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Information Outlook, March 2004

Special Libraries Association

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Special Libraries Association, "Information Outlook, March 2004" (2004). *Information Outlook*, 2004. 3.
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information

the monthly magazine of the
special libraries association
vol. 8, no. 3
March 2004

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outlook®

How To Grow a Community of Practice

The JPL Information Providers Network

Staying Up to Date in Web Search

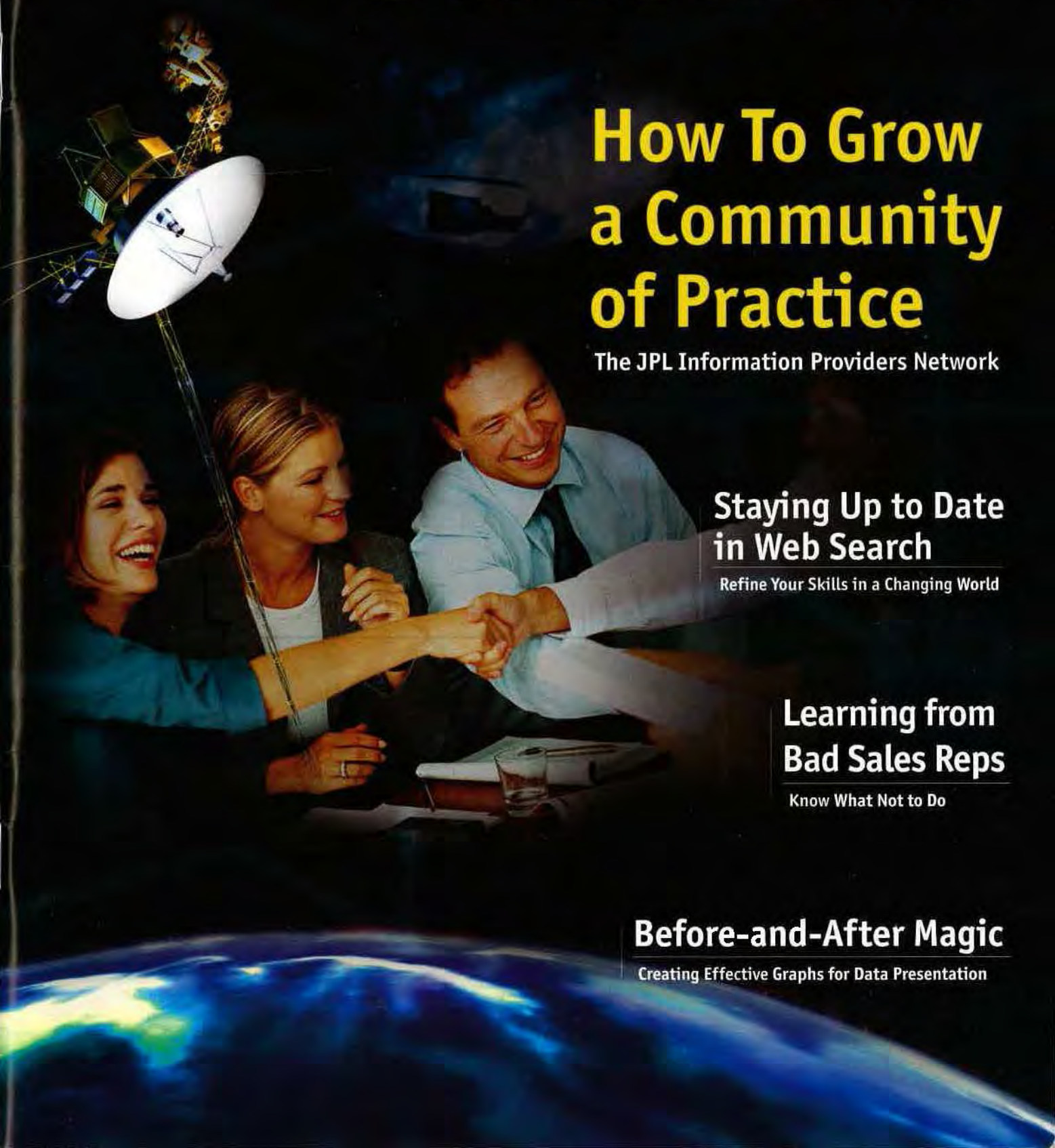
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How to Grow a Community of Practice - The JPL Information Providers Network

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Library's network of in-house Information Providers is an example of how a special library can take the lead in coordinating a group of information professionals that results in a community of practice to promote knowledge sharing. Teresa Bailey and Susan Hendrickson, librarians at JPL, describe the network's creation and offer feedback from its users.



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Before-and-After Magic - Creating Effective Graphs for Data Presentation

Like a well-made suit, data presentation is critical to a successful presentation. But if the chart formats you choose are confusing to your audience, they can muddy your message. Cybèle Werts, information specialist for the Northeast Regional Resource Center, writes about creating charts that showcase your data by focusing on the visual or graphic aspects of chart design.



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Staying Up to Date in the Ever-Changing Web Search World

Rita Vine, co-founder of Workingfaster.com, says, "Unlike books, which are static once printed, the Web is a moving target - good Web search sites go bad, others change their focus, and some disappear altogether." She argues that sharpening your skills on Web searches is an essential component of your professional value as a provider of information, and offers a number of useful resources.



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Everything I Know About Promoting the Library I Learned from Bad Sales Reps

Adam Bennington, a freshly minted MLIS librarian at the State Farm Corporate Library Information Center in Bloomington, IL, makes lemonade from lemons. He applies horrible examples of vendor behaviors he has witnessed to the art of promoting the library.

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The Monthly Magazine of
the Special Libraries Association
Vol. 8, No. 3
March 2004

Publisher Douglas W. Newcomb
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Information Outlook®
(ISSN 1091-0808) is the monthly, award-winning
publication of the Special Libraries Association,
1700 Eighteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC
20009-2514; tel: (202) 234-4700;
fax: (202) 265-9317; e-mail: magazine@sla.org.

2004 Subscription Rates:
Standard subscription \$125 (both US and
International). Single issue (January 2001-) \$15.
Missing copies will be supplied when losses have
been sustained in transit and as supplies last.
Claims for missing issues must be filed within four
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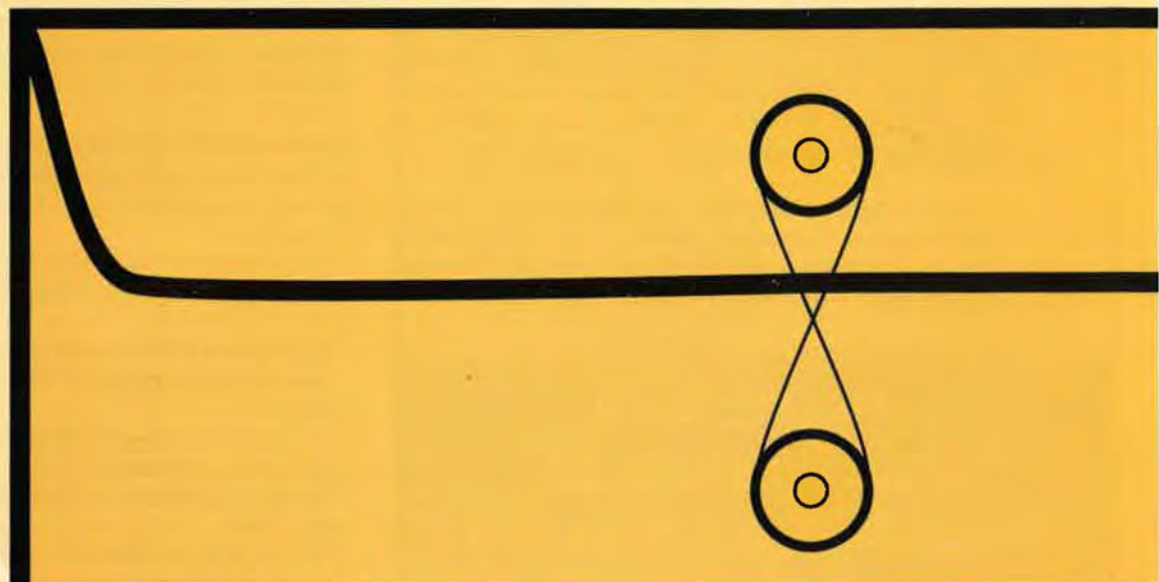


