendations to others. You can join groups with similar interests (almost 500 members are librarians), chat with others, and search titles, authors, tags, and users. When you've finished organizing your bookshelves at home, try LibraryThing. It's fun!

The Business of Baseball

www.businessofbaseball.com

Back in the day, the sport of baseball was just that—sport. These days, it seems to be much more a world of money and power (with the help of television and the Internet), and a lot of the commentary out there goes beyond game reportage to talk of salaries, steroids, and profitability. If that's the kind of thing you're interested in, this site is for you.

news briefs

UN Exam Deadline Set

Young U.S. professionals with degrees in library and information management are being recruited for junior professional posts with the United Nations.

Applications for taking the examination must be received by October 31.

Detailed information and application forms may be obtained at: www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/exam.htm or from EmploymentUN@state.gov. Candidates must:

- Be U.S. citizens.
- Be noore than 32 years old as of December 31, 2007 (UN requirement).
- Have at least an undergraduate degree (advanced degree is a definite.
- advantage) in one of the following occupational fields or related areas: economics, legal affairs, library and information management, publishing and printing, radio production (Arabic and Spanish), security, or statistics.
- Be fluent in English and/or French, the two working languages of the Secretariat. Knowledge of additional official languages of the UN (Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish) is a definite advantage. For radio producers, Arabic or Spanish are required.

A maximum of 50 individuals will be allowed to take the exam per occupational group. If applicants exceed 50, only the most qualified will be selected.

The examination will be given in February 2007 in New York City.

Obituaries

Elizabeth Eddison

Elizabeth "Betty" Eddison, dedicated SLA leader and community activist, died July 31 following a lengthy illness.

She was a supporter of SLA and worked tirelessly in her community of Lexington, Massachusetts.

She served on the SLA Board of Directors (1991-1994) and served on numerous committees. She was chair of SLA's Leadership and Management Division in 1988, was honored as a Fellow in 1995 and inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2002 before her retirement.

A memorial service was scheduled for 10 a.m. September 9, at the Church of Our Redeemer, 6 Meriam St., Lexington, Mass. In lieu of flowers donations in her memory may be made to The Town of Lexington's Jack Eddison Blossom Fund, C/O Town of Lexington, 1625 Massachusetts Ave, Lexington, Massachusetts, USA, 02420.

Frederick G. Kilgour

Frederick G. Kilgour, an honorary SLA member, librarian and educator who created an international computer library network and database that changed the way people use libraries, died on July 31, 2006. He was 92 years old and had lived since 1990 in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

He is widely recognized as one of the leading figures in 20th century librarianship for using computer networks to increase access to information in libraries around the world. He was among the earliest proponents of adapting computer technology to library processes. At the dawn of library automation in the early 1970's, he founded OCLC Online Computer Library Center and led the creation of a library network that today links 55,000 institutions in 110 countries.

NYT To Honor Public *and* Academic Librarians

The *New York Times* will present awards to both public and academic librarians in 2006. Previously, awards have gone only to librarians working in public libraries.

Nominations for the sixth annual New York Times Librarian Awards for public librarians are being accepted until September 15. The awards will honor 21 public librarians across the country who provide outstanding community service on a consistent basis. Nominations come from the public.

Additionally, in September and October, The Times will accept nominations of academic librarians working in university and college libraries for The New York Times Academic Librarian Awards. These nominations may come from students, faculty, and administrators at universities and colleges nationwide and awards will be presented to three academic librarians. Awards will be given to those academic librarians whose outstanding service has enriched their libraries, institutions and academic communities. Nominations for academic librarians will be accepted until October 20. Information about the awards program can be found at www.nytimes-community.com.
For more information, call (212) 556-4520.

NCLIS Opposes Merger with IMLS

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science has voted to oppose a proposal for consolidation with the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The draft proposal says "there is a significant need for a strong voice within the federal government to provide advice and guidance on domestic and international library and information policy. Since its inception, IMLS has been involved in both national and international library and information policy. With the addition of new responsibilities IMLS will be better able to meet its statutory responsibility to 'identify national needs and trends of library services,' and will strengthen its ability to contribute to information policy by conducting studies, surveys and analyses of library and information needs of the Nation; appraising the effectiveness of current library and information services programs to meet national needs; and promoting planning, research, and development activities in coordination with national and international networks." (The full proposal is online at www.imls.gov/pdf/ConsolidationPlan_draft.pdf.)

A major concern of NCLIS is the proposed plan's lack of reference to the Commission's statutory advisory and policy development role.

"In the legislation which created the Commission, our first responsibility is to advise the President and Congress on the implementation of policy with respect to library and information science," said Commission Chair Beth Fitzsimmons. "We are surprised that this critical authority is given so little attention in the draft document. In fact, the Commission's advisory and policy development role is hardly mentioned. Instead, the primary emphasis in the plan is on the Commission's work with the National Center for Education Statistics in implementing the Library Statistics Cooperative Program, which is referred to as one of the Commission's 'main functions.' This is not the case."

In recording its opposition, the NCLIS also stated its concern that "the proposed merger of the statistics, policy development, and funding programs" would compromise the integrity of the three activities, considered by the members of the commission to be essential but separate programs.

web sites worth a click

Statistics abound, plus interviews, articles, and information on stadium renovations. With registration, you can access chat forums and blogs. As the World Series approaches, the Business of Baseball helps keep you up to date on baseball trivia.

Earth 911

www.earth911.org/master.asp

I remember when, several years ago now, recycling received a lot of attention and everyone was encouraged to do their part by returning grocery bags to the supermarket and reusing what materials they could. Some localities made it easier by instituting curbside pickup of paper, glass, and plastics. End of story? Not exactly. What about batteries, including the ones we use in our telephones? Older thermostats contain mercury…you can't just throw those away when you install a new energy-efficient programmable one. How many computers (and cell phones, for that matter) can you keep in your basement before it becomes an electronics museum? What are some alternatives? These questions can be answered through Earth 911, a site that offers resources on how to conserve, shop smart, and be safe. Find out how much paint to purchase for a project and use leftover paint creatively, and where to donate reusable household items. Access local information by menu/postal code to find options in your area (Earth 911 is currently available for the U.S. and Canada, and looks to expand worldwide, starting with Europe). This site makes it easier to be green.

The Great Buildings Collection

www.greatbuildings.com

How often do you look up when you walk down the sidewalk? We all miss interesting, and often beautiful, works of architecture unless we have a guidebook in hand while on vacation. The Great Buildings Collection brings you closer to your surroundings and those who have created the buildings that make our towns and cities. Search for buildings you know, or browse by category such as architectural style, location, or climate. Most entries feature photographs, or direct you to other sites where you can view the structure. Use the building and architect timelines to see where your favorites fit into history.

Carolyn J. Sosnowski, MLIS, is an information specialist at SLA. An archive of Web Sites Worth a Click columns is available at www.sla.org/content/resources/inforesour/webclick.cfm.

The Rules of Negotiation

By Debbie Schachter

Negotiation skills—which are usually developed through experience and mentorship—are essential to librarians. These skills are important for building relationships with vendors and obtaining the best value in product and service offerings for your clientele.

While these skills are valued in the business world, we usually do not have a chance to use them until a certain stage in our career. Certainly, in my experience, it was a number of years into my career before I was able to participate in negotiations with vendors, and the experience left me feeling unsure of the success of the outcome.

In the past, for many special libraries, there was little opportunity to do much negotiation with vendors, given that their products had fixed prices and libraries paid for these products based on need and demand. Libraries could achieve bulk discounts, but that would usually apply to organizations with significant collections budgets. As electronic resources have become more prevalent—and, in particular, as vendors have seen the opportunity to provide direct client access to their resources—negotiation for broader access and licensing has become more commonplace.

Because libraries evolved to bring order to information resources and to increase access to information, the seemingly unclear processes of negotiation would appear to be the antithesis of the rule-oriented work of librarians. Generally speaking, however, negotiation is something we do informally almost constantly. We negotiate with our colleagues to divide work tasks; and we negotiate with clients in the reference interview, particularly when the timeframe is tight or the resources are not attainable. We often negotiate our salary increases and other benefits requests with our employers. But when it comes to official negotiation over product licensing, service contracts, and so on, the special librarian often begins the experience feeling uncomfortable with the process, given our sense that we are uncertain of our ability to negotiate a good deal.

Rules of Engagement

Negotiation does have a set of rules, and both parties do need to be aware of these before entering into negotiations. The first is the basic premise that both parties enter into negotiation with the honest intention of creating a deal. If one does not actually want to achieve a workable deal, it is simply time wasting to begin the process. Vendors, of course, understand the rules and the sales reps with whom you work are clearly interested in developing an agreement with you. If you are unsure whether you see any benefit or interest in achieving a deal with a vendor, it is incumbent upon you to be clear with their representative before beginning any discussion. If you are simply seeking information, be clear as to your intentions and the timeframe for when you anticipate any type of decision and purchase. That way won't create unreal expectations or appear not to be acting in good faith with the vendor.

The hoped-for outcome of negotiation is to come to an agreement where all parties feel that they have achieved a benefit worth the expense. Any reputable vendor will know that they need to build a long-term relationship with you as a customer. The vendor's intentions are, yes, to earn money, but also to make you a satisfied customer—particularly when competitors would only be happy to provide you with their services or products. And remember, you are not always looking just for the best price, but the price that best suits you and your clients, particularly when price is associated with the additional services or value that the vendor is trying to provide to your clientele.

Do Your Research

We cannot always compare what we are getting for our deal versus the next library, but this does lead to the next point of negotiation, which is to do your research before entering into any type of negotiation. You need to understand the marketplace, the products that are available, the value that is inherent in the different services or products on offer, and what your particular clientele requires. It is often easy for vendors to say that this is the resource or product for your library customers, but you are the one

Debbie Schachter has a master's degree in library science and a master's degree in business administration. She is the head of strategic planning and development at the British Columbia Courthouse Library Society, where she is involved in planning and managing organization-wide projects, marketing and communications, Web site management, and branch supervision. Schachter has more than 14 years of experience in management and supervision, technology planning and support, and reference service in special library settings. She is the treasurer of SLA's Western Canada chapter, and has previously held the positions of public relations chair (2003-2004) and fund development chair (2002-2003). She can be contacted at dschach@telus.net.

most knowledgeable about what your customers need, not just demand, and it is necessary to ensure that this vendor has the right product or service to meet your needs, at your price.

Know What You Want/Need

Do you need the Mercedes or the Subaru? Any vendor will try to sell you the maximum of what they can provide, but it doesn't necessarily follow that what they have is truly the best for you and your clientele. You also need to consider the "just in case" versus "just in time" decisions that limited budgets have forced libraries to make for a number of years. Given your present funding, along with customer needs and your plans for delivering new services or products for your customers, how does a vendor's products or service meet those needs? How is this reflected in your library's annual plans? New services or significant product changes at the library should be anticipated some time in advance, such as when you are developing your annual plans and your annual budget. You shouldn't be jumping into any significant changes without thought and planning, particularly when considering a significant new expense. You may only need one part of a suite of products at this time, or a limited number of licenses, so be realistic with the perceived value for price.

Know Your Motivation

This means understanding what will motivate you to negotiate with a given vendor for a specific product. Will it be price alone? Is it the level of service you will receive? Is it to build on an existing relationship with a reliable vendor even though there are other competitive products or services in the marketplace? These will all have an effect on your negotiations. If it is price alone, you need to be clear about that. If you see the added benefit of bundling with existing subscriptions or services, that allows you to think about the broader aspects of this negotiation. If it is being imposed through other centralized services in your organization, that again has an impact upon how or why you are negotiating with a particular vendor.

Building Trust

Sometimes when we enter into a negotiation for services or goods, we consider it a one-time transaction. This may be self-defeating in the long run, however, as it is difficult to predict the future and determine whether we may need to develop a long-term relationship. To be on the safe side, always think of the long term implications of your relationship with any vendor, just as vendors should be thinking more of relationship-building themselves. Even an individual transaction that may seem insignificant to your library at first can lead to opportunities to have a better relationship with a vendor over the long term. This further leads to the possibility of offering your clientele more value through better pricing and faster response from a vendor who sees the long-term value.

Be Honest

If you have particular constraints and concerns, talk to the vendor about these. If you provide some realistic parameters within which they can produce an offer, it will be save both of you time and effort. It will also show your honest intent to come to an agreement and will help to build the relationship. This relates to any price constraints, time constraints, technology (what is possible within your organization), etc.

Know When to Leave

Finally, it is important to understand that it is not always possible to come to an agreement. If the vendor requires too much money or cannot provide the level of service you require, you may not be able to reach an agreement. This is understood as one of the possible results of negotiation, so don't feel that you have experienced failure if you cannot make a deal. As long as you have bargained in good faith and provided honest and clear information to the vendor, there is nothing to stop you from coming to an agreement in the future.

Sometimes failure to reach an agreement is due to the vendor's internal policies and procedures, which may change over time as their competitors change the way they offer information and services. Sometimes it is based on the changing potential that the vendor sees for having your library as a customer. Even if the negotiation process ends with no agreement, you have begun to develop a relationship, which may benefit you in the future.

Developing negotiation skills is a matter of understanding these basic premises, and finding the opportunity to practice. Each organization operates differently, so it is also important to understand how negotiation is handled in your library or larger organization. As the library manager, you should develop good relationships with vendors, as information and trust help to make both parties satisfied that you have worked to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. Not every deal can be negotiated, and there will be those that you simply cannot make, due to unrealistic expectations on either or both sides. That is to be expected and should become part of your experience in building your negotiation skills.

For Career Growth, Forget the Label and Recognize the Opportunities

By Forrest Glenn Spencer

Jill Hurst-Wahl's profession began in the fifth grade—that was the year she began working in at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School library in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. That was the year she knew that accessing, collecting, preserving, and distributing information would become the core of her career.

Hurst-Wahl loves information. She has sought it out wherever it resides and she has provided it effectively for her end-users, whether at a school library, in the corporate world, or in her own firm.

Now in its eighth year in business, Hurst Associates Ltd. is a successful information consultancy that serves clients primarily in competitive intelligence and digitization planning. The journey Hurst-Wahl has taken since her elementary school days to the present was one of opportunities offered and taken, lessons learned and skills honed, services developed and rendered professionally.

"I started my company in 1998," Hurst-Wahl says, "because I wanted to be out on my own. I didn't want to work for corporations anymore. Running out of the gate I had a good first year. I like to be able to take on clients and projects that I enjoy and be able to take my business in different directions. It has allowed me to do things I wouldn't have done otherwise. It's been fun."

Her firm is the sum of her 15-year experience as a corporate librarian and information technology professional in New York State. "In my corporate life I performed competitive intelligence, so I started my business to do CI for businesses that needed that type of work done," Hurst-Wahl said. "Along the way I got into digitization planning projects. Today, about 50 percent of my business is about CI or business research and the other 50 is digitization."

On Her Own

Hurst-Wahl is one of those high-energy individuals who never let the clock rest, so it's no wonder she earned a profit in the first year as an independent consultant.

In business intelligence, she works with companies in a variety of industries, from financial services to manufacturing. In digitization, she has been employed by not-for-profit organizations in project planning in both hardware and software applications and training. She is a frequent speaker, conducts workshops, and has written more than two dozen articles in industry journals. On top of that, she has conducted college classes (online and on-site) and maintains her own blog, Digitization 101.

Born in Harrisburg, Hurst-Wahl has spent most of her life in upstate New York. Out of high school and with her determination to become a librarian, she entered Elmira College where she earned a BA, Cum Laude. "In the late 1970s it didn't seem to matter what you majored in as an undergrad as long as you got the MLS, so I majored in philosophy/religion and English, and worked in my college library." After Elmira, she earned her MLS at the University of Maryland College Park.

It was an off-chance meeting at a funeral that led her to a job opportunity with Corning Inc. in 1983.

"I came to Corning, not as a librarian, but as an IT professional—even though I didn't have an IT degree," Hurst-Wahl recalled. "What I had done in library school as a graduate assistant was supporting the library's computer classes. I learned how to troubleshoot computer problems—and this is 1983. We're not talking computer problems you have now. I worked with the students, troubleshot, and did the things the faculty wanted me to do. Corning had an end-user support group and I joined the company to be part of that department."

She served as a training coordinator for information services for four years before her promotion to business systems analyst. A few years later, Corning created a business support library and made Hurst-Wahl its supervisor. At that time, the business library was part of the Technical Information Center, but management wanted the library to be a separate unit. Her job was to revitalize the library, move it into its own space, develop services that the company could market, and hire and train staff. Part of her new job included competitive intelligence.

"I was introduced to CI at Corning," Hurst-Wahl said. "That's what the library did. In 1989, the business library at Corning existed but had no staff, no budget, and amazingly, it had one client. Someone in Corning knew I had my MLS and hired me to supervise. The new job revitalized my library skills and I learned new skills on the job about how to deliver information to business people in a way that was useable to them, meeting their turn-around time, their information needs in both content and format. And what we did was on-demand."

It was at Corning that Hurst-Wahl came to learn and appreciate the concept of running a library as a business. "We charged for our services and kept an eye on the bottom line," she said. "We had to estimate project cost; we had to bill everything back—all those things that business people think about."

Hurst-Wahl remained at Corning for four additional years before moving the Rochester, N.Y., firm of Manning & Napier Advisors as a research librarian. Her job at this financial advisory firm included working as a project manager, a database product manager and, eventually, director of intelligence.

"I went to Manning to be their first librarian," said Hurst-Wahl. "They never had one before. After my first month, there were two people who came to talk to the principal owner about investing in a business idea, which was to develop a specialized search engine. I soon got involved in this area to develop search technology."

Over the next four years, she continued performing CI for Manning, supported the financial analysts with research, and worked with the programmers in developing new search products. As at Corning, Hurst-Wahl's skills overlapped in different ways, combining library science and information technology—and learning the practice of developing resources that generate revenue.

By 1998, it was time for her to pull it all together in her own business. One of her first clients was Manning & Napier, the very company she was leaving. "I didn't count on that," Hurst-Wahl noted, "but it was nice to have." She made many cold calls during that first year, but it wasn't cold calling that built her client base. It was networking. She decided that her company was to be built upon her business intelligence skills, and what eventually became an intricate element of her new venture, digitization planning.

"I was hired by the Rochester Regional Library Council on a digitization demonstration project called Winning the Vote (http://www.winningthevote.org)," Hurst-Wahl recalled. "It was a very cool project to work on for a couple of years. And then in 2001 I had another library council approach me on digitization that they were planning. To date, I have done digitization planning for four library councils in New York State."

Digitization planning projects are usually funded by grants. Hurst-Wahl works with her clients to determine exactly what they want to accomplish and what it will take in terms of money and resources to do it.

She also conducts workshops on digitization. "What happens a lot of times with people—even with a plan—is they support the idea, they're gung-ho, and then suddenly there's this wall that appears before them. For me, it's been interesting to watch an organization get involved in digitization. A light will turn on and they say, 'Yes, we can do this, let's go forward and do this' or they go, 'Oh, we cannot do this yet. We have other priorities demanding our attention.'"

Active in SLA

Hurst-Wahl joined SLA while at the University of Maryland College Park. When she didn't enter the academic field as a

SLA Member Profile

Jill Hurst-Wahl

Joined SLA: 1990

Job: Information Consultant and President

Employer: Hurst Associates, Ltd.

Experience: 23 years professional experience

Education: BA, Elmira College; MLS, University of Maryland

First job: Real first paying job, park/playground supervisor; first professional library job, supervisor, business support library, Corning Inc.

Biggest Challenge:
- Continually marketing my services to those groups and individuals who could benefit from what I have to offer.
- Keeping up to date with the changes that are happening in "my section ' of the information industry.

librarian, she dropped her membership. But when she became a corporate librarian at Corning, she rejoined and has remained an active member via the Upstate New York SLA Chapter.

While she was building her consulting company, she remained active in SLA. She was the president of the SLA Upstate New York Chapter. And she has worked on the chapter's newsletter and served as a business manager during the 1990s.

As president, she worked to ensure programs were rotated throughout the state. And she and other presidents (past and present) have worked to streamline the chapter's operations, update policy and procedures, make the events more enjoyable and accessible, and make the networking experience valuable for members.

She also has served as a liaison with the SLA student chapter at Syracuse University. Hurst-Wahl went to her first SLA annual conference in 1992 and has attended each one since. Her blogging at the conference in recent years has become welcomed portraits and vital news for attendees and non-attendees alike. Last spring, she taught a Click University Live! program on digitization project management.

In 2001, Hurst-Wahl moved from her home in Rochester to Syracuse to be a visiting senior instructor in the Syracuse University School of Information Studies. Her approach in the classes has been to introduce a business aspect to librarianship and to think of the possibilities available to pursue for an information specialist.

"When I talk to students," Hurst-Wahl said, "one of the things I will bring into a discussion is: You cannot do everything, you can't give away everything. I tell them that it's okay to think about charging a fee for a service. That's very different from the classic librarian mentality. But the reality is that there's a cost to what libraries do. We should try to give away as much as free as possible, but there are certain services to which fees will need to be applied. Working in the corporate world taught me important lessons when I started my own business in how I look at what I do, knowing that you cannot always give away service."

For a while, Hurst-Wahl was teaching full-time at Syracuse and serving her clients full-time. But today she teaches only one class per year, online. "Teaching is a lot more work than people think, and I didn't realize it until I started doing it. I will continue teaching. I enjoy it. I am able to bring what I learned in my business to my students, and I also learn things from them in how they see things differently." It's that difference that Hurst-Wahl's stresses to her students.

Seeing things differently has benefited her. When she was earning her MLS, she thought she would be employed at an academic library. She had no idea she would be working as a librarian for a large international company like Corning or eventually running her own consultancy firm.

"MLS students are asking me if the jobs are really there," Hurst-Wahl said. "One of the ways to find an answer is to look creatively. As librarians, we tend to think about libraries as the place we are going to work. I say, 'Why not work for a vendor that is creating products and services for libraries?' They need librarians in their organizations because we know how to talk to our fellow librarians; we know what information service professionals want because we are information service professionals, too. A lot of students don't think about working for a vendor, or working for a corporate or a news library, something other than a not-for-profit organization. That's a new thought for them. They don't automatically think of that. They don't think of using their information skills differently in a company and not being in library. Businesses need information research; search engines need development. There are many opportunities for students. I say, 'Look at all the opportunities that are out there.'"

This year, Hurst-Wahl has been exploring a new opportunity and expanding her outreach with it: social networking.

"Social networking tools were not an area of my business, but I have learned about it and examined the trends that are unfolding. I can see how those tools can be used by various groups, like libraries. So, I started talking about these tools even though I may talk about digitization. I show them these other tools and how to be interactive with users. I find myself talking more about that area." In the past, her presentations have been about business intelligence or on libraries in general, but she has expanded her audiences to the business community, which Hurst-Wahl sees as a way of marketing and networking her business.

And she continues to tell people to look for opportunities, as she has done. "I don't describe myself as a librarian, in my business," Hurst-Wahl concluded. "I tell the client what I can do for them. I tell them how I can deliver back the information so they can make better decisions. These are the skills I have, these are the resources I can tap into, and if I need other information, then these are the associates I can contact. I found it very helpful not to describe myself as a librarian because I want them to see me as a businessperson. I try to instill that into my students: Think about what you can do and not necessarily what the label is."

Forrest Glenn Spencer is a Virginia-based independent development researcher and freelance writer. He specializes in developing potential donor prospects for non-profit organizations, such as America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth, the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, and American Red Cross. Forrest was a 14-year broadcast news associate and has written for numerous print and Internet publications over the last several years. He can be reached fspencer@chemsoft.net.

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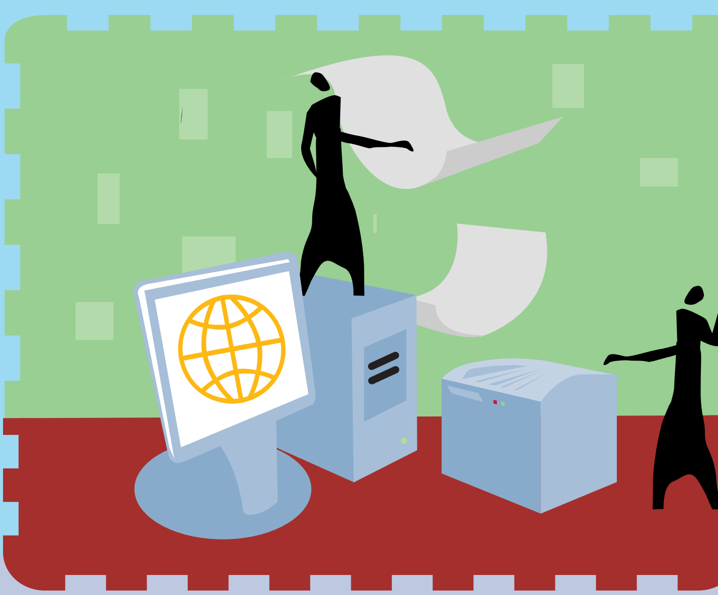

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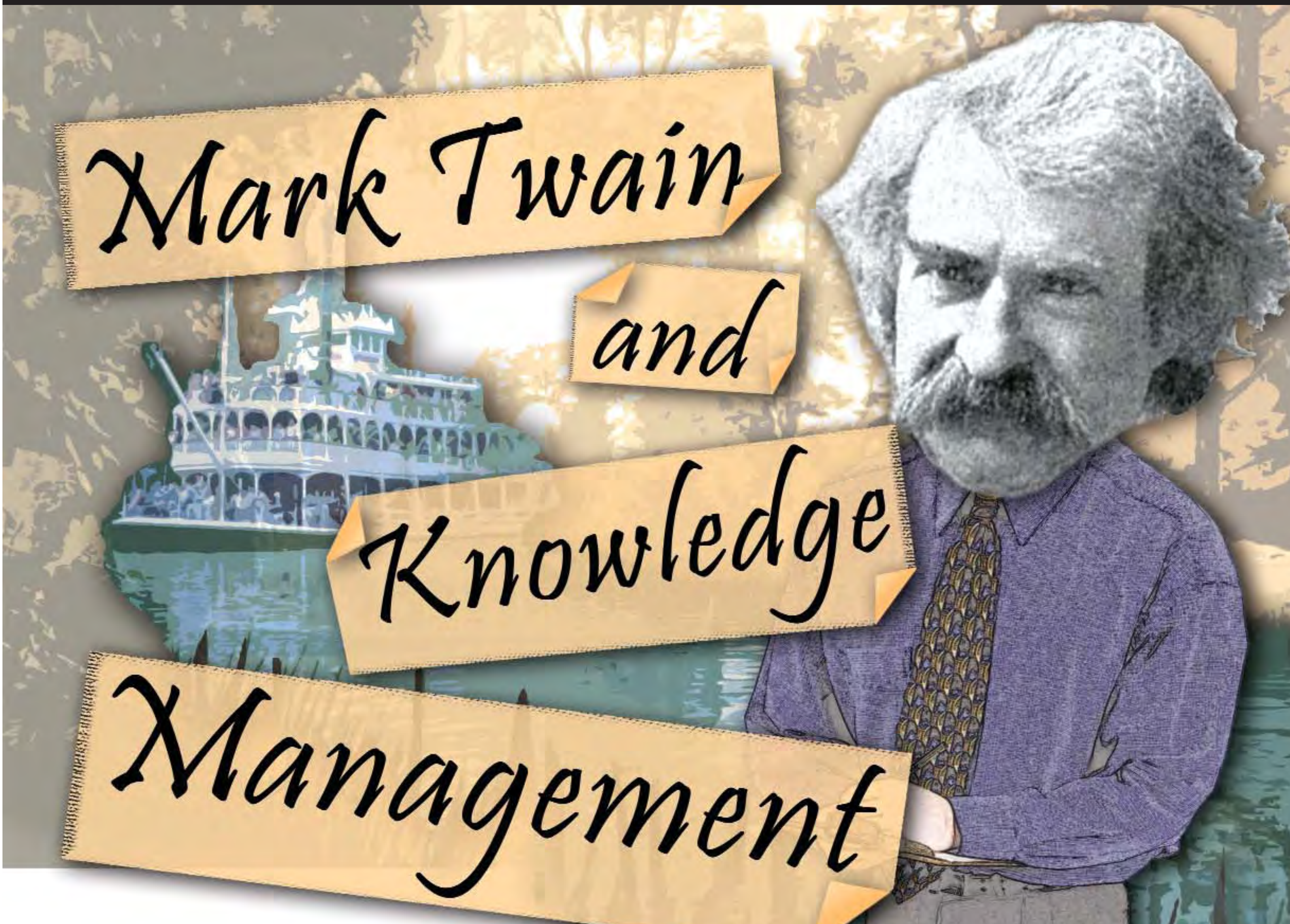
Mark Twain and Knowledge Management



By Duane McCollum, MS

The initial audiences for this article were my peers and managers at my own company. I was inspired to write it because I felt that the rhetoric of knowledge management writing is overloaded with ambiguous terminology. That rhetoric makes it difficult for information professionals and managers to fairly assess the applicability and merits of knowledge management initiatives and their supporting technologies.