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making news

SLA Names Winners Of 2004 Awards

SLA has selected 26 individuals for their exemplary contributions and achievements in the information industry. The winners were announced by SLA President Cindy Hill at the Albuquerque Leadership Summit. They will be officially honored during the 2004 SLA Conference in Nashville, June 5-10.

Since 1948, SLA has recognized individuals who have distinguished themselves in the information profession through its awards and honors program. Award winners are determined by select committees and approved by SLA's Board of Directors.

There were no winners for the Factiva Award, Innovations in Technology Award, or the Media Award. The H.W. Wilson and International Special Librarians Day honorees remain to be selected.

The 2004 award winners are:

Hall of Fame, Ellen Miller, Wilda Newman, Ruth Seidman
John Cotton Dana Award, Donna Scheeder, Barbara Semonche
Rose Vormelker Award, Anne Caputo, Doris Helfer

Fellows, Susan DiMattia, Richard Geiger, Karen Kreizman Reczek, Agnes Mattis, Lyle Minter

Professional Award, T.N. Prakash, Elton B. Stephens

Membership Achievement Award, Kenlee Ray

Diversity Leadership Development Award, Innocent A. Awasom, Praveen Kumar Jain, Paiki Muswazi, Akram Sadeghi Pari, Cassandra M. Shieh

President's Award, The Executive Director Selection Committee, Lynn Berard, chair; Tamika Barnes, Richard Hulser, Mary Lee Kennedy, Dottie Moon

Sponsorships Open for SLA Awards

Opportunities remain for organizations to sponsor awards that will be conferred at the 95th annual SLA conference in Nashville.

Sponsors will receive the following recognition:

- Three tickets to the awards reception
- Acknowledgement by the SLA president at the awards reception
- Opportunity to present the award to the recipient along with the SLA president
- Signage recognition in the registration area of the conference hall
- Signage recognition at the awards reception and in the awards reception program
- Founding Donor badges for booth staff
- Inclusion in press releases about the awards

The awards and sponsorship costs are as follows:

Hall of Fame, \$10,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association at or near the end of an active professional career for an extended and sustained period of distinguished service to the Association in all spheres. Also granted for prolonged distinguished service of a chapter or division that has contributed to the Association as a whole.

Rose L. Vormelker Award, \$10,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association in recognition of exceptional services to the profession of special librarianship in the area of mentoring students or practicing professionals in the field.

President's Award, \$10,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association for a notable or important contribution during the past Association year. The contribution must have enhanced the Association or furthered its goals and objectives.

John Cotton Dana Award, \$5,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association in recognition of exceptional service to special librarianship.



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Honorary Member, \$5,000 sponsor fee. Nominated at the Winter Meeting, this individual is elected by the Association members at the annual conference. Candidates may not belong to the Special Libraries Association, and there may be no more than 15 honorary members concurrently.

Professional Award, \$5,000 sponsor fee. Granted to an individual or group, who may or may not hold membership in the Association, in recognition of a specific major achievement in, or a specific significant contribution to, the field of librarianship or information science, which advances the Association's stated objectives.

Fellow of the Special Libraries Association, \$5,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association in recognition of leadership in the field of special librarianship and for outstanding contributions and expected future service to the Association.

Diversity Leadership Development Program Award, \$5,000 sponsor fee. Granted to an active member(s) of the Association from a multicultural background who displays excellent leadership abilities in the profession and demonstrates a willingness to develop and strive for leadership opportunities within the Association.

Media Award, \$2,000 sponsor fee. Recognizes journalist(s) who published an outstanding feature article on the profession of special librarianship, preferably in a general circulation publication or radio or television production.

Member Achievement, \$2,000 sponsor fee. Granted to a member(s) of the Association for outstanding contributions by raising visibility, public awareness, and appreciation of the profession, Association Unit, or the Association at large.

SARC Merit Awards, \$2,000 sponsor fee. The SLA Student and Academic Relations Committee recognizes the active development and participation of student members through their involvement in their student group activities.

International Special Librarians Day, \$2,000 sponsor fee. Awards the efforts made by an individual member(s) of the Association to promote his/her special library, information resource center, or profession during International Special Librarians Day, the Thursday of ALA's National Library Week (Thursday, April 22, 2004).

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June - Looking globally (closed for articles)

July - The future of special libraries

August - Technology

September - Copyright issues

October - Marketing special libraries

November - Innovation

December - Business issues

If you can write an article on one of those topics, let's talk about it. If you have a better idea, let us know.



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SLA Website Has New Tools

If you haven't visited the SLA website recently, you're missing something.

SLA has launched the fourth generation of the site. The online community at www.sla.org features a cleaner, more modern appearance with improved access to resources.

The redesign includes an improved search utility and an all-new taxonomy, thesaurus, and content management system to provide quicker access to information. Also new are the: navigation bar, the menu headings, the site map, and more.

SLA launched the first version of its website in 1996. It was revised in 1997 and 2000.

SLA.org Offers Online Translations

SLA has expanded accessibility to its online content by integrating language translation services from WorldLingo (www.worldlingo.com). Visitors may now access free, electronically prepared translations of HTML text housed on the site in 12 languages: Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Japanese, Dutch, Greek, Korean, and Chinese (simplified and traditional).

This new service provides rudimentary translation, but visitors to the site may also select a professional translation option from WorldLingo. This fee-based service allows visitors to request a quote on professional translation of any page or document found on the SLA website. Upon receiving the quote, visitors may choose to purchase or decline. Electronically prepared translations are not available for attached documents (for example, Word or PDF files), but fee-based professional translations may be obtained.

No Greenbacks, No Problem

SLA now accepts membership dues in selected international currencies. Members may pay by check to join or renew in euros, British pounds sterling, or Canadian or Australian dollars.

The expanded currency options offer flexibility for members. For more details on SLA's enhanced payment flexibility, go to www.sla.org or call 202-234-4700.

Campaign Recruits 178 New Members

The 2003 membership recruitment campaign brought 718 new members to SLA.

Two chapters and two divisions recruited the most new members or had the highest percentage increase in membership in the competition that ran from September 1 to December 31, 2003. The Eastern Canada Chapter won for the most members gained with 21. The

Oregon Chapter, which grew by 15 percent, won for the highest percentage increase.

The Information Technology Division won for the most members gained, with 27. The Military Librarians Division, which grew by more than 6 percent, won for the highest percentage increase.

Each of the winning units received a certificate and a full registration for the 2004 annual conference in Nashville. The registrations can be used as awards, fundraiser opportunities, or scholarships.

In the individual recruiter category, Nancy Gershenfeld of the University of Washington and a member of the Pacific Northwest Chapter, the Leadership and Management Division, and the Information Technology Division won an iPAQ Pocket PC in the grand prize drawing.

Some 118 members participated as direct recruiters. For each new member, the recruiter received one entry into the drawing. The recruiter who signed up the most members had the most chances to win.

The winners of the campaign were announced at the 2004 Leadership Summit in Albuquerque. For more information and the specific results of your chapter or division, contact Diana Gonzales at membership@sla.org.

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New Caucus Set For Archivists

SLA members interested in archiving or preserving now have their own caucus.

The SLA Board of Directors has approved the new Archival and Preservation Caucus, which will provide a new forum to support special librarians and other professionals interested in archives and preservation of digital or paper-based materials. The Caucus plans to: exchange the latest information regarding archival and preservation activity; provide members with a forum for discussing research articles, literature reviews, case studies, perspectives, and international reports; develop professional skills through collaborative learning and promote archival and preservation knowledge within SLA; and provide special librarians and other information professionals with a knowledge exchange area where they can learn about new and developing archival and preservation technologies and activities.

Sandra Schock is the caucus convener. For information on the Archival and Preservation Caucus or instructions on how to join, please contact Diana Gonzales at 202-939-3671; email membership@sla.org.

I am currently an SLA member and want to join the new Archival and Preservation Caucus (If you would like to join SLA and the Caucus, please go to www.sla.org.)

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At Last, the Inside Story of SLA's New Vision, Mission and Values

By Barbara Spiegelman

Three little words.

No, not, "I Love You."

If such strong feelings seem unlikely in a professional association, then you haven't met SLA's Vision, Mission, and Values. Let me introduce you: VMV, meet the members. Members, meet the VMV. The long-awaited Vision, Mission and Core Value Statements of our beloved Association.

Vision

The Special Libraries Association is the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners.

Mission

The Special Libraries Association promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

Core Values

Leadership

Strengthening our roles as information leaders in our organizations and in our communities, including shaping information policy.

Service

Responding to our clients' needs, adding qualitative and quantitative value to information services and products.

Innovation and Continuous Learning

Embracing innovative solutions for the enhancement of services and intellectual advancement within the profession.

Results and Accountability

Delivering measurable results in the information economy and our organizations. The Association and its members are expected to operate with the highest level of ethics and honesty.

Collaboration and Partnering

Providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner within the information industry and the business community.

The Committee worked long and hard to get the VMV right. It was a lengthy and difficult process from start to finish. How could it possibly take this long? Ask any member in the Association's leadership, or a committee, task force or roundtable member who has focused on the VMV, and most will take a deep breath and proclaim that time was a precious commodity.

First, there were the basic concepts: Who are we now? What do we want to? What is the process to get from point A to point B? How can we lay new track while we're running the train? What are we willing to give up? How hard are we willing to work? How much are we willing to spend? How will we know if we are successful? At times it became overwhelming, but we pushed forward because we knew that the task at hand was pivotal to the Association's future course.

We gathered ideas from the leadership of the Association, chapters, divisions, and conference focus groups, members and non-members, and leaders within the industry and outside of it. And we have the paper to prove it.

Next was the winnowing and narrowing phase. Is Concept A the same as Concept B? Does idea 1 devalue a portion of the membership? Does the wording of idea 2 seem to encompass SLA? Perhaps we have gone too far. But have we not gone far enough?

Finally, it was time to pull it all together. At the SLA 2003 Conference in New York, the Board of Directors asked the Strategic Planning Committee to finalize the Vision, Mission, and Core Values Statements of the Association, and to present them for approval.

Members and liaisons of the Strategic Planning Committee, Doris Helfer, Gloria Zamora, Ethel Salonen, Linda Henderson, Janice R. LaChance, Cindy Hill, and Barbara Spiegelman (chair), all served diligently to see that a common goal was achieved.

The committee was very aware of the importance of our task. We teleconferenced. We read and re-read drafts created by others. We edited and re-edited our own words. In one memorable session, we found ourselves discussing the use of the Oxford comma in the values statements.

So many people; so much work; so much time.

But it was well worth the effort. Because as an Association and as individual members, we now see the vision, we all support the mission, and most importantly, we recognize ourselves in the values.

It's nice to get it right.

Barbara Spiegelman is the Chair of the SLA Strategic Planning Committee and President of the Spiegelman Group in Pittsburgh, PA.

Find a Way to Yes! SLA Keynoter's Tips

Customer service and satisfaction is the first order of business whether you are running an airline or an information center. This was the underlying message from Ann Rhoades, keynote speaker at the (SLA) Leadership Summit in Albuquerque, NM, January 21-24. She is president of People Ink (www.peopleink.com) and the former executive vice president of people at JetBlue Airways. Her energetic focus on people—both staff and customers—makes it obvious why Fast Company once referred to her as "something of a legend in hiring circles."

Rhoades spent many years working at Southwest Airlines, then moved to JetBlue when it was founded. During its first year of operation, JetBlue turned a profit at the same time that 12 other airlines went broke. She credits the success to creating a "People-Centric" organization from the beginning. "Energize both your 'crew' and customers to be passionate about the company," she advised. "What are the promises you will make?"

Determine the values under which you will operate. "Caring is one value," she said, explaining that after 9/11, JetBlue didn't let anyone go and continued to pay salary and benefits because "it was the right thing to do." She cautioned, "Values aren't enough." Communication plays a big role in a people-centric organization. "People will do what you expect if you tell them," she said.

Hire "A" players who mirror your values, Rhoades advised. "Don't skimp on the recruitment process, because you can't fix attitude." Be willing to take risks when hiring, she said, describing one outstanding flight attendant, a 63-year-old former fire fighter who rescued people during the first bombing of the World Trade Center. He is empowered to do the unusual regardless of whether it fits the routine description of his job. The result is that customers are so impressed with his sensitivity that they don't want to fly any other airline. One of Rhoades' favorite interview questions is, "When did you break a rule for a customer?"

If, after the prolonged and careful interview process, you find you have hired the wrong person, "cut your losses early" and admit that you made a mistake, Rhoades said. She gave several examples of the benefits of letting the team on which the new person will serve do the first cut in the hiring process. If they have a say in the selection, they will help the new person succeed. "Find 'A' players anywhere you can and hire people who will 'get to yes' for your customers," she

said, in support of nontraditional job arrangements. Hire people who "get it," keep the rules simple and flexible, and give them power to resolve issues, Rhoades said.

Rhoades referred to the situation that is currently in the news. JetBlue, along with other airlines, was asked to release passenger lists to the federal homeland security people. JetBlue complied. The other airlines refused. "We screwed up," Rhoades admitted. "We gave out names because the government asked." The CEO personally wrote or called everyone whose information had been released. "He took ownership of the error and the recovery," Rhoades said. The airline sent free tickets to everyone, but some customers returned them saying they didn't want their favorite airline to go broke. In any situation where dissatisfaction is possible, "Recovery of customers is key."