For example, knowledge management discourse frequently uses phrases such as "preserving knowledge," "sharing expertise," "eliminating stovepipes," "collaboration for new knowledge," "innovating for greater productivity," and "knowledge management for organizational competence," with little regard for their meaning.

Titles of recent books on knowledge management declare they will show us how "Preserving Corporate Knowledge and Productivity When Employees Leave" is essential; that "Improving communication and creating a Knowledge-sharing culture" is the new key to efficiency; that "The New Knowledge Management" is all about "Complexity, Learning, and Sustainable Innovation"; and that "An intelligent organization (made up of) integration performance, competence and knowledge management" is something to which companies must aspire.[i] "Survival" is another term frequently used in knowledge management discourse. "Knowledge management," Kevin C. Desouza wrote, "has moved from being a phenomenon in the minds of industry leaders to a requirement for survival in today's fiercely competitive marketplace."[ii]

Knowledge management is an important professional and academic field of inquiry, and knowledge itself has been made out to be an important economic resource.[iii] Some corporations have added the corporate-level executive position of CKO (Chief Knowledge Officer). The term as it is used today became popular among management and information professionals around 1996.[iv] A Wikipedia entry on the topic claims that knowledge management has already gone through the first of two stages of evolution, the first being "the capture of information and experience so that it is easily accessible in a corporate environment."[v] In the second stage, practitioners having acknowledged that "knowledge is not a commodity but a process," knowledge management now (supposedly) "gives priority to the way in which people construct and use it."[vi] Contemporary knowledge management development parallels innovations in Internet and intranet technologies. Web portals, content management systems, collaboration systems, expertise location systems, the semantic web and its "intelligent agents," and digital support systems (DSS) are sometimes thought to be all we need for knowledge management. Thus, many knowledge management articles seem to have a "heavily prescriptive quality proffering knowledge management tools (usually biased toward information technology), and methodologies."[vii]

In my company, knowledge management is defined as "(a) discipline that promotes finding, selecting, organizing, distilling and presenting information in a way that improves an employee's comprehension in a specific area of interest"—a definition we appeared to have borrowed from The Gartner Group without acknowledgement, I am sorry to say.[viii] Michael E.D. Koenig and T. Kanti Srikantaiah, in their *Knowledge Management for the Information Professional,* affirmed the conventional wisdom that since we live in a "knowledge era" then our "organizational knowledge is a strategic corporate asset that needs to be garnered, retained, updated, disseminated, and applied to organizational problems."[ix] Most knowledge management discourse has a corporate setting concerned with how to extract, store, and direct knowledge to the people who need it to perform some sort of activity important to a business. However, it often sounds as if what corporations really want is not knowledge management but instead a knowledge vacuum cleaner to stick on people's heads, suck out all their knowledge, and then discard the bodies.

Two Kinds of Knowledge

Knowledge management discourse has identified two kinds of knowledge to manage, explicit and tacit. Knowledge is considered explicit if it can be captured and stored, reused and shared. Examples of explicit knowledge might be found in documents such as best practices, FAQs, or, at my company, so-called "desktop instructions" that describe precisely how to do some activity. Other examples of explicit knowledge might be knowledge repositories (databases), decision support services (and by implication, data warehouses), and the U.S. Army's After Action Reviews.[x] The term "tacit knowledge" was coined by philosopher Michael Polanyi in his book *The Tacit Dimension* (1967) and later interpreted for an organizational management context by Ikujiro Nonaka.[xi] Agreement on what tacit knowledge really is and what to do with it is far from settled. Tacit knowledge, which "lies at the very basis of organizational knowledge creation,"[xii] might be found in someone's skills, know-how, intuition, hunches, or insights. Tacit knowledge is intimate, unstructured, resides in someone's head, and is not easily captured (if at all).

This article uses a work of American literature to offer insights into contemporary knowledge and information management. Perhaps, to manage knowledge and solve our problems with sharing it, we should separate ourselves from the knowledge era and look instead to our past, in this case the steamboat era. For that purpose, I chose to examine chapters VI to XXII (6 through 22) of Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, published in 1883.

If knowledge management is an invention of our knowledge era, then how on earth could steamboat pilots in 1850 manage the awesome amount of information necessary to do their job? Consider the challenges Twain described for a steamboat pilot:

> "He cannot stop with merely thinking a thing is so and so; he must know it; for this is eminently one of the 'exact' sciences. With what scorn a pilot was looked upon, in the old times, if he ever ventured to deal in that feeble phrase 'I think', instead of the vigorous one 'I know!' One cannot easily realize what a tremendous thing it is to know every trivial detail of twelve hundred miles of river and know it with absolute exactness. If you will take the longest street in New York, and travel up and down it, conning its features patiently until you know every house and window and door and lamp-post and big and little sign by heart, and know them so accurately that you can instantly name the one you are abreast of when you are set down at random in that street in the middle of an inky black night, you will then have a tolerable notion of the amount and the exactness of a pilot's knowledge who carries the Mississippi River in his head.
>
> "And thn if you will go on until you know every street crossing, the character, size, and position of the crossing-stones, and the varying depth of mud in each of those numberless places, you will have some idea of what the pilot must know in order to keep a Mississippi steamer out of trouble. Next, if you will take half of the signs in that long street, and change their places once a month, and still manage to know their new positions accurately on dark nights, and keep up with these repeated changes without making any mistakes, you will understand what is required of a pilot's peerless memory by the fickle Mississippi." [xiii]

The challenges of the contemporary knowledge worker are similar to those faced by Mr. Bixby (the master pilot in the story) and Mark Twain (his apprentice, or "cub pilot"). That is, we have to deal with constant change and ambiguity and man-

Duane McCollum earned a Master of Science in Information Management in 2004 from the University of Washington's Information School. He lives in the Seattle area with his wife Jodi and two children and works for The Boeing Company.

age huge amounts of information, just as they did. Historian John Lewis Gaddis warned fellow historians (and information professionals, too, I think) "not confuse the passage of time with the accumulation of intelligence by assuming that we're smarter now than they were then. We may have more information or better technology or easier methods of communication, but this doesn't necessarily mean we're any more skillful at playing the cards we've been dealt."xiv

The Text of Piloting

The exercise of this article is to cast ideas about knowledge management into a different context by reading *Life on the Mississippi* for its information connections (that is, how the characters in the story find, select, organize, and use information to do their work). However, reading the text and nothing but the text is potentially misleading. The reason is that *Life on the Mississippi* contains at least two stories. The first is the text itself; the story told by Mark Twain. The other is a subtext of the personal experiences of Samuel Clemens, upon which the former was based. These authors were not exactly the same person. Mark Twain was a refined public persona created by Samuel Clemens for a variety of reasons.[xv] Therefore, to assume the story is a factual account of Sam Clemens's experiences in steam boat piloting may be inaccurate: Mark Twain's story is a nostalgic retelling of some of the experiences of Samuel Clemens.[xvi]

Mark Twain wrote that "there was but one permanent ambition among my comrades in our village on the west bank of the Mississippi River. That was, to be a steamboatman."[xvii] The steamboat and all that came with it was a critical economic engine to the people on the Mississippi during the 1840s through the 1850s. "Mark Twain knew that for himself and for many villagers (in Hannibal, Missouri), it was the steamboat and all it typified that opened up a new and marvelous world of adventure and opportunity."[xviii] It was also a difficult profession to get into; Twain described himself having to lay "siege" to Mr. Horace Bixby, the master pilot of the *Paul Jones*, to become an apprentice.[xix] Although Twain did not mention specific dates of his service in either the book or in the *Atlantic Monthly* installments "Old Times on the Mississippi" (upon which certain chapters were substantially based), Samuel Clemens probably entered the trade around 1857.[xx]

It was a demanding profession. It required of him two unsalaried and difficult years of apprenticeship, long hours, and a dangerous work environment.[xxi] Twain wrote "if I had really known what I was about to require of my faculties, I should not have had the courage to begin. I supposed that all a pilot had to do was to keep his boat in the river, and I did not consider that that could be much of a trick, since it was so wide."[xxii] With regard to Samuel Clemens, the veracity of that quote is questionable, as he knew a fair amount about steamboating and piloting long before he ever started his apprenticeship.[xxiii] But Twain wanted to show how difficult a learning experience this was and, most important to him, that no ordinary person could do it well. He also captured here and throughout the story the essence of a novice getting into more than he bargained for (a situation many of us can identify with). He saw himself as writing about "piloting as a science" and a book that would "carry the reader step by step to a comprehension of what the science consists of."[xxiv] To impress on his readers how remarkably difficult the job was, he wrote passages such as the following:

> "Ship channels are buoyed and lighted, and therefore it is a comparatively easy undertaking to learn to run them; clear-water rivers, with gravel bottoms, change their channels very gradually, and therefore one needs to learn them but once; but piloting becomes another matter when you apply it to vast streams like the Mississippi and the Missouri, whose alluvial banks cave and change constantly, whose snags are always hunting up new quarters, whose sand-bars are never at rest, whose channels are forever dodging and shirking, and whose obstructions must be confronted in all nights and all weathers without the aid of a single lighthouse or a single buoy; for there is neither light nor buoy to be found anywhere in all this three or four thousand miles of villainous river. I feel justified in enlarging upon this great science for the reason that I feel sure no one has ever yet written a paragraph about it who had piloted a steamboat himself, and so had a practical knowledge of the subject."[xxv]

Knowledge Acquisition on a Steamboat

Most professions, especially complex ones such as steamboat piloting, have a specialized vocabulary. Twain had to learn to recognize and recall things that seemed unimportant at first glance but were actually critical. For example, in the beginning of his apprenticeship, he described Mr. Bixby calling out all the "points" along their first journey up the river. Twain complained to himself that the "points" were "all about level with the water's edge; they all looked about alike to me; they were monotonously unpicturesque."[xxvi] He ignored them at his peril:

> Presently he turned on me and said:--
> "What's the name of the first point above New Orleans?"
> I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.
> "Don't know?"
> This manner jolted me. I was down at the foot again, in a moment. But I had to say just what I had said before.
> "Well, you're a smart one," said Mr. Bixby. "What's the name of the next point?"
> Once more I didn't know
> "Well, this beats anything. Tell me the name of any point or place I told you."
> I studied a while and decided that I couldn't.
> "Look here! What do you start out from, above Twelve-Mile Point, to cross over?"
> "I--I--don't know."
> "You--you--don't know?" mimicking my drawling manner of speech. "What do you know?"
> "I--I--nothing, for certain."
> "By the great Cesar's ghost, I believe you! You're the stupidest dunderhead I ever saw or ever heard of, so help me Moses! The idea of you being a pilot—you! Why, you don't know enough to pilot a cow down a lane."

> [. . .]
> "Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?'"'
> I tremblingly considered a moment, and then the devil of temptation provoked me to say:--
> "Well--to--to--be entertaining, I thought."[xxvii]

A "point," in the above passage, was likely a crossing for the boat "where the channel goes from one side of the river to the other"xxviii It might also be termed a "bridging point" that indicated "a place in a river that was suited for a crossing because that point of the river was either narrow or shallow."xxix Such things were not always stable, in the sense they were occasionally seasonal.xxx However they may be defined, to a pilot, recognizing points was critical:

> My boy, you must get a little memorandum-book, and every time I tell you a thing, put it down right away. There's only one way to be a pilot, and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C.[xxxi]

How could he find, select, and organize all this information? In the case of piloting, could anyone ever learn the river until they got it all "just like ABC"? Twain's memory seemed inadequate, and reliance upon a notebook to store all of that information did not always help:

> By the time we had gone seven or eight hundred miles up the river, I had learned to be a tolerably plucky upstream steersman, in daylight, and before we reached St. Louis I had made a trifle of progress in night-work, but only a trifle. I had a note-book that fairly bristled with the names of towns, "points," bars, islands, bends, reaches, etc.; but the information was to be found only in the note-book—none of it was in my head. It made my heart ache to think I had only got half of the river set down; for as our watch was four hours off and four hours on, day and night, there was a long four-hour gap in my book for every time I had slept since the voyage began.[xxxii]

It may be interesting to note that Samuel Clemens did not have a very good memory.xxxiii Nevertheless, as Mark Twain, he wrote that piloting was a colossal task of training your memory: "Give a man a tolerably fair memory to start with, and piloting will develop it into a very colossus of capability. But only in the matters it is daily drilled in."xxxiv But dutifully memorizing or recording information for recall later was not always helpful. In this case, there was just too much information. That was especially true when the narrator went down the river the opposite way:

> When I returned to the pilot-house St. Louis was gone and I was lost. Here was a piece of river which was all down in my book, but I could make neither head nor tail of it: you understand, it was turned around. I had seen it when coming up-stream, but I had never faced about to see how it looked when it was behind me. My heart broke again, for it was plain that I had got to learn this troublesome river both ways.[xxxv]

Knowing and Reading the River

Twain portrayed the accomplished pilot as someone who knew the river so well that he could pilot the craft at night (in the 1850s, there was far less artificial light on the river than there is today). An example of this was described in "The Hat Island Crossing" episode in Chapter VII. One evening, Mr. Bixby was running late and dared to make the difficult Hat Island Crossing at night to make time. Today, doing so might seem reckless, putting time (and money) ahead of safety. But Mr. Bixby, with a wheelhouse full of his peers, made the difficult crossing with no problem. Twain wrote:

> Fully to realize the marvelous precision required in laying the great steamer in her marks in that murky waste of water, one should know that not only must she pick her intricate way through snags and blind reefs, and then shave the head of the island so closely as to brush the overhanging foliage with her stern, but at one place she must pass almost within arm's reach of a sunken and invisible wreck that would snatch the hull timbers from under her if she should strike it, and destroy a quarter of a million dollars' worth of steamboat and cargo in five minutes, and maybe a hundred and fifty human lives into the bargain.[xxxvi]

In this passage, a pilot's knowledge is an individual and a social phenomenon. Bixby had excellent timing, unsurpassed skill in controlling his boat, and he followed the image of the crossing he had in his mind. How much of this account was fictionalized and how much of it was accurate may never be satisfactorily determined. But as much as this passage might remind us of that saying "knowledge is power," it also says knowledge, or being knowledgeable, gives a person status. Should knowledge management initiatives or application designers be concerned with the fact that knowledge can appeal to an individual's ego?