JetBlue asked their people what they wanted their leaders to do. The answers clustered around five topics: treat people right, do the right thing, communicate with your team, encourage initiative and innovation, and inspire greatness in others. The final slide in Rhoades' presentation showed a JetBlue sign at an airport, summing up the values and commitment. "Frankly my dear, we do give a damn."

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How To Grow a Community of Practice

The JPL Information Providers Network

By Teresa R. Bailey and Susan M. Hendrickson

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Library has established a network of in-house Information Providers that connects people who are in some way responsible for imparting information within the Laboratory. The network is an example of how a special library can take the lead in coordinating a group of information professionals that results in a community of practice (CoP) that promotes knowledge sharing. Its success is the result of perseverance and commitment, flexibility, and nonexclusionary membership criteria.

Background

The Jet Propulsion Laboratory, managed

*Teresa R. Bailey (teresa.r.bailey@jpl.nasa.gov) is a Technical Librarian at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) Library.
Susan M. Hendrickson (susan.m.hendrickson@jpl.nasa.gov) is the Acquisitions/Serials Librarian at the JPL Library.*

by the California Institute of Technology, is charged with the robotic exploration of the solar system for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). With a staff of 16, the JPL Library is the Laboratory's main library, housing its largest collection of book and journal holdings, with approximately 40,000 books and 1,000 current journals. The Library is one of the departments in the Library, Archives & Records Section.

Creation of the Network

The origin of the Information Providers network stemmed in part from a JPL strategic plan in the midst of Total Quality Management (TQM), reengineering, and downsizing more than six years ago. One of the main

goals was networking: Who do we need to know, and who needs to know us? Most libraries work hard to ensure that their customer groups know that they exist, but what about other groups within the organization that might even be considered competitors of sorts?

Teresa Bailey, Technical Librarian, organized the first meeting of JPL Information Providers. Invitations were extended to those who were already identified as conduits of information, whether in their own departments or for the organization as a whole. In addition, these people were asked to identify others in their organization who might be interested in participating in the network. While caretakers of small departmental collections were targeted for participation, no one was excluded, thereby opening up the opportunity for those who didn't know exactly where they fit to have a community with which to identify. The network has continued to welcome employees of all levels and job titles, from secretary to manager.

Staying Connected

An Information Providers referral directory was created to track active members of the network, as well as to list organizations that have collections or information but don't necessarily have a representative who actively attends meetings. The referral directory, maintained in Excel format by a JPL Library staff member, includes the following fields:

- Organization name
- Information collected and/or provided
- Contact person
- Phone
- Hours of operation
- Location
- E-mail address
- Fax number
- URL of intranet site (if applicable)

Job titles are not listed, in keeping with a philosophy of an informal, nonhierarchical network.

Participating organizations include small, departmental collections as well as enterprise-wide operations. Participating groups include the following:

- JPL Library, Archives & Records Section
- Audio Visual Library
- JPL Rules!-JPL governing documents
- NBS (New Business Systems)-The department that designs

and supports more than 50 software applications that support the Laboratory's business operations

- EIS (Enterprise Information Systems)-Provides access for Web services, data applications, and custom database connectivity for a variety of projects
- Knowledge Management Program Office
- Project libraries-Document repositories for the Laboratory's numerous projects
- Engineering Standards Library
- ICIS (Institutional Computing & Information Services)
- Engineering Document Services-Storage and distribution of JPL's engineering documents and drawings in paper, electronic, and microfilm format
- IPAC (Infrared Processing and Analysis Center) Library-Offsite book and journal collection supporting this department, whose offices are at Caltech
- ORSL (Oceanic and Remote Sensing Library)-Periodical collection
- Photography Lab
- PDS (Planetary Data System)-Distributes scientific data from NASA planetary missions, astronomical observations, and laboratory measurements
- RPIF (Regional Planetary Image Facility)-A branch of the NASA image collection
- Inside JPL-Employee portal to JPL's intranet
- KnowWho Directory-A Web-based experts database created in a joint project between the JPL Library and Knowledge Management
- Internal Communications-Institutional news

A JPL e-mail discussion list was also created for members. However, its main function has been to post meeting announcements rather than for informational exchange among members.



Quarterly Meetings

Meetings are held quarterly, giving the Information Providers an opportunity to share their concerns on issues such as marketing, customer relations, and website usability face-to-face. Meetings are also a good opportunity to update the data in the referral directory. The first meeting drew about six participants, but the number has gradually increased over the years. When Web-based applications began to be incorporated into JPL operations, the number of Information Providers expanded to include employees involved in these functions who realized they could benefit from having a support network of colleagues with similar interests. About 30 members of the network routinely attend the meetings. Perseverance has been a key factor in the success of the network; it has grown gradually and did not happen overnight.

Those who arrive early to the meetings use the opportunity to catch up with one another, discussing new projects or new job roles. New members to the network are encouraged by the lively interaction of the group and discover quickly that it thrives on social interaction.

The meetings have proved an excellent way for the Information Providers to preview the new projects evolving within the organization. For example, at one meeting the Knowledge Capture team introduced a new knowledge management tool called "JPL 101," a Web-accessible database of JPL organizational knowledge in a question-and-answer quiz format. The questions covered information that every employee should know in the areas of JPL History and Culture, Flight Projects and Missions, Science, Technology, JPL Organization and Structure, Stakeholders, and JPL General Information. At another meeting, representatives from New Business Systems (NBS) discussed the future integrated architecture with the NBS upgrades for mission projects. Of course, the JPL Library uses the meetings to highlight its new products as

well. At a recent gathering, we demonstrated an early version of the JPL Authors Database, a tool that is scheduled to debut in early 2004.

Flexibility is important when dealing with a network of such diverse organizational subcultures and personalities. Discussions of projects of any scope are welcome, whether they be small, departmental undertakings or institution-wide ventures.

Information Providers Fairs

The first Information Providers Fair was held in April 2001 in place of the Library's traditional open house activities. Its theme, "Connecting Knowledge," celebrated the power of networking among the JPL Information Providers. A second fair with the same theme was held in June 2003. The fairs were advertised to the entire Laboratory, and refreshments and raffles were used to lure customers.

While the Information Providers network meetings are informal, the fairs gave participants the opportunity to come together formally. A combination of posters, tabletop displays, and demos were used to showcase the products and services offered by each organization. The fairs became an excellent venue to showcase products and services that might not fit in other established exhibitions at JPL, such as the IT (Information Technology) Fair or the Health and Safety Fair.

The fairs were held within the JPL Library's space, including the customer service lobby, book and periodical wings, and current periodical reading room. The JPL Library coordinated the fair activities, which involved a huge amount of teamwork on the part of the staff. Not only did we design our own posters and demos, but we worked on all of the logistics and publicity aspects of the fairs as well.





DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Dean of Libraries and Librarian of the College

Dartmouth College invites nominations and applications for the position of Dean of Libraries and Librarian of the College. We seek to appoint an energetic leader to guide an accomplished staff with a reputation for high-quality scholarly support. S/he should be a skilled manager who understands and is sensitive to the traditional academic library and the innovations and challenges brought to it by rapidly emerging information technologies.

With over 5800 students and 650 full-time faculty members, Dartmouth College combines the best features of an undergraduate liberal arts college with the intellectual vitality of a research university. The highly selective undergraduate college has been at the forefront of American higher education since 1769. In addition, over 1500 graduate students are currently enrolled in 16 programs in the arts and sciences and three professional schools: business, engineering, and medicine. Like the liberal arts college, these schools have a long and distinguished history and are among the first established in their respective fields in the United States.

Dartmouth views the Libraries as an essential resource to support a varied and demanding curriculum and the research needs of its faculty and students. Dartmouth recently invested over \$65 million in library expansions and consolidation. The Libraries presently comprise the Baker-Berry Library, which contains a state-of-the-art media center, the map center, and library administration and central services, plus eight specialized collections located in several academic centers. Together, these libraries house 2.4 million volumes, 26,000 serials, a vibrant and growing sound and film collection, and a substantial rare book and manuscript collection. Dartmouth's digital library system links users to a broad array of databases, thousands of full-text journals, electronic books, and digitized images, and it facilitates direct access to the book collections at Brown, Columbia, Cornell, Penn, Princeton, and Yale. The Libraries belong to the Digital Library Federation and the Association of Research Libraries and operate within a technically robust networked environment, which includes campus-wide wireless access to the Digital Library. The Baker-Berry building is also home to Computing Services--the institution's central computing organization--and the newly created Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning.

The Dean of Libraries oversees an annual budget of nearly \$20 million and about 200 professional staff and support personnel. Dartmouth's Libraries are proactively involved in the life of the institution, joining with faculty, for example, to launch new virtual journals such as *Linguistic Discovery*. The Dean plays a creative role in fostering a climate conducive to supporting the scholarly enterprise of diverse faculty, students, and staff; aiding in the recruitment and retention of new faculty; and tending to the development of collections and services. The Dean of Libraries reports to the Provost and will be a member, along with the academic deans, of the Provost's Academic Council.

With primary administrative responsibility for all units of the Dartmouth Library, the Dean of Libraries must have a strong commitment to maintaining excellence in academic research and library services, to working collaboratively with academic and administrative departments, to operating in a technologically sophisticated environment, and to developing the expanding libraries into a center of campus-wide learning.

With an even distribution of male and female students, about a third of the undergraduate student population members of minority groups, and the highest proportion of tenured female faculty in the Ivy League, Dartmouth is committed to diversity and encourages applications from women and minorities. Dartmouth College is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action employer. Additional information is available at <http://www.dartmouth.edu>. All applications, nominations and inquiries should be directed to:

Professor Katharine Conley, Dean of Libraries Search Committee, Dartmouth College, Office of the Provost, 6004 Parkhurst Hall, Room 204, Hanover, NH 03755-3529


Please send a letter of application, a curriculum vitae, and the names of three references. Review of applications will begin April 15th and continue until the position is filled.

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Products and services profiled at the 2003 Information Providers Fair included the following:

Information Providers Organization	Poster or Demo Title
Knowledge Management	eArchives/Electronic Library Service
JPL Library	JPL Library eSubscriptions
JPL Archives	How to Find Historical Information at JPL
Human Resources, Professional Development	Developing Yourself at JPL
JPL Regional Planetary Image Facility	NASA's Regional Planetary Image Facilities
Proposal Center	Small Proposals Information System
Photographic & Imaging Services	New Display Capabilities: Connecting with Our Customers
Internal Communications	Products and Services of the Internal Communications Office
Enterprise Process and Standards Program Office	NASA Technical Standards Program
Office of Safety and Mission Success	Lessons Learned
Engineering Document Services (EDS)	A Guide to EDS Capabilities

Clearly one of the benefits of the Information Providers Fairs was that the participants themselves could learn even more about one another's organizations, products, and services by visiting each of the displays. The Laboratory as a whole benefited from the fairs as well, since employees had the opportunity to learn about various informational organizations in a centralized setting. "I've been at JPL for three years, and I didn't know your department existed," was a comment overheard at one of the poster sessions.

Evolution of a Community of Practice

The CoP concept has received a lot of attention in the literature; however, there are few examples of such communities centered on groups of information professionals, such as the JPL Information Providers network. Nickols (2003) contends there are two types of communities of practice: self-organizing and sponsored. While sponsored CoPs are initiated and chartered by management, self-organizing CoPs evolve on their own, are informal, and reflect the group's interests. The JPL Information Providers network is an example of a self-organizing CoP.

While there is no executive sponsor per se, the Library has taken the lead in coordinating—not managing—the network. In fact, the basis of the JPL Information Providers network contains many of the criteria recommended for an organic structure that facilitates knowledge sharing (Ahmed 2002):

- Nonhierarchical
- Free from rules
- Participative and informal
- Face-to-face communication
- Little red tape
- Interdisciplinary teams that break down departmental barriers

Although groups that provide information in an organization are sometimes competitive in nature, our experience demonstrates that such groups can also operate as partners. Tsai's

(2002) concept of "coopetition" acknowledges the possibility of simultaneous cooperative and competitive behavior within an organization. Certainly there is that potential within our own organization, as departments indirectly compete for a fixed amount of resources. In some cases, services could logically be provided by more than one unit, creating the possibility of "turf wars." However, there is minimal competition among the members of the JPL Information Providers network because they view one another as colleagues. The tone for noncompetition was set in the early development stages of the group, as the meetings made it clear that the network was going to be about camaraderie and support—not about individual units' self-interests.

Benefits of the Network

New employees who join the Information Providers network find it is an excellent way to be introduced quickly to all of the different types of "informational" organizations within JPL that can assist them in their day-to-day work. In a large organization, it often takes years to get up to speed and become well-connected, but the network accelerates that process.

Participant feedback on the Information Providers network has been positive: "I find the Information Providers network a wonderful networking tool," states Margaret Simpson of JPL Rules! "We in the information field tend to move around within JPL, and it helps us to keep track of and stay in touch with everyone. I also find out about interesting things going on that I otherwise might not hear about. I bring the information back to my boss to share so that she knows what is going on as well."

"The Information Providers network has helped me keep informed of new and upgraded sources of information. In turn, I am able to provide referrals to customers seeking information as well as expand my understanding of what is happening. Any service we provide to our customers benefits JPL," says Carol Dumain of the Engineering Standards Library.

Members of the network are empowered because they get an insider's view of other groups that provide similar services. By taking the lead, fostering a CoP of information providers, and keeping the connection alive, the JPL Library's understanding of how it fits into the organization's information landscape has increased and allowed us to leverage the information resources provided by its members.

Sources

Ahmed, Pervaiz K., et al. (2002). "Culture for Knowledge Sharing and Transfer." In *Learning through Knowledge Management*. Woburn, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Nickols, Fred. (2003). "Communities of Practice: An Overview." <http://home.att.net/~discon/KM/CoPOverview.pdf>.