The secret to Mr. Bixby's success was that he followed the shape of the river in his mind. He impressed this on Twain in the following way:

> "What is the shape of Walnut Bend?"
> He might as well have asked me my grandmother' opinion of protoplasm. I reflected respectfully, and then said I didn't know it had any particular shape. My gunpowdery chief went off with a bang, of course, and then went on loading and firing until he was out of adjectives.
> I had learned long ago that he only carried just so many rounds of ammunition, and was sure to subside into a very placable and even remorseful old smooth-bore as soon as they were all gone. That word "old" is merely affectionate; he was not more than thirty-four. I waited. By and by he said,—
> "My boy, you've got to know the shape of the

> river perfectly. It is all there is left to steer by on a very dark night. Everything else is blotted out and gone. But mind you, it hasn't the same shape in the night that it has in the day-time."
>
> "How on earth am I ever going to learn it, then?"
>
> "How do you follow a hall at home in the dark? Because you know the shape of it. You can't see it."
>
> "Do you mean to say that I've got to know all the million trifling variations of shape in the banks of this interminable river as well as I know the shape of the front hall at home?"
>
> "On my honor, you've got to know them better than any man ever did know the shapes of the halls in his own house."
>
> "I wish I was dead!"[xxxvii]

Knowledge, in this story, was experienced, learned, forgotten, relearned, and relived. Knowledge management was more than just a part of working life. Mark Twain and Mr. Bixby did not consult FAQs, "how-to" documents, knowledge portals, or rely on sophisticated DSSs to do their work:

> Here were leagues of shore changing shape. My spirits were down in the mud again. Two things seemed pretty apparent to me. One was, that in order to be a pilot a man had got to learn more than any one man ought to be allowed to know; and the other was, that he must learn it all over again in a different way every twenty-four hours.[xxxviii]

Learning about, knowing, and anticipating the changing shape of the river and the locations of points and bends was only part of the work. Twain wrote that he "had often seen pilots gazing at the water and pretending to read it as if it were a book; but it was a book that told me nothing."xxxix Accomplished pilots could read the river: The novitiate and the common passengers could only regard the river with ignorance.

> Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river![xl]

Intuitively, it seems that more knowledge should always be a good thing. But to Mark Twain, such knowledge came with a personal price: the loss of a favorite or familiar mental picture of the world. In this passage, he showed that learning and knowing required a personal transformation, implying a certain kind of loss. He seemed to be saying that a personal change takes place in us whenever we take in new knowledge (something information technology is generally not designed to help us do).

Knowledge Networking for Pilots

The editors of *Knowledge Management for the Information Professional* suggested that knowledge management should be termed "knowledge sharing" or "knowledge networking," because that's what we're really doing.[xli] Mark Twain described what might be called knowledge networking among steamboat pilots. Information exchange about the river and the nuances of piloting occurred quite often, especially when pilots rode boats to "look at the river."[xlii]

> All visiting pilots were useful, for they were always ready and willing, winter or summer, night or day, to go out in the yawl and help buoy the channel or assist the boat's pilots in any way they could. They were likewise welcome because all pilots are tireless talkers, when gathered together, and as they talk only about the river they are always understood and are always interesting.[xliii]

He called this information-sharing an "ancient river custom."xliv Listening to other pilots and their constant talk about the river, together with immersion into the world of piloting, was how he and other pilots learned and kept learning their craft. But that networking was not altogether informal. Sophisticated social and informational networks of pilots actually existed in the guise of various unions, or "associations." The association to which Samuel Clemens belonged was the Western Boatman's Benevolent Association (Twain referred to it as "the Pilots' Benevolent Association"xlv). It was around in one form or another from about 1853 and given that official name in 1859.xlvi It was formed in part due to the regulations of steamboat traffic and piloting imposed by the Steamboat Act of 1852, and in part due to the downward pressure on wages brought about by the oversupply of licensed pilots. The oversupply was caused by licenses being granted to "paper pilots," that is, "men of standing and influence but lacking in knowledge of the river."xlvii The WBBA sought to raise the wages of pilots, restrict entry to the profession by reducing the number of new apprentices, and generally raise the quality of the skills and knowledge of licensed pilots.

Edgar M. Branch wrote the definitive monograph about the WBBA, entitled *Mark Twain and the Starchy Boys*. The WBBA was a kind of school for pilots, and apprentices like Twain (or Clemens), once accepted, were drawn into a brotherhood of high reputation and standards. Based on his research, Branch concluded that "the WBBA played a key role in the transformation of Samuel Clemens the obscure printer into Samuel Clemens the successful pilot."[xlviii] Mr. Bixby was a WBBA member and "meticulously followed the method of inductive observation and careful memorization, the twin bases of his trained intuition."[xlix] Samuel Clemens, and by implication Mark Twain, must have "observed the association in operation, and from the beginning of his apprenticeship he was trained in its ways and in line with its values."[l]

The WBBA was very effective in managing and sharing information about the river. Member pilots documented and shared with each other crucial, up-to-date information about the river and its conditions. Twain wrote "(i)t was a rigid rule of the association that its members should never, under any circumstances whatever, give information about the channel to any 'outsider.'"[li] They developed a system of data exchange up and down the river:

> At every good-sized town from one end of the river to the other, there was a "wharf-boat" to land at, instead of a wharf or a pier. Freight was stored in it for transportation; waiting passengers slept in its cabins. Upon each of these wharf-boats the association's officers placed a strong box, fastened with a peculiar lock which was used in no other service but one—the United States mail service. It was the letter-bag lock, a sacred governmental thing. By dint of much beseeching the government had been persuaded to allow the association to use this lock.
>
> Every association man carried a key which would open these boxes. That key, or rather a peculiar way of holding it in the hand when its owner was asked for river information by a stranger—for the success of the St. Louis and New Orleans association had now bred tolerably thriving branches in a dozen neighboring steamboat trades—was the association man's sign and diploma of membership; and if the stranger did not respond by producing a similar key and holding it in a certain manner duly proscribed, his question was politely ignored.[lii]

The quality of the information recorded and shared among WBBA members was likely higher than it would have been otherwise because the members had an economic and legal stake in making themselves strong enough to deal with the ship owners. Members were even given forms to fill out for their reports:

> Imagine the benefits of so admirable a system in a piece of river twelve or thirteen hundred miles long, whose channel was shifting every day! The pilot who had formerly been obliged to put up with seeing a shoal place once or possibly twice a month, had a hundred sharp eyes to watch it for him, now, and bushels of intelligent brains to tell him how to run it. His information about it was seldom twenty-four hours old. If the reports in the last box chanced to leave any misgivings on his mind concerning a treacherous crossing, he had his remedy; he blew his steam-whistle in a peculiar way as soon as he saw a boat approaching; the signal was answered in a peculiar way if that boat's pilots were association men; and then the two steamers ranged alongside and all uncertainties were swept away by fresh information furnished to the inquirer by word of mouth and in minute detail.[liii]

Another important aim of the association was to provide a formal meeting place for pilots to debrief after their work.liv Twain wrote:

> The first thing a pilot did when he reached New Orleans or St. Louis was to take his final and elaborate report to the association parlors and hang it up there, after which he was free to visit his family. In these parlors a crowd was always gathered together, discussing changes in the channel, and the moment there was a fresh arrival, everybody stopped talking till this witness had told the newest news and settled the latest uncertainty. Other craftsmen can "sink the shop," sometimes, and interest themselves in other matters. Not so with a pilot; he must devote himself wholly to his profession and talk of nothing else; for it would be small gain to be perfect one day and imperfect the next. He has no time or words to waste if he would keep "posted."[lv]

In a way, it was similar to the Army's After Action Reviews ("a professional discussion of an event, focused on performance standards, that enables soldiers to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses").lvi

Branch described "the glory days of the WBBA on the lower Mississippi—a two-year period coinciding with Sam Clemens's tenure as a first-class pilot, and one that Mark Twain documented in *Life on the Mississippi*."[lvii] Branch credited the WBBA as instrumental in improving the safety of steamboat travel.[lviii] The WBBA, with its successful information management strategy, gained better working conditions and wages for pilots, established "higher standards for their craft and for the industry in general," enhanced their professional and social status, and created the means to develop their individual piloting skills.[lix] Nonmember pilots, consequently, "began to ground steamboats, sink them, and get into all sorts of trouble, whereas accidents seemed to keep entirely away from the association men."[lx]

Conclusion

How important is knowledge when it is no longer relevant? In the later chapters of *Life on the Mississippi*, Mark Twain returned to the scene of his apprenticeship after many years had passed and much had changed. The steamboat industry was no longer the king of river commerce, which was unalterably changed by the Civil War and the advent of more advanced railroad technology. The "noble science of piloting" and the "knights of the tiller" were no longer in high demand.[lxi] The knowledge (and skill) necessary to pilot steamboats, the information management schemes of the WBBA, perhaps even the ability to read the river had a limited span. Perhaps an important lesson here for knowledge management in the workplace is that knowledge, however important at some particular time, may lose its relevance. What information technology does very well is to store and retrieve vast amounts of data (and by implication, we assume, serve as a resource for knowledge). But what information technology doesn't do well is to adapt quickly to our changing knowledge needs. Depending on technology for storage and retrieval may lead us to managing irrelevant knowledge.

Mark Twain showed that people cannot absolutely master knowledge, any more than he and other pilots could master the Mississippi River. The best a steamboat pilot in 1850 could do was to become and remain *knowledgeable*. Pilots had to master their memory, develop piloting skills, and cultivate a sense of self-confidence, and they relied heavily on their peers. In *Life on the Mississippi,* acquiring knowledge meant immersion and constant learning and relearning the river. The pilots were not knowledge receptacles or static knowledge resources: they were the conduits of that energy. Often in our corporate settings, knowledge is portrayed as an object, something that should be extracted, transformed, stored, and passed around using information technology. Knowledge in the information (or knowledge) age is often seen as an artifact separated from the creator, the user, and the context of both. Mark Twain's story showed how knowledge is instead inseparable from people and their experience. Knowledge management initiatives and information professionals and managers should focus *least* on technology and *most* on understanding an organization's unique information and knowledge needs. Perhaps knowledge management initiatives should seek the direction of educators, human resource managers, and information behavior researchers before inviting IT departments and vendors to buy and support the latest and greatest systems. The chances are great that some sort of knowledge management system already exists in an organization even with rudimentary technology (such as the steamboat pilots had), and likely it is successful (otherwise, the organization would likely flounder and people could not get their work done).

On the right is a summary of knowledge management issues as they were dealt with in *Life on the Mississippi* versus today.

Issue	Twain's Era	Present
What is the challenge?	How to transfer knowledge from one person to another within an organization.	Same
Disseminating business knowledge	Expert to apprentice, person to person.	An emphasis is on computer networks and sophisticated software and *then* person to person.
Keeping knowledge within the organization	A union was formed to maintain and disseminate knowledge within the organization.	Knowledge often disseminated widely, available to many employees; often used to train others outside of the organization; many organizations depend on the knowledge and expertise of outside groups to supply goods and services without which the organization could not function.
What should knowledge management be?	Any distinction between learning and knowledge management appeared to be missing. Pilots were expected to be exceptionally knowledgeable about the river, how to read it, where the crossing points were, and so on. They learned and to an extent relearned their craft by immersion in it.	Knowledge is the means of production in the information economy. Some companies consider themselves knowledge-producing companies.
When can it or should it be done?	Pilots required constant updates of knowledge and information.	Depends. If there is knowledge we can predict a worker will need, then we might be able to store and provide it on demand. However, information technology so far cannot anticipate unknown or unarticulated information needs.
Where does knowledge management take place?	The WBBA used a simple technology of documenting river news in the lockboxes. Pilots depended upon each other for news of river conditions. River guides known as "navigators" were published beginning about 1828.[i]	With information technology, we can easily deliver information that some of us refer to as knowledge. Ideally, we seem to want knowledge management systems to deliver knowledge to make a worker instantly knowledgeable whenever and wherever necessary.
Why is knowledge management important?	It was essential for river safety, helped reduce fatal accidents, fines on pilots and owners, and the revocation of pilot's licenses. It helped the WBBA gain a bargaining advantage against the owners and their agents (the captains) thus enabling pilots to keep their wages and reputation for quality high, and in part made the licensing of new pilots the association's responsibility.[ii]	Considered essential to create or maintain a competitive advantage in your market.
Who is responsible for knowledge management?	The pilots themselves were responsible. They were motivated by economic concerns, river traffic safety, and the reputation of their profession.	Apparently, this has yet to be resolved. For some of us, it is a management responsibility. For others, it is an exercise for advanced technology.
Who owns knowledge on the job?	Each individual pilot owned knowledge and shared it with peers. The WBBA appeared to have ownership of certain kinds of river piloting knowledge, but the owners (management) did not.	The corporation that employs the worker often claims ownership of the knowledge that worker uses or creates. If that is true, how should we deal with ownership and management of knowledge when we outsource important work?

[i] Horwitz, 265.
[ii] Horwitz, 262.

Elizabeth Orna, in her powerful book *Practical Information Policies*, wrote that in 1999 there was "a particularly determined IT (information technology) attempt to take over the knowledge management bandwagon."[lxiv] She quoted Davenport and Prusak's *Information Ecology* (1997), capturing the *technophilia* (Orna's term) many of our companies continue to have: "our fascination with technology has made us forget the key purpose of information: to inform people."[lxv] In 2005, it appears that IT has succeeded. Perhaps Mark Twain's stories might challenge us to reflect on just how far we have actually progressed in piloting our way along the ever-changing, ever-flowing river of human knowledge and information. As we progress in this field, we should take time to identify and separate the core issues of knowledge management from the potential of information technology to address those issues.