Tsai, Wenpi. "Social Structure of 'Coopetition' Within a Multiunit Organization: Coordination, Competition, and Intraorganizational Knowledge Sharing." *Organizational Science* 13(2), March-April 2002, pp. 179-190.

copyright corner

Eleventh Amendment Immunity

By Laura Gasaway

Suppose that a library in a state-supported institution or organization infringes copyright. Is there a reason to bar copyright owners from suing for damages because of the status of the library? Traditionally, state governments and entities have enjoyed sovereign immunity from some types of suits under the Eleventh Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 1990, the Copyright Act was amended by section 511(a), in response to infringement claims by software producers against state-supported universities that had reproduced copies of software for computer labs on their campuses. The statute eliminated sovereign immunity for states, instrumentalities of a state, and state officials and employees and stated that they were no longer immune from suit for copyright infringement. The Patent Act was similarly amended in 1992 to eliminate sovereign immunity

from patent suits.¹ Municipal and county entities traditionally do not enjoy sovereign immunity, so they were not mentioned in either statute.

Through a series of decisions since 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court has restored the vitality of Eleventh Amendment immunity for intellectual property claims. Sovereign immunity may appear to be an esoteric legal issue for copyright, and to some extent it is. However, it may have significant impact on copyright owners as well as many of the special subject libraries that are part of state-supported educational institutions, museums, and archives. The recent revitalization of Eleventh Amendment immunity relates to states' rights. In *Florida Prepaid Postsecondary Expense Board v. College Savings Bank*,² the Supreme Court held that the 1992 amendment to the Patent Act, which permitted state entities to be sued for damages in patent infringement, was barred by Eleventh Amendment immunity.³ One of the grounds for this holding was that Congress had no evidence that such entities had been infringing patents when it amended the statute.

The same is not true for copyrights. In fact, quite the opposite: section 511 was enacted in response to claims of copyright infringement by state universities. So, does Eleventh Amendment immunity cover copyright? It appears that it does. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals had addressed the issue in *Chavez v. Artes Publico Press*⁴ four years before *Florida Prepaid*, and a long series of appeals and vacated judgments followed. The 5th Circuit ultimately dismissed the case on the basis of *Florida Prepaid* because the Copyright Remedy Clarification Act was an improper exercise of congressional legislative power in violation of the Eleventh Amendment. So, it appears that state entities are immune from suits for copyright damages. Thus, privately supported institutions are likely at greater risk for copyright infringement suits since copyright holders are less likely to commit the resources to sue a state entity and risk dismissal of the suit because of sovereign immunity than to sue a private institution or corporation. State agencies are not totally immune from copyright or patent suits, however; they still may be sued for an injunction. Also, individual employees are not immune



from suits for damages, even when they were acting in an official capacity when the infringement occurred.

Then there is the bad publicity factor. Even if state agencies enjoy sovereign immunity from suits for copyright damages, it would still be very embarrassing to the agency or institution to be named as a defendant in a suit for an injunction. In fact, it would be a public relations nightmare.

For the past few years, Congress has tried to find a way to ensure that state agencies and institutions that infringe copyrights are treated the same as other infringing entities and may be sued for damages in copyright. For example, it might be possible to require a state agency, such as a university, to agree to a *quid pro quo* concerning intellectual property rights. If the University of North Carolina wanted to hold patent rights in inventions by its faculty members, which it definitely does, and be able to sue infringers of its intellectual property, the exchange would require UNC to submit itself to

suits and thus opt out of Eleventh Amendment immunity.

The latest bills to address this issue were Senate bill 107-1611 and its companion House bill 107-3204, the Intellectual Property Protection Restoration Act (IPPPRA). IPPRA would condition a state's ability to recover damages in intellectual property suits on its waiver of immunity from private suits against it. This would put states on an equal footing with private parties with respect to suits for damages since a state would be entitled to no damages for infringement of its own intellectual property rights unless it waived its Eleventh Amendment immunity. States would have only two years to waive their immunity. Non-waiving states that sued private parties for infringement would be ineligible for monetary damages that would otherwise be available under federal law.

This bill was totally unacceptable to states, because the waiver applied to the entire state and not just to the institution that wished to enforce its own intellectual property rights. So, if the

University of North Carolina wanted to waive its sovereign immunity in order to be able to sue for infringement of its intellectual property, the waiver would apply to all North Carolina State agencies and not just to the university. This is an impossible standard, since the North Carolina Department of Corrections, Department of Transportation, etc., couldn't care less whether the university holds patents and copyrights. The agencies do care if their Eleventh Amendment immunity is waived across the board, however. A more acceptable bill would allow the University of North Carolina to waive only its own rights.

It is likely that Congress will continue to try to find a solution to what copyright holders see as a significant problem. Basic fairness dictates that states be treated the same as other entities and be responsible for compensating copyright holders when they infringe the copyright rights of a private entity.

¹ 35 U.S.C. § 296(a) (2000).

² 527 U.S. 666 (1999).

³ The case also covered trademarks.

⁴ 59 F.3d 539 (5th Cir. 1995).

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Before-and-After Magic

Creating Effective Graphs for Data Presentation

..... Graphics reveal data

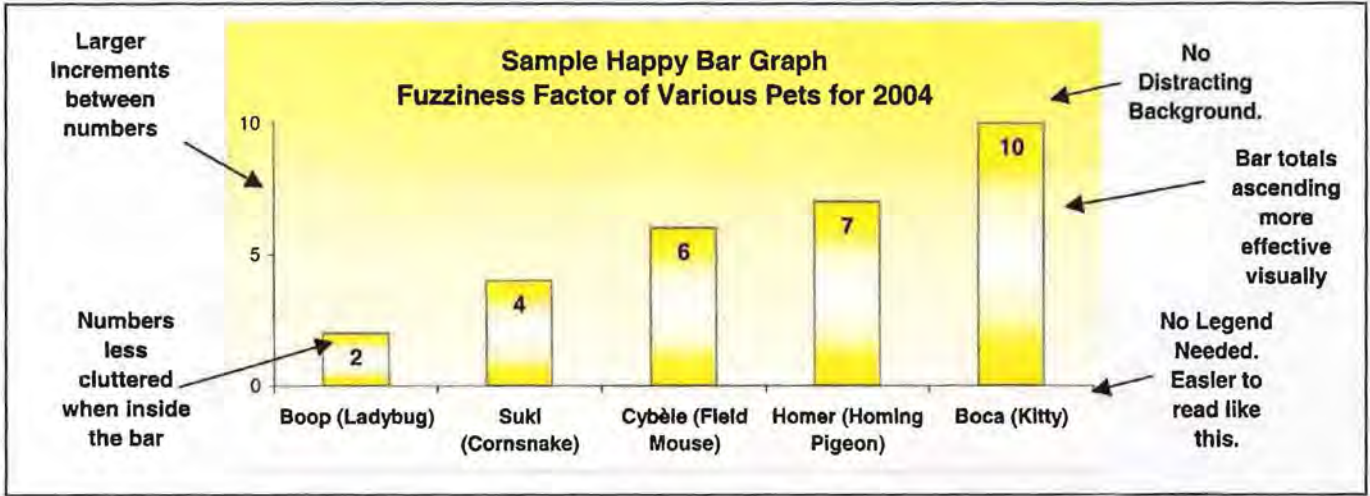
By Cybèle Elaine Werts

Two people arrive at a job interview for a public relations position at an education foundation. Both are highly qualified for the job. Both are wearing suits that are freshly pressed, but one suit is lined and tailored, and the color and style are flattering. The other is far less attractive. Employers may not be able to say what makes for a well-made suit, but they will still be affected on a subconscious level and give the job to the person who appears more competent. We are all affected by how things look, even if we don't know why. When all else is equal, visual presentation can

make the difference between landing a great job and standing in the unemployment line.

Data presentation is similar to a well-made suit in that it is a critical part of reporting, particularly in the current climate of data-driven decisionmaking. Unfortunately, graphs can be very confusing to readers and can muddy your message. This article is about creating charts that showcase your data, focusing on the visual or graphic aspects of chart design. This is not about choosing the right chart for your data or an analysis of manipulating statistics. We assume that readers have a good sense of the data they are presenting, as well as some skills in using a spreadsheet soft-

Cybèle is an information specialist for the Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC), a project of Learning Innovations at WestEd in Williston, Vermont. She can be reached at cwerts@wested.org or at 802-951-8224.



ware application such as Excel. For the sake of brevity, only bar charts and trend graphs will be reviewed, but these guidelines apply to most types of charts.

General Chart and Graph Recommendations

The purpose of charts and graphs is to express the information you're writing about in a visual way. The sample charts show how small changes in layout and color can make your data clearer. You may laugh at the "crabby" examples, but each of those ineffective elements has been observed in real-life reports. If you're going to use charts, it's a good idea to include them in the body of your document because putting them in an appendix creates an unnecessary step for the reader and might mean they won't be read at all. If you have multiple graphs on a page, help the reader distinguish among them by using color; for example, use green for the education charts and blue for the government charts. Finally, if there is a large amount of data, a chart is optimal because it's difficult for the eye to read a huge table full of numbers. In contrast, if the data set is small, use a table, which saves space and is easier to read. Here are more tips for well-designed charts:

Overall Style

- Titles should clearly state what the graph is and avoid acronyms. You may think everyone knows what NERRC is,

but your chart may go to readers who are unfamiliar with the name. (NERRC is the Northeast Regional Resource Center.)

- Include a total of items measured if it's relevant. For example, N = 98 indicates that your sample included 98 responses.

- Use a legend only when necessary because it requires the reader to take another mental step to translate the information. Notice that placing the identifier (Boca the cat) under the bar takes less time to read.

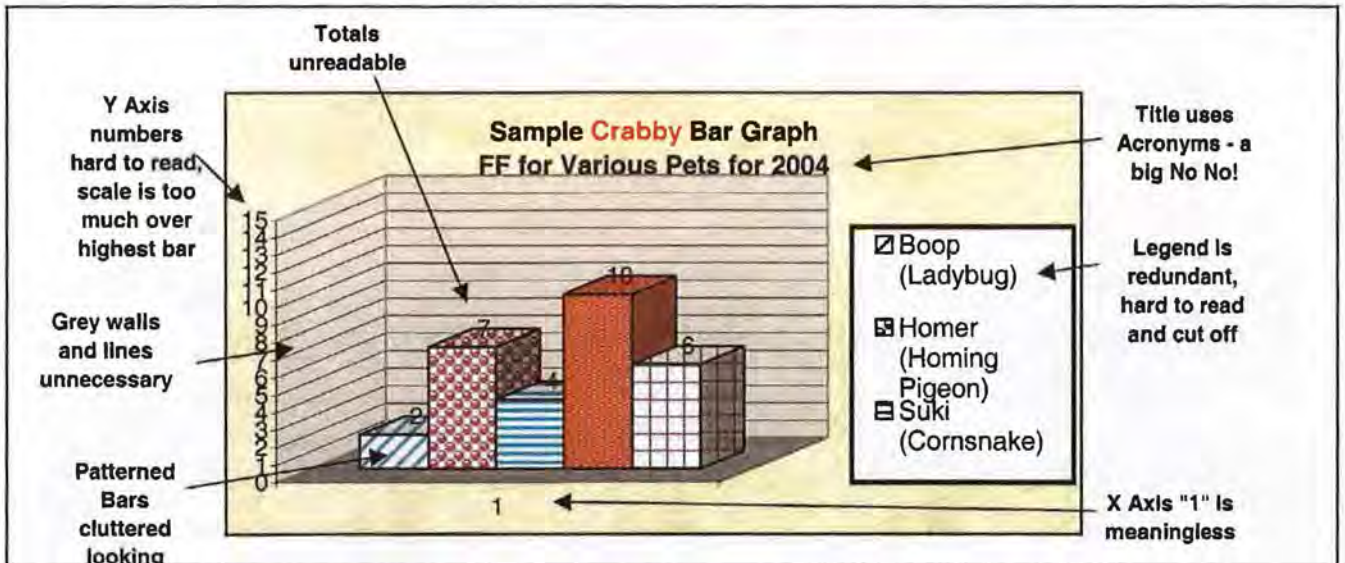
- Keep the angle of the whole chart front and center. Skewing, or twisting the bars to odd angles, may add visual interest, but can change the meaning of your data.

Clean, Simple Visuals

- Use easy-to-read fonts like Times or Helvetica. Complex fonts or tiny point sizes (under 12 points) decrease readability.

- Avoid cute clip art unless it's directly related to the data you are presenting.

- Avoid lurid colors like lime green or hot pink; they are hard on the eyes and distract from the message. Do use colors that can be copied easily in black and white. For



Vision, Mission and Core Values Statements



Special Libraries
Association

Vision

The Special Libraries Association is the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners.

Mission

The Special Libraries Association promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

Core Values

Leadership: Strengthening our roles as information leaders in our organizations and in our communities, including shaping information policy.

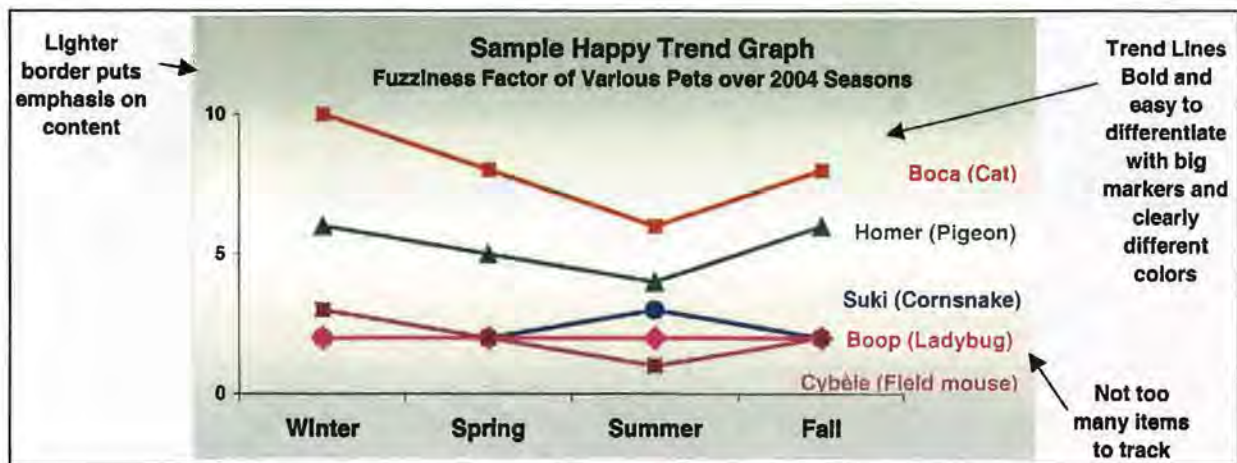
Service: Responding to our clients' needs, adding qualitative and quantitative value to information services and products.