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4 Steps to Creating a Knowledge Sharing Plan

By Libby Trudell

If you've thought about taking action to encourage knowledge sharing in your organization, but aren't sure how to get started, you're not alone. Changing behavior is difficult, and it doesn't happen overnight. One way you can begin is to initiate and model "knowledge sharing behavior." This article describes four steps for planning a pilot project, drawn from experience in the knowledge sharing trenches.

That experience started in 2001, when I attended the SLA Knowledge Champions Institute, led by Nancy Dixon, author of *Common Knowledge*. The experience became even more valuable when I became part of an internal knowledge council as Dialog's "knowledge sponsor" later the same year.

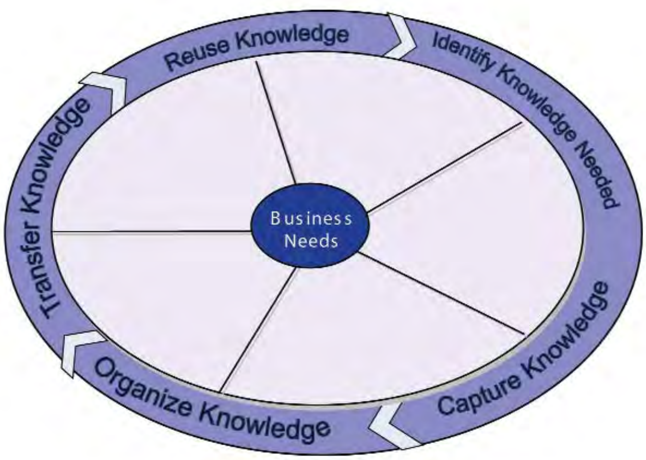
Our group of knowledge sponsors strove to stimulate knowledge sharing, both within our own business units and across the business unit boundaries. There were successes but, not surprisingly, we learned that it is hard work. It takes continued focus on motivating and rewarding knowledge sharing behavior. We learned also that a small project could sometimes have a significant effect on the organization. This experience reinforced my belief that information professionals are uniquely well positioned both to initiate knowledge sharing programs and to model knowledge sharing behavior.

The What and Why of Knowledge Sharing

Most of us have a general understanding of what knowledge sharing is, but it has a particular emphasis in the workplace. In *Common Knowledge*, Dixon characterizes it as a process for intentionally translating work experience into shared or common knowledge (Dixon, 2000). There are many ways to achieve knowledge sharing and, certainly, no single best practice. However, as illustrated in the basic Knowledge Sharing Circle (Figure 1), knowledge sharing requires activities to purposefully capture knowledge and encourage its transfer to and reuse by other parties.

Most importantly, knowledge sharing is meaningful when these activities are focused around and driven by

Figure 1: Knowledge Sharing Circle



actual business needs, which is shown as the central core of the process.

Clearly, the process of knowledge sharing is not an end in itself—it is a means to achieve business objectives. The continuous transfer of work experience across the organization over time can create competitive advantage for existing operations, time to market, or customer satisfaction.

The Four-Step Process

As illustrated in Figure 2, the process of building a knowledge-sharing plan includes 1) identifying business needs, 2) understanding and matching knowledge sharing activities to needs, 3) selecting appropriate tools, and 4) modeling knowledge sharing behavior. Throughout, the four steps must be supported by ongoing communication about the business impact, to reinforce the process.

Step 1: Start with Business Needs

The plan must start with an analysis of business needs and be designed to measure impact on those needs, even if only anecdotally. How do you identify those business needs that might be enabled or supported by knowledge sharing activities?

Begin with the assumption that the activities of business in each functional area are, fundamentally, either to come up with new ideas or to improve implementation and processes. Business consultant Laurie Kauffman suggests that business needs can arise in the gap between the status quo and the activities of generating better ideas or a more effective process. Clearly, the most important business needs tie to the organization's strategic and financial objectives. To identify these gaps, you have to "understand what different departments actually do and how their work supports the financial health of the organization as a whole." (Kaufmann, 2004).

One technique for this is to survey the landscape of existing activities and interview executives or their designees. Of course, each functional group in the organization has a strategic plan, which lays out its own objectives, with significant links to the corporate strategy. Understanding a strategic plan is the most immediate way to identify areas of business need.

Remember that the very requests for information coming to the information center, on topics such as the existence and utility of existing technologies, market intelligence, and customer and competitor research, may already highlight some of the key gaps. Therefore, the information center, by virtue of its role as the point of contact for many functional areas in the organization, is uniquely positioned to spot emerging business needs at an early stage.

Step 2: Understand KS Activities

While the process of identifying business needs may already be an ongoing part of managing your information services, to move forward with your plan, you next need to identify knowledge sharing activities that can have an impact on those business needs. Many types of activities can contribute to the cycle of knowledge transfer and reuse. Some of them are activities that may already be in use in your organization, but others will be new concepts to your constituency. Let's look at some examples.

Communities of Practice. You would think that people who can benefit from drawing on each other's expertise on the job would find each other naturally, but it isn't always the case. Due to the highly distributed or global nature of so many organizations, people don't necessarily come into contact. A community of practice can help encourage interaction among individuals who support a common project or initiative even though they may be in different departments or organizations.

Leverage in/Leverage out. Although individual knowledge is an important asset, the best leverage is in transferring knowledge or experience from one team to another. And, the opportunities are greatest for knowledge transfer when project teams are forming or disbanding.

• *Leverage in*. Each time a new initiative is begun, employees should seek out others in their organization or in other companies who have relevant experience. This ensures that the team gets to acquire and build on previous experience.

• *Leverage out*. Each time an initiative is completed, employees document or disseminate learning and experience so others can reuse it. This guarantees that what went well—and, just as important, what didn't—is common knowledge for the next project team.

Dixon notes the approach used in the U.S. Army called "After Action Review." Everyone involved in an action is gathered together immedi-

Figure 2: Knowledge Sharing Planning Process

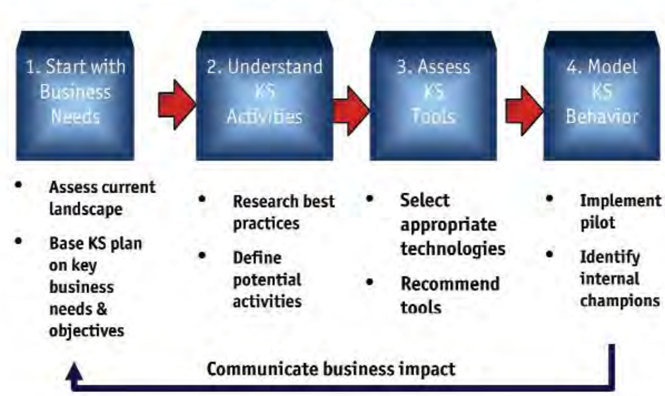


Figure 3: Knowledge Sharing Activities for Business Needs

Business KS Needs Activities	Redesign Intranet	Standardize licensing process
Community of Practice		
Best Practice Conference		
Research/Re-use		
Leverage in/out.		
Knowledge Council		

ately following completion of an action, regardless of rank, and gives feedback on three simple questions: What was supposed to happen? What did happen? What accounts for the difference? (Dixon, 2000)

Research and Reuse. Here, the focus is on encouraging people to archive and share templates and documents, as well as to reuse standardized formats. This may be aided by a reward or recognition system. People will also be motivated by experiencing increased productivity, as they learn that what you put in, you often get back. Ultimately, a document management system could be required, but this knowledge sharing activity can get started simply by posting materials such as business plans, reports, and presentations to a shared drive or intranet page.

Best Practices and Benchmarking. Best practice conferences provide a focused opportunity for cross-functional interaction and relationship building that often leads to less structured knowledge sharing among the participants in the future. One goal is to encourage participants to just pick up the phone and talk to each other. Such events can center on mining the lessons learned from a major initiative or pulling together people in similar functional groups to share their best practices.

Benchmarking typically implies going outside the organization to gain an understanding of industry best practices. Often this is a research-driven effort that can be guided by the information center.

Knowledge Councils. A knowledge council is a cross-disciplinary group, typically, comprised of fairly senior staff, whose purpose is to break down functional silos. The objective is for council members to identify links and connections across the organization that might not otherwise surface in daily interactions. These groups can help with the process of identifying business needs, disseminating ideas, championing projects, and modeling knowledge sharing behavior. This activity is challenging because this role is no one's primary job and it's easy to lose momentum. Typically, it needs executive level sponsorship to be effective.

Matching Needs and Activities

With a list of business needs, and a list of potential knowledge sharing activities to choose from, as now illustrated in the Knowledge Sharing Circle (Figure 4), you have the information needed to pick a potential knowledge-sharing project. Ask yourself where there is a match between a critical business need and a knowledge sharing activity.

Creating a simple matrix is one way to easily review the options (Figure 3).

Some business needs can be met with very simple solutions, while others will require an investment in additional resources. If you can identify a simple project that can be achieved with available resources and has the potential to have an impact on the business, that's a great starting point. You may identify other categories of activities that could be added to the Knowledge Sharing Circle.

Step 3: Knowledge Sharing Tools

Now that the knowledge-sharing objective has been identified, you are ready for step three, selecting tools or technologies to support your project. Sometimes a project can move forward without support from a technology tool, but often knowledge sharing activities are enabled by software applications. A few examples are:

- Web conferencing
- E-rooms
- Intranets
- Inquiry tracking database
- Document management system
- Directory of internal experts
- Taxonomy
- Internal blogs and wikis
- Customer/contact relationship management systems

These tools may already be available within your organization, and it certainly facilitates implementation if you choose a project that can rely on existing technical infrastructure. If a new technology is required, successful implementation will necessitate collaborating.

Some items on this list, such as maintaining a database of inquiries or searches, can be handled just by the information center. Effective deployment of other tools will provide an opportunity to use your collaborative skills by working with other departments within your organization, such as:

- Human Resources, to create a directory of staff expertise.
- Marketing to make an archive of product literature and organizational documents.
- Product development or research and development to make a collection of project reports.
- IT to create Web-enabled training materials.

Select tools after defining the business needs and anticipated activities, but remember that these tools are the means, not the starting point. If you start

Figure 4: Knowledge Sharing Circle with Activities

implementing tools before you have a clear business need to address, the implementation is likely to falter through lack of support and focus.

Step 4: Model Knowledge Sharing Behavior

Now that the foundation is laid, the real opportunity is in taking on a project that allows you to model knowledge sharing behavior. It makes sense to start with something small, and build from there. After assessing your list of business needs, choose a pilot project in which you or the Information Center (IC) can collaborate with other departments, and where there is a clearly defined functional user or department who will benefit.

Pilot Example

As an example of a how a pilot might flow, let's look at a project to improve internal document access, adapted from a Quantum2 workshop developed by Alice Redmond-Neal of Data Harmony.

1. **Business need.** The VP of R&D has expressed a need to encourage reuse of internal research papers, which requires making them more accessible. To improve access, he would like to enable and direct all document authors to do self-indexing as a requirement of authorship.

2. **Knowledge Sharing Activity**. After discussion of possible implementation options, the VP agrees on an objective to create a shared repository, and further requires that no document be added to the repository until it has been indexed by its author.

3. **Knowledge Sharing Tools**. Now the information center must work with the IT department to identify and gain acceptance for a software tool. Bringing in new software applications can be challenging and championship by the R&D department manager, for whom this is a high priority, will be important.

It's understood that not everyone will jump at the opportunity to take on this new task. Some authors may not understand the use of indexing, or how to use the controlled terms. Some may feel it takes up too much of their time. Another obstacle may be that some feel strong personal ownership of documents and are reluctant to make them available for sharing. Motivating knowledge workers who create documents is key to the project's success.

4. **Information center role and collaboration**. The information center can develop a controlled vocabulary suited to each business activity and train internal authors about using the indexing process. The information center also can work with HR to create a reward and recognition system for authors. There should be incentives to comply, as well as recognition and reward for sharing documents that reuse these knowledge assets. Motivational strategies can be applied on individual, team and department levels. One organization developed a point system to track who created and who reused knowledge that included in what ways and how many times a single document was retrieved and used. Metrics like these provide the basis for rewards and prove the value of the project.

The Case for Knowledge Sharing

In conclusion, it's obvious there are many benefits for information professionals in initiating and leading knowledge sharing initiatives within the organization. Some of these include:

- The successful transfer of critical business knowledge.
- A potential for ROI through time saved and redirected efforts through improved access to information, reduced project cycle time and reduced costs.
- An opportunity for building relationships through training and support of users.
- Creation of useful knowledge repositories administered by the information center.
- Collaboration across organizational boundaries through partnership with HR to create rewards and recognize knowledge sharing behaviors.
- Partnership with corporate communications to develop a plan for ongoing internal dissemination of stories about knowledge sharing and business results.

Any project you decide to undertake offers—indeed, often requires—partnership with other parts of the organization for success. This is an opportunity to identify people within the organization who are also passionate about knowledge sharing.

Combining visible reward and recognition with proactive communication of business results is a key to effecting culture change and encouraging knowledge sharing behavior. With a tangible return on investment, the knowledge sharing activities will have clear organizational impact.

The final and, perhaps, most important benefit for the information center, is that assuming a leadership role generates an opportunity to demonstrate the value and return on investment for the information center itself.

Libby Trudell is senior vice president, information professional development, Thomson Dialog, responsible for programs including the Quantum2 leadership development program, Dialog's graduate education program for library schools and customer advisory boards. Prior positions at Dialog include: vice president, product management; vice president, strategic planning; senior director, product marketing; director, marketing and customer service; manager, marketing. Prior to Dialog she was online services manager, Cooperative Library Agency for Systems & Services; OCLC coordinator/research analyst, NELINET; serials cataloger, Boston Theological Institute. She has a BA from Tufts University and MLS from Simmons College. She serves on the SLA Board of Directors as Chapter Cabinet Chair-Elect, and is Chair of the IT Division's Communications Section. Previous SLA roles include the Nominating Committee; president, program director, and membership chair of San Andreas Chapter, and Strategic Planning Committee chair for the IT Division.

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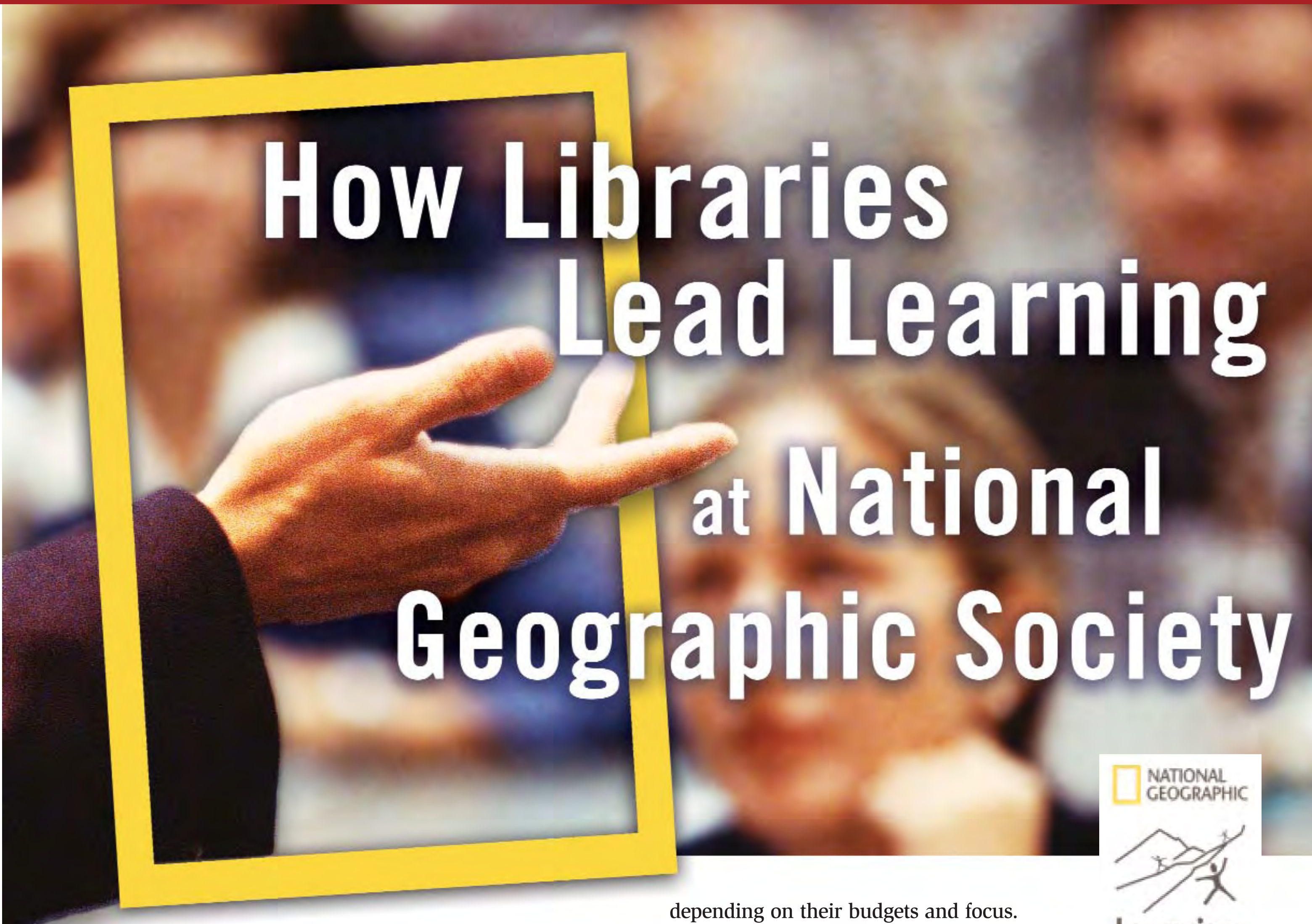


How Libraries Lead Learning at National Geographic Society

By Susan Fifer Canby

This is the story of how librarians at National Geographic Society apply their training and collaboration skills each day to coordinate, manage, and evolve the Society's internal university, National Geographic Learning Systems. While the Society relied on librarians to teach them research skills and how to filter information, at first they didn't expect us to take on creating an umbrella for all internal learning at the Geographic.

Where We Started

Various divisions within the organization offered training courses to the staff, but they could be located only by guessing what division site might offer it. Libraries and Information Services, Information Systems and Technology (IS/IT), and Human Resources (HR) were the principle offerings. IS/IT offered mostly e-learning from a particular vendor. There was no central learning strategy or umbrella that provided easy access to the staff. There was no way for HR to capture information in the personnel files of staff who took training. The Geographic did provide tuition assistance for college-level training, and individual departments approved training, depending on their budgets and focus.

In the fall of 2002, our new CFO called upon a few of his senior management team including Libraries and Information Services to work with the society's other corporate services to develop an internal university we would call National Geographic Learning Systems, or NGLS.

Having struggled unsuccessfully for years to apply technical solutions to introduce knowledge management, we were eager to see if knowledge management could be addressed from a cultural perspective. The CFO wanted to reduce the cost of external training and stimulate his managers to work together as a team.

From the beginning LIS took the lead striving to build a cross-divisional team with the idea that many hands could make light work. We had extensive training experience and were interested in providing a new way for employees to share their knowledge to meet the changing needs of the society.

Most internal universities are created to encourage:

- Improved recruitment. Often candi-

Susan Fifer Canby, is vice president, libraries and information services, at the National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C.

dates will say that learning opportunities are as important as higher compensation.

- Increased innovation. An educated staff is more likely to be innovative, with implications for the bottom line.
- Reduced turnover through high morale and internal career mobility.
- Employee advancement. Programs don't have to be mandatory for employees to know that learning is a good path to increased pay and responsibility.

NGLS differs from many corporate universities in that it uses the society's significant internal knowledge and skill sets, focuses on general and specialized skills needed to work at National Geographic, and is managed in a collaborative, decentralized manner rather than by HR.

Jumpstart the Process

After developing a curriculum and business strategy, we realized we could use some coaching to jumpstart this effort. We needed an independent voice to help us determine how to engage and facilitate managers to teach (most had never taught before), how to measure results, how to create a positive buzz as we began a cultural change, how to identify the long-term goals and how to encourage participation. Working with a consultant, we generated the following vision:

- Create a culture of continuous learning within the organization that would lead to improved services to members and customers.
- Develop a forum for capturing and sharing internal expertise and knowledge.
- Assess and improve work processes and develop a shared vocabulary.
- Strengthen the leadership and training skills of staff.
- Increase employees' professional, editorial, and technical competencies.
- Develop flexible staff who could evolve their skills as the organization changed.

The CFO asked each manager in Corporate Services to take on a training role to teach the Employee Essentials classes. These are classes we thought would be useful to any employee: Presentation, Project Management, Running Effective Meetings, Time Management, Understanding the Financial System, Empowerment. Mangers worked with each other to outline classes. Then, with coaching from the consultant, we took "train the trainer" classes from HR to ensure classes were crisp and interactive.

Meanwhile LIS utilized its organizational strengths to build the Web site, add class and faculty descriptions, and develop a training calendar. Classes were scheduled and tested. LIS set up the structure and processes and recruited internal skills to support NGLS.

A staff designer created the logo for branding the site, a PowerPoint presentation, handouts, and marketing and promotional materials. The team wanted to impart the ideas of learning as a continuous process, that all of us are in it together, that there are "summits" like Mt. Everest to reach. IS/IT built a computer training room, and we also identified other training spaces in the organization that could be used. LIS converted part of its periodical room into a new training space.

As the "Employee Essentials" were being organized, the libraries collaborated with HR, IS/IT, and Building Services to offer new staff a coordinated first day of training. HR followed up with Civil Treatment for staff and managers. With a Web site dedicated to learning, we started aggregating training under the umbrella of the NGLS training calendar.

Expanded Course Offerings

In 2003, NGLS began with "Employee Essentials," a consolidated orientation, as well as the libraries' research classes. By 2004, we recruited faculty to teach "Proofreading," taught by our best internal proofreader; "Negotiation Skills" taught by senior legal counsel; and "Handling Original Collection Materials," taught by our conservator.

In 2005 our archivist began offering "High Adventure: A History of the Geographic"; a senior NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC magazine researcher taught an "Introduction to the NG Style Manual"; a senior administrative assistant offered "Networking and Creating Contacts"; a development staff member added a course on "Managing Federal Grants"; and our vice president for financial planning taught "Developing Capital Projects that Sell." And a librarian introduced CPR training.

In 2006 we persuaded a cartographer to teach "Map Reading Skills" and a digital lab technician to teach "Adobe Photoshop." LIS knew the program was getting momentum when staff began to approach us to teach courses they wished to share, e.g. "Quark Xpress," "Grant Writing," and "World Music."

Focus on Teaching

Part of the faculty recruitment strategy is to coach the trainer during the class development stage, provide administrative process, model effective classes, and offer feedback regularly.

- Train the Trainer. We coached new faculty on how to make their courses interactive and blend with other courses, and provided a test bed. HR followed up with a formal three-part session to train new faculty to teach what they know, videotaping and evaluating their performances.
- Consistency. We created standardized forms to help faculty work through the elements of the classes including how the class supports the society's goals, a resume form, a checklist for teaching, class evaluation forms, NGLS logo, and presentation templates. We identified speakers' aids and materials. And as people taught, they created new forms for goal setting, agendas, class handouts and more. We linked additional material from the Web site, supporting our goal to speak a common "language."
- Registration and scheduling. We recruited various administrative staff, who were pros with the HR business systems software, to accept registrations, send class reminders, track attendance, schedule classes and update the calendar, order water and supplies for classes, create certificates, and notify managers of classes taken by their staff annually for performance appraisals.
- Feedback. Internal market research staff were willing to crunch the numbers on class attendance and feedback and to survey staff periodically.
- Budget. Purchasing agreed to order small Geographic flags for all staff completing Employee Essentials.
- Learning Shelf. LIS set up a reserve shelf for materials referenced in classes.
- Marketing. LIS consulted with faculty on ways to promote their classes and to plan classes for the calendar three months in advance.
- Recognition. The CFO publicly recognized at one of his "all hands meetings" those who reached a "summit" with a Geographic flag and certificate and a notation in their HR files.

Learning Day

Once the faculty and processes were in place, we needed to alert staff that the culture was to change—that learning was to be a part of all our jobs. We held the first Learning Day in 2003 with the theme of "Back to School!" We gathered a cross-divisional group interested in putting together a continental breakfast, providing some entertainment, locating prizes, creating and staffing informational booths, marketing the story, blowing up balloons, and handling all the tasks necessary to make a festive offering.

Annual Learning Days have followed, each with a new theme and growing attendance. It has become a great way to involve faculty, alert staff to new offerings, sign up people for classes they want to take, and remind staff about learning and the Society's investment in them. Themes to date and attendance figures:

- Learning Day Fall, 2003: "Back to School" drew 300 staff.
- Learning Day Fall, 2004: "NG Olympics" drew more than 500.
- Learning Day Spring, 2006: "Puzzling Learning" enticed the biggest turnout to date with more than 600 attendees!

Cultures Don't Change Easily

NGLS hasn't been without its stumbles. Early hurdles included getting the team to work together and encouraging departments to see NGLS as the learning umbrella, particularly HR which was used to going it alone. With no staff or budget for this project and only one senior champion, it was hard to get traction at first.

After a year or two, working closely with HR, we got funding to offer managers e-learning courses from two training ven-

dors with appealing titles such as: "Essential Skills for Tomorrow's Managers," "Going from Management to Leadership," "How to Overcome Negativity in the Workplace," "Delegation skills," "Confronting Problem Performance," "360 Performance Appraisals," "Leadership Skills for Women," and "Managing Others Through Change." Managers demonstrated very little interest in tackling these courses by themselves at their computers and after a year we decided to not renew the contracts. However e-learning continues to appeal to staff for technical classes.

NGLS administration is decentralized and depends to some degree on the passion of the faculty. LIS reminds the faculty about scheduling their classes, and because they don't have to recruit students, it encourages them that people want to learn from them. The biggest push-backs have been addressing employees' concerns that managers will think they have discretionary time if they take time out to take training. Some managers still don't want to encourage their staff to take what they see as "softer" training. We deal with ensuring that the pacing is right, content stays fresh, and scheduling and marketing of classes is effective with few cancellations or low-class attendance.

We've had results

During the program we have:

- Developed and maintained a learning Web site.
- Invested in a new training center, NG Learning Lab.
- Developed a certification and reward strategy at CFO's quarterly meetings and certificates for staffs' "I-love-me walls."
- Developed an administration strategy and process for recording learning in HR files
- Developed a common language between staff and departments on topics taught.

In addition:

- Staff now makes better use of Corporate Services, largely due to better orientation.
- Individual and unit goals are incorporated into planning process.
- Faculty demonstrates greater confidence in teaching and have become 'knowledge nodes.'
- Increased collaboration and sharing more quickly resolves problems between managers.
- The faculty has expanded to meet the increased demand (doubled in three years from 18 to 40 faculty)
- Staff from all parts of the organization take training.
- The intranet is the top source of awareness of NGLS classes.

Market Research

It is reassuring to read that we continue to make significant strides in terms of positive responses for all satisfaction attributes.

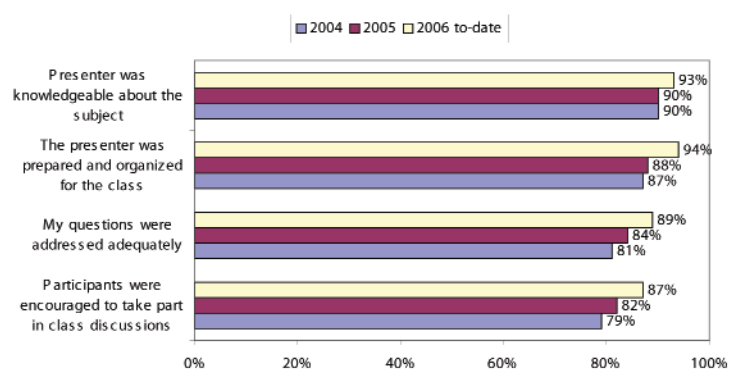
For instance in June 2006:

- All four Overall Satisfaction elements received significantly higher agreement ratings in 2006 to-date compared to the already strong ratings given in 2004 and 2005. Learning useful information was the top-rated satisfaction attribute (86 percent "strongly agree") in 2006 to-date.
- We also saw significant increases in the already highly rated attributes of the presenter being organized and prepared for class (94 percent "strongly agree"), questions were adequately addressed (89 percent "strongly agree"), and participants were encouraged to take part in class discussions (87 percent "strongly agree") in 2006 to-date compared to 2004 and 2005.