Innovation and Continuous Learning: Embracing innovative solutions for the enhancement of services and intellectual advancement within the profession.

Results and Accountability: Delivering measurable results in the information economy and our organizations. The Association and its members are expected to operate with the highest level of ethics and honesty.

Collaboration and Partnering: Providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner within the information industry and the business community.

www.sla.org



example, multiple, similar shades of green will merge into an indiscriminate gray on a copy.

- Consider using colors that are more accessible to people with visual impairments or color blindness. See the article in the references section for more information.
- Remove the gray "walls" and background lines unless they are needed to make the data more readable.
- Make borders thinner and dark gray instead of heavy and black. This puts the emphasis on the content of the chart rather than the border.
- Remove the default x-axis "1" in favor of an actual x-axis title, or leave it blank. Adjust the angle of the text for optimum readability.
- Use larger increments in the y-axis, such as 25, 50, 75, instead of smaller increments, such as 10, 20, 30. Make the maximum number only slightly higher than the tallest bar to optimize use of space. Choose a point/font size that is easy to read and doesn't obscure the numbers above and below.

Bar Charts

Bar charts are one of the most common types of graphs. A bar chart shows data at a "point in time" not unlike a snapshot. In contrast, if you have data that shows something over time you'll want to use what's called a trend graph. Trend graphs are far more useful because they show how things change over time, and use the space of the chart more effectively.

One of the challenges of developing charts in Excel is that the default options make for a disorderly chart. You can see how this looks in the sample "crabby" bar graph. The problem is that there is too much information, both in the bars and in the legend. In contrast, look at the sample "happy" bar graph, whose information is easy to read and clearly delineated. Here are some guidelines for creating a sharp-looking bar chart:

- For bar charts that stand alone (aren't being compared to another bar chart), sort the data in either ascending or descending order, because readers want to know the highest and lowest values. If you are comparing one bar chart to

How to Change Default Chart

First, create your chart in the basic style

To Change This

Change type of chart (from a bar graph to a pie chart)

Remove chart border and change background colors

Remove gray wall in background

Remove lines in the gray wall

Format the legend

Remove x-axis "1"

Change the angle of the text on the x-axis so it's easier to read

Change the highest number on the y-axis and adjust the major units and other style elements

Change colors and patterns inside the bars on a bar chart

Move bar totals inside the bar*

*This is not available for some types of charts. If bar totals are not showing, go into "Chart Options," Select the "Data Labels" tab, and select "Show Value." Then you can go ahead and use the directions at right to move the data labels inside the bars.

Change colors and markers on a trend graph line

another, keep the order of the bars consistent so the reader can compare graphs without having to transpose the bars.

- Avoid three-dimensional bars (they look like rectangular boxes) unless there's a specific reason to use them. They take up more space and make it hard to read the value of the bar.
- Use solid colors or gradations inside the bars and in the background of the chart. Patterns like checks or plaid make it difficult to read the text.
- Put bar totals inside the top of the bar instead of allowing them to float around in the graph. It looks neater and helps prevent confusion about which number goes with which bar.

Trend Graphs

- Limit the number of trend lines so they don't overlap and you can't tell which is which. A full-page chart can include a lot more lines than a small one, which should have only a few.
- Make the lines heavier, with larger markers (the little triangles or boxes along the lines).
- Use colors that are very different from each other. Excel often defaults the trend lines to multiple shades of blue, which makes them very hard to tell apart. Choose colors that contrast well with the background color of the chart. For example, don't use a pale green series line when your graph background is pale blue.
- Legends are more useful in trend graphs, but color-coded text can be easier to read (see sample).

Your Ideas and Suggestions Are Welcome

Please send your ideas and comments on creating effective charts to cwerts@wested.org.

This report includes samples of well-designed charts:

Outcome Based Planning: State Partners and Local Communities Working Together to Improve the Well-being of All Vermonters, by Vermont's Department of Developmental and Mental Health Services, <http://www.ahs.state.vt.us/pdfFiles/OutcomeBasedPlanning03.pdf>.

Additional Reading on Data and Presentation

- The Visual Display of Quantitative Information, by Edward Tufte
- A Guide to Effective Accountability Reporting, by the Council of Chief State School Officers (see Chapter Three in particular), <http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/GEAR.pdf>
- How to Lie with Statistics, by Darrell Huff
- Graphical Data Presentation, a product of Deakin University, <http://www.deakin.edu.au/~agoodman/sci101/chap12.php>
- A Pie or a Slice? Graphing, Charting, and Presenting Data, by Dr. Madhukar Pai MD, DNB, <http://www.sunmed.org/graphing.html>
- Considering the Color-Blind, by Chuck Newman, <http://webtechniques.com/archives/2000/08/newman/>

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Settings in Excel for Windows

that you want, such as bar, trend, or pie.

Do This

Right-click on the chart (not on any of the individual parts) and choose "Chart Type."

Right-click on the chart (not on any of the individual parts) and choose "Format Chart Area" to adjust the colors, font, and style.

Right-click on the gray wall (not on the horizontal lines) and choose "Format Plot Area."

Right-click on the lines and choose "Clear."

Right-click on the legend and choose "Clear" to remove it, or choose "Format Legend" to adjust the colors, font, and style.

Right-click on the "1" and choose "Clear" to remove it.

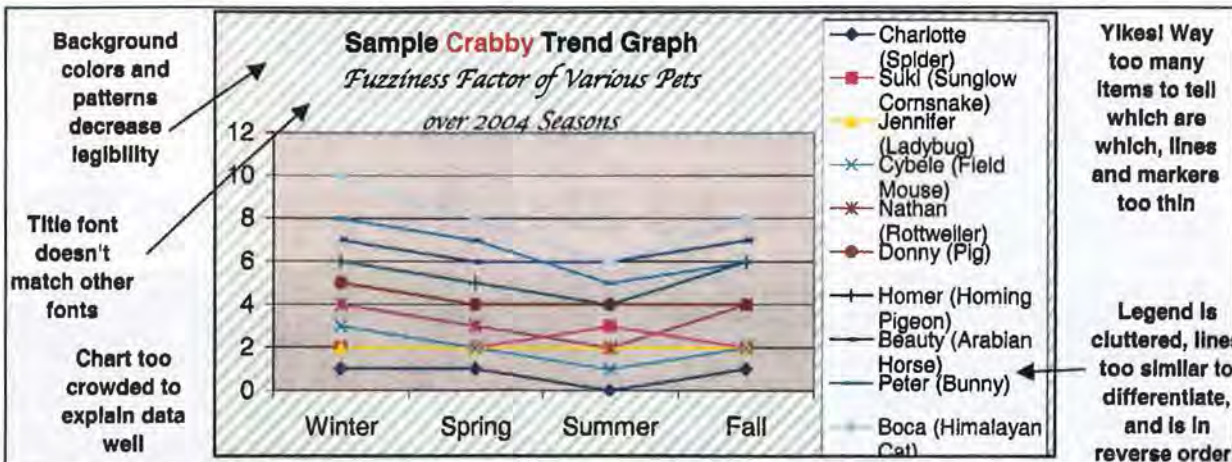
Right-click on the x-axis and choose "Format Axis"; then choose the "Alignment" tab. Adjust to taste.

Right-click on the y-axis and choose "Format Axis." Click on the "Scale