- In the instructor category, participants continue to be nearly universal in 2006 to-date in their strong agreement that the presenter was knowledgeable about the class subject and that the instructor was prepared and organized for class. We also saw significant jumps in the number of participants who were very likely to strongly agree that participants were encouraged to join in class discussions, and that their questions were adequately addressed in 2006 to-date compared to 2004 and 2005.

Agreement on Instructor Attributes

% saying they "Strongly Agree"



Keeping learning fresh:

Even with a decentralized strategy, LIS continues to assert leadership to ensure that NGLS:

- Sets annual goals and measures results
- Strives to inculcate learning into the formal HR performance appraisal process
- Reduces Society outside education budgets
- Aims for at least 90% positive feedback on market research
- Improves marketing support to increase class attendance
- Identifies and recruits new trainers and support new faculty who aspire to share knowledge
- Holds annual faculty meetings to review successes and their impact on the Geographic, to streamline processes, and provide an opportunity to discuss and ask questions
- Involves new staff in Learning Day and evolves learning to the next level.

In summary:

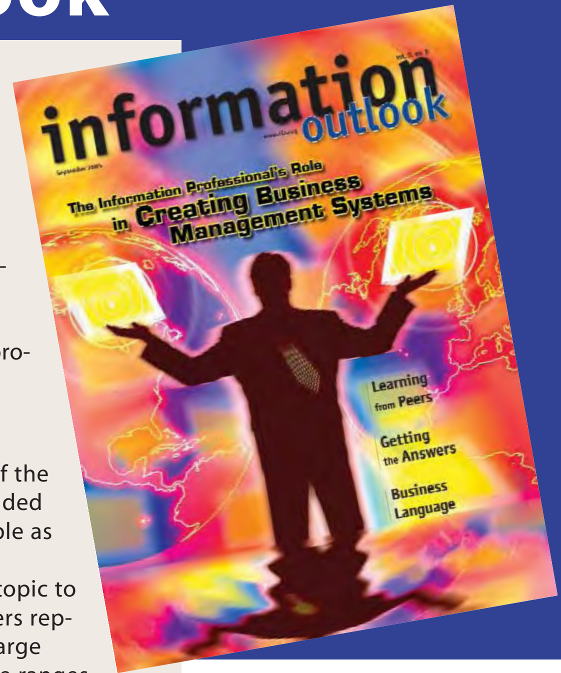
Librarians are logical leaders in the learning arena, because they can use their extensive training, web, and networking skills to help the staff of their organizations share knowledge, identify nodes of expertise, and continue to learn new skills necessary to keep their organizations competitive for the future.

How to Write for Information Outlook

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

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

We welcome proposals for articles of interest to information professionals.



Topics

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

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

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

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

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

A note to vendors and service providers

In many cases you may have the best and most current information on a topic. We invite you to share that expertise with our readers, to advance the body of knowledge of the profession. But—we'll insist that your articles do not promote your business or claim that your product or service is the only solution to a given problem. Expanded writers guidelines are at www.sla.org/content/Shop/Information/writingforio/index.cfm.

To submit a proposal…

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

Editorial Calendar

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

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

Issue	Cover Article	Deadline
October 2006	**Web searching** Possible topics: Meta directories, using online search engines, the best sites for various content areas.	Aug. 11, 2006
November 2006	**Copyright** Possible topics: Global considerations, permissions, new laws and regulations	Sept. 8, 2006
December 2006	**Managing** Possible topics: Planning, budgeting, supervising a staff, purchasing.	Oct. 6, 2006

coming events

September 2006

Digital Resources in the Humanities and Arts
3-6 September 2006
Totnes, Devon, UK
http://www.ahds.ac.uk/drha2006/index.php?cf=5

I-KNOW: 6th International Conference on Knowledge Management
6-8 September 2006
Graz, Austria
http://i-know.know-center.tugraz.at/

10th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries
European Association of Health Information and Libraries (EAHIL)
11-16 September 2006
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
http://www.eahilconfcluj.ro/

CLICK U Live!
Project Management for Solo Librarians – Part I
13 September 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

Bringing Text Alive: The Future of Scholarship, Pedagogy, and Electronic Publication
Text Creation Partnership
14-17 September 2006
Ann Arbor, MI, USA
http://www.lib.umich.edu/tcp/conference

ALIA 2006 Biennial Conference Australian Library and Information Association
19-22 September 2006
Perth, Australia
http://conferences.alia.org.au/alia2006/

CLICK U Live!
Project Management for Solo Librarians – Part II
27 September 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

October 2006

LIANZA Conference 2006
Library & Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa
8-11 October 2006
Wellington, New Zealand
http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2006/

Internet Librarian International
Information Today
16-17 October 2006
London, UK
http://www.internet-librarian.com/index.shtml/

Internet Librarian 2006
Information Today
23-25 October 2006
Monterey, CA, USA
http://www.infotoday.com/il2006

2006 actKM Conference
actKM Forum
25-26 October 2006
Canberra, Australia
http://www.actkm.org/actkm_2006_conference.php

Library Assessment Conference
ARL, UVa, University of Washington
25-27 October 2006
Charlottesville, VA, USA
http://www.arl.org/stats/laconf.html

International Conference on Multidisciplinary Information Sciences & Technologies
University of Extremedura and the Open Institute of Knowledge
25-28 October 2006
Mérida, Spain
http://www.instac.es/inscit2006

2006 LITA National Forum
Library & Information Technology Association
26-29 October 2006
Nashville, TN, USA
http://www.ala.org/ala/lita/litaevents/litanationalforum2006nashvilletn/06_Call.pdf

KMWorld & Intranets 2006
Information Today
31 October-2 November 2006
San Jose, CA, USA
http://www.kmworld.com/kmw06

November 2006

ASIS&T 2006 Annual Meeting
American Society of Information Science and Technology
3-9 November 2006
Austin, TX, USA
http://www.asis.org/Conferences/AM06/am06call.html

ECM West Conference & Expo
AIIM
6-8 November 2006
San Jose, CA, USA
http://ecmwest.com/ecmwest/v42/index.cvn?id=10000&p_navID=9

CLICK U Live!
Writing for Publication
7 November 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

Sofia 2006
Various Universities
8-10 November 2006
Sofia, Bulgaria
http://slim.emporia.edu/globenet/Sofia2006

CLICK U Live!
The Value of Corporate Libraries
22 November 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

Online Information 2006
28-30 November 2006
London, UK
http://www.online-information.co.uk

December 2006

New Librarians' Symposium 2006
Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)
1-2 December 2006
Sydney, Australia
http://conferences.alia.org.au/newlibrarian2006/

Eighth International Conference on Grey Literature
4-5 December 2006
New Orleans, LA, USA
http://www.textrelease.com/pages/2/index.htm

International Conference on Digital Libraries (ICDL 2006)
The Energy and Resources Institute
5-8 December 2006
New Delhi, India
http://static.teriin.org/events/icdl/

50th Anniversary - Golden Relection & Directions
Military Librarians Workshop
Dec 4-8, 2006
http://www.sla.org/division/dmil/index.html

CLICK U Live!
Copyright for the Corporate Librarian: The Importance & Consequences of Copyright Issues in the Digital Environment
6 December 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

1st International Conference on Digital Information Management
Digital Information Research Foundation and Christ College
6-8 December 2006
Bangalore, India
http://www.icdim.org

CLICK U Live!
Taxonomy Technologies and Successes: Techniques & Systems for Automated Classification
13 December 2006
www.sla.org/clickulive

index of advertisers

Digital Rights Permissions

By Lesley Ellen Harris

Obtaining permission to use digital content should generally be approached in the same manner as analogue or traditional content. In any digital project, whether simply including a photograph or article on your Web site, or developing an entire Web site or DVD, or creating a digital archive, permission-wise, you need to consider the following:

1. **Are you using a work that is protected by copyright?** Digital and non-digital works are equally protected by copyright. Follow the rule that content on the Internet is protected by copyright unless there is information associated with the content that states otherwise.

2. **Is the duration of copyright still running or is the work in the public domain?** In the U.S., copyright protection lasts 70 years after the author's death. In some countries, duration is only life-plus-50. When using work on a Web site, get permission for life-plus-70 to cover yourself in all countries.

3. **Is the work an adaptation or translation of a public domain work?** Adaptations and translations may be copyright-protected works even if they are based on public domain works. Generally, digitizing a work will not in itself result in a new copyright-protected work. However, if it is more than a mere digitization and there are modifications to the work, there may be a new copyright-protected work. In this situation, you may need to obtain permission from both the original/underlying work, and the new digital work.

4. **Are there underlying works for which permission is needed?** Digital works are by their very nature composed of many layers of rights and different kinds of copyright-protected works. Works like Web site content, CDs or DVDs, video games, and educational software, often consist of various types of works from literary (including computer software/code) to artistic to musical to audiovisual. Each of these works must be cleared when creating a multimedia work or when reproducing a part of that work. Different works may have different copyright durations, and different ownership and authorship.

5. **Are you using a substantial portion of a work?** Generally, very small uses of works like quotes do not require permission. It is more difficult to use a "small" portion of a photograph or painting.

6. **Are you using the work in a copyright sense?** Reproducing, publishing, performing in public, or adapting a work are copyright uses. Also, including content on a DVD or Web site or digital archive are copyright uses.

7. **Is there an exception in the law that exempts you from obtaining permission?** Exceptions are generally limited and vary from country-to-country. If in doubt about whether an exception applies to your situation, or if you need to be completely risk free, obtain permission.

8. **Are you using the work in a country where an author has moral rights?** If so, are you modifying the work in a manner that may be prejudicial to the honor or reputation of the author, and does the author's name appear in association with the work? In the U.S., moral rights only attach to authors of works of fine art. However, in many countries, authors of all copyright-protected works have moral rights. Even mere digitization of a work may result in a modification of that work and may harm the reputation of an author. Thus, moral rights may have an even greater role in the digital world. If possible, obtain a waiver of moral rights if you are using the work on a worldwide basis.

Negotiating with Digital Rights Owners

Some unique considerations may arise when negotiating the permissions you need for using content in a digital format. These include the following:

1. If you are obtaining permission to use content in a digital format, also consider obtaining some traditional rights. For example, you may want to promote some of the content through print publications and may require certain print rights.

2. Your permission to use the content on a Web site, for example, may not include the right to digitally archive that same content on a DVD or on the Internet. Consider all digital rights you may need at your initial negotiations with the rights holder. It is always better to obtain more rights than what you need than to have to later negotiate further rights for use of the same works.

3. The value of digital content is still not established and is always a

Lesley Ellen Harris is a copyright lawyer/consultant who works on legal, business, and strategic issues in the publishing, content, entertainment, Internet, and information industries. She is the editor of the print newsletter, The Copyright and New Media Law Newsletter, in its 10th year of publication in 2006. If you would like a sample copy of this newsletter, e-mail: contact@copyrightlaws.com.

She also is a professor at SLA's Click University where she teaches a number of online courses on copyright, licensing, and managing copyright and digital content for SLA members. SLA members may register for the fall 2006 courses at: http://www.sla.org/content/learn/learnmore/distance/2006cul/index.cfm.

matter of negotiation. Sometimes rights holders see their work as having more value in the future in a digital format and may ask for much more than you are willing to pay for that content. Determine your budget before negotiating rights and place your own value on those works before negotiating with the rights holder.

4. The Internet often means that the content may be reproduced in unlimited quantities. Is the rights holder in agreement with this?

5. Digital content may be reproduced in a variety of quality. Negotiate with the rights holder the quality of the reproduction (to avoid a future complaint by the rights holder and a possible allegation of moral rights infringement.)

6. If you are adapting the content at all or digitizing traditional content, ensure that the rights holder agrees with what you are doing with that content and is fully aware of your use of that content.

7. Consider how you will pay the rights holder. If the rights holder is a book author, for example, he is used to being paid a royalty for the use of his work. However, in the digital world, it often makes more sense to pay a fixed fee, especially if a work is one of 1000's going into a Web site or DVD. This is negotiable.

8. Many rights holders are concerned about unauthorized uses of their works once their works are available in a digital format. What precautions are you taking to protect content, for example, copyright notices, encryption, password-protected sites, and policing authorized uses?

Conclusions

Whether you are clearing copyright in traditional or digital content, a checklist or written permissions policy (as a stand-alone document or as part of a copyright or intellectual property policy), may help ensure that your enterprise has a thorough and consistent approach to clearing digital permissions.

Computer Peripherals Aren't Peripheral

By Stephen Abram

> **Peripheral:** borderline, exterior, external, incidental, inessential, irrelevant, minor, outer, outermost, frivolous, secondary, superficial, surface, tangential, unimportant, exoteric, external, extraneous, extrinsic, foreign, marginal, outermost, outlying, outmost, outward, over, superficial, surface, extraneous, immaterial, impertinent, inadmissible, inapplicable, inapposite, inappropriate, incidental, needless, nonessential, pointless, redundant, superfluous, supplementary, unconnected, unessential, unnecessary, unrelated...
>
> **Frill:** amenity, decoration, doodad, extravagance, fandangle, flounce, foppery, frippery, furbelow, fuss, garbage, gathering, gewgaw, gimcrack, gingerbread, gore, jazz, lace, nice touch, ruffle, spinach, superfluity, thing, tuck...
>
> **Accessory:** accent, addition, adjunct, adornment, appendage, appendix, appliance, appurtenance, attachment, component, decoration, extension, extra, frill, help, supplement, trim, trimming...
>
> **Extravagance:** absurdity, amenity, dissipation, exaggeration, excess, exorbitance, expenditures, folly, frill, immoderation, improvidence, lavishness, luxury, outrageousness, over-indulgence, overdoing, overspending, preposterousness, prodigality, profligacy, profusion, recklessness, squander, squandering, superfluity, unreasonableness, unrestraint, unthrift, waste, wastefulness, wildness...

Sometimes we think of new technology accessories as frills, sometimes even extravagances. Sometimes our host organizations push back about needed tools by asking for excessive justification. With librarians' well-earned reputation as good budget managers and penny pinchers, we sometimes shy away from acquiring the needed innovative and improved accessories for our jobs. I hope this column helps to disavow you of that notion. There are some things that just make our lives easier, and that is good enough justification.

I recall when colleagues would tell me that they were only going to ask for a desktop PC, because they worried that a laptop would be perceived as a wasteful extravagance by their boss or clients! I even remember library colleagues paying extra to have "frills" removed from standard PCs! These included such items as graphics cards, speakers, CD ROM drives, DVD drives, and the like! Luckily, that era has gone by the wayside (except for a few dinosaurs), and we're no longer trapped at our desks in our fundamentally mobile and customer-focused profession. Our tools need to be with us when we travel, even if it's just across the hall to the partner's office or upstairs to the boardroom. The expectation is that you will now work from a hotel, an archive, your local public library collection, etc. You should be able to download, scan, print, and be productive anywhere, anytime. With wireless connectivity, you can even send the answer to your client from almost anywhere, as soon as you find it. Why should they wait for you to return to the office? Client service happens when the client is interacting with us—anywhere—not just where we might be pigeonholed in an old image.

Anyway, there are a few neat tools that I try to have with me all the time and some that I covet and have added to my wish list. This is what makes it fun to shop in those computer stores—looking at all the fine gadgets. Here are a few affordable basics where there's often a lot of choice in style and price-range:

Headphones

I am startled at how few of our colleagues use headphones at work. I hear that some are afraid of appearing to be listening to music. Personally, I have no problem with music in the office, as long as you can see your clients walk in to interrupt your reverie and as long as you can hear the phone. There are plenty of studies showing how music increases creativity and office productivity. Of course, it can also increase office tension since people like different genres of music. Hence, headphones in the cube farm make a nice compromise. I love the customized, free radio channels you can create using Pandora com or last.fm. Bring a little Zen to your workplace.

But music isn't the primary reason I am advocating headphones. How are you going to participate in the multi-media world of knowledge sharing, information and learning if you're tied to reading a screen of dead transcripts or closed captions? How are you going to take advantage of e-learning, distance education, press conferences, podcasts, and streaming media if you don't have the ability to access and experience them in real time?

Headphones can be very cheap, even free if you keep the ones they give away in the airplane. The cool sound dampening headphones are a little pricier but they are my preference. I'm usually trying to hear over the engines of a plane. Your standard work environment may be a little calmer. Your iPod or MP3 player headsets will work too. (And just as an aside, I know folks who use their iPod as a back-up device. They're often more cost-effective than a 40-GB dedicated back up!)

Speakers

Add an inexpensive speaker set to your office desktop set-up. They're easily moved from PC to PC and you can share training events and corporate video announcements. By using speakers, you create a collaboration atmosphere and everyone reacts and shares their views. This is an essential part of information, knowledge, and learning dynamic. Libraries should be exemplars of making the right delivery choices. With so much information coming in formats other than print now, we need to show that we can deliver the stock market briefings and analyses, streaming video press conferences, learning events, and podcasts just as well as we do other formats. They're great for livening up your open houses and training breaks too.

Stephen Abram, MLS is vice president, innovation, for SirsiDynix and the President–elect of SLA. He is an SLA Fellow and the past president of the Ontario Library Association and the immediate past president of the Canadian Library Association. In June 2003, he was awarded SLA's John Cotton Dana Award. This column contains his perspectives and does not necessarily represent the opinions or positions of SirsiDynix. He would love to hear from you at stephen.abram@sirsidynix.com.

Remote Control

I couldn't live with out this cheap little thing! Running about $60, my remote control for PowerPoint presentations is just the thing to look professional and keep your eye on the audience and not on your keyboard. These remotes now don't require installation and run anywhere just by plugging them in to the USB port.

My remote control is a model of simplicity and ease of use. It only does four things: move slide forward, move slide back, blank the screen to return the audience attention to the presenter—plus it's a laser pointer to draw attention to specific points on the slide. Cool. No more being Mr. Mumbly Fingers—head down staring in the dim light at a keyboard, trying to find the key you need—instead of facing your audience. If you do speeches of any length, train, or teach, you should have a remote control and practice at becoming proficient. It won't take long and you'll look like the pro you are.

Portable Scanners

There are some simple pen scanners out there now. They're ultra light and some can wirelessly add scans to your PC (right away or later). Are you often doing research in other libraries, government offices, reading rooms, etc.? Do you have multiple copy cards for the photocopiers or silly bags of nickels, dimes, or quarters? Why? You could be more efficient with a portable scanner and get the information you need quickly, sometimes without even removing the book or journal from the stacks! It takes a little practice, but for the peripatetic researcher it can be a godsend. A simple hand held scanner may pay for itself quickly in copying costs, let alone your valuable time! It's worth trying at the store. When something is sold in airline magazines, it's mainstream.

Wireless Mouse

These new computer mice rid you of the annoyance of the mouse's tail cord. And why do the mouse cords' lengths shrink overnight? Wireless mice can be used as remotes too within short distances. Most of us have thrown away those old-fashioned mouse pads since they are unnecessary with the modern mouse, which has no trackball. If you have PCs that jointly support people who are left-handed and right-handed, it's certainly a whole lot easier to move the mouse around. I just like the clean desktop appearance without cords and pads. It seems more professional to me. As a technology-adept profession, it's good to present an up-to-date image.

PC Projector

How's your PC projector doing? How old is it? I occasionally go to libraries where they're still resuscitating the original PC projector they acquired long ago. These dinosaurs are rolled in on big carts with bags-o-cables. They weigh a ton and support a color palette that is the equivalent of the mid-size package of Crayola™ crayons. Combined with the support of a pixel count that comes from the era of the original Super Mario graphics, the projection quality is pixilated, dim and the colors are wrong. It was an expensive purchase years ago and the lamps are treated with the respect given to the Holy Grail. If you recognize this scenario, it's time to upgrade.

Generally, when librarians are doing presentations it involves PowerPoint and loads of screenshots or actual live Web and software demonstrations. It is important (essential in, my view, for this sort of teaching situation) that the screen images look like they do in real life when people return to their workstations or go on the Web.

Good Web sites and modern software developers invest in making their interactions more effective with nice color palettes, good typefaces, and relevant graphics and pictures. They know this helps with both usability and user satisfaction. If your projector makes the site or software look bad, it makes you look bad. Modern computer projectors are also ultralight, and you can take them anywhere you need to present—so you can connect with your community. The new models support all colors well and can show the tiniest detail as well as the best monitor. You can even correct keystoning and other display irregularities. You can show a DVD in widescreen theater style too. And best of all, prices have dropped a lot. You only get one chance to make a good impression.

My Bigger-ticket Wish-list Items

I don't have any of these things, but if you're looking for a holiday present, I wouldn't refuse one.

Don't you think laminators are fun? Every school librarian that I know is addicted to creating washable, spit-proof signs, covers, learning tools, etc. With cheap color printers, these are attractive, and such things as end-user guides and shortcuts are more usable. There must be a creative use for one of these in special libraries, beyond cool luggage tags.

I also love those cool Smart Boards that you can surf just by touching the full-size projected image of the Web browser. Cool. If you do lot of web demos, these are more necessary than a frill.

My favorite thing I saw at a show lately is a 3D copier. Yes, you can put an object on the platen (like a dinosaur bone) and it makes a 3D version of that object, not a 3D picture—a full-scale replica of the object! You can also feed the copier CAD-CAM designs, and it will create an object that exactly models your virtual design. These are apparently sold to schools, colleges, consumer product companies, and R&D labs. I can't wait for the home version. It's got to be coming to a Toys "R" Us near me soon!

Necessary: all-important, basic, binding, bottom line, cardinal, chief, compelling, compulsory, crucial, de rigueur, decisive, elementary, exigent, expedient, fundamental, imperative, incumbent on, indispensable, mandatory, momentous, needed, needful, nitty-gritty, nub, nuts-and-bolts, obligatory, paramount, plain vanilla, prerequisite, pressing, prime, principal, quintessential, required, requisite, significant, specified, unavoidable, urgent, vital, inescapable, inevasible, inexorable, infallible, undeniable, required, wanted.

So there you have it. Pat yourself on the back if you have most of these needed peripherals that make your life easier, make you more productive, and visibly demonstrate your professionalism and mastery of the technological world.

It's All About the People

By John R. Latham

Technology and its never-ending advancements are great, but information management is still all about the people. Whether it is your customers or stakeholders or your staff they are all individuals who require different handling and motivation.

It is all too easy to give preference to the needs or development of one of these to the detriment of the other. Nerida Hart of Australia's Department of Families, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs, said in a recent profile, that they "decided early on to provide knowledge enhancing services which add value to client decision-making and client capability, and to enhancing skills and knowledge, both among our own staff and among our clients."[1]

What I found so prescient about this was that both staff and clients were included in the knowledge-enhancing services. So often we read of what we must do to add value to the services we provide our clients, but less often about enhancing the development and experiences of staff. It must follow that a motivated and skilled team of professionals is going to provide a better overall service for your clients and stakeholders, than one that just goes through the motions.

One of the biggest challenges for the modern manager is the development of human potential. It is so difficult in these days of reduced staff and increased expectations to take time to concentrate on this aspect of management, but it will be time well spent. You have to invest to get a dividend, and your dividend will be a highly motivated staff that will not only reduce your supervisory time in the long run, but will give you more time to step back and look objectively at the services you provide.

If you are lucky enough to have a good training budget, make sure that you share the educational opportunities equitably among staff. You will not boost morale if the same people appear to attend all the courses or conferences. If the continuing education opportunities are limited, you can extend the benefits by requiring the attendees to give a short presentation to your team on what they learnt from the course or conference. Include a discussion on how this extra knowledge can be put to good effect and improve work experiences or provide new or improved services.

Learning is not just the accumulation of knowledge, but a modification in behavior. Set quantifiable targets and timetables to evaluate these improvements, and include incentives that reward improving the skills of fellow staff, not just the course attendee. Before attending a conference, set objectives for visits to the exhibit hall, and specific goals from the networking opportunities. Share these networking opportunities and what was learnt from one's peers about new services and trends in the industry.

Learning is not just about attending conferences. Look at the strengths and weaknesses in the skills of your team and create a culture where mentoring fellow staff and sharing skills is encouraged and rewarded. Staff with the more developed skills should not see this sharing of their skills as a threat. As Eileen Gunn puts it so succinctly, "Sure, seasoned professionals can mentor younger folks on climbing the ladder, but insight can flow in the other direction, too. Generation Y may be able to teach baby boomers a thing or two about navigating the 21st century workplace."[2] Also from a team point of view it is not ideal to have only one person as a specialist in any one field or expertise.

In these days of push and pull technology and electronic dissemination of resources, it is easy to forget that, ultimately, it is a whole load of disparate individuals who are the beneficiaries of your products and services. Carol Tenopir, in her article on her NFAIS Miles Conrad Memorial Lecture, says that "most users just want tools and technologies to help them do their work better and more conveniently. They will not change their work habits unless that change means more convenience."[3] Unfortunately, what one individual thinks is the technology that helps her or him the most is not the same technology that suits another. We have to find out the preferred mode of dissemination, whether it be PDA, mobile phone, e-mail, instant messaging, a podcast, blog, or whatever. Fortunately, providing information in all these different formats is becoming significantly easier and cheaper to provide. There is neither an ideal nor a single answer for every preference. We have to consider what our clients want, and the more options given to them, the better. It's all about the people.

[1] "Libraries Aren't About Books – Libraries Are About People." *The SMR Knowledge Services e-Profile*, June 15, 2006. http://www.smr-knowledge.com/eProfiles/e-Profile_06-15-06_Hart.pdf.

[2] "Three Tips from Gen Y About the New Workplace." *Computerworld*, August 1, 2006.

[3] "Building Bridges." *Library Journal*, April 1, 2006. http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6317247.html.

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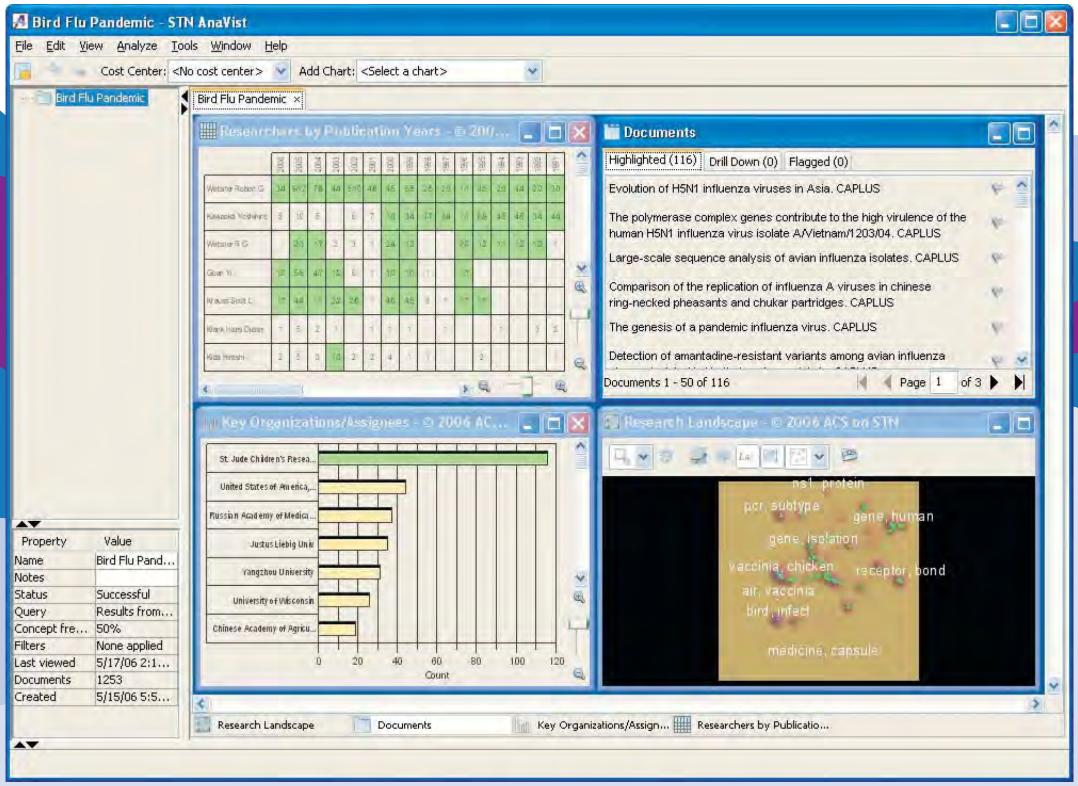

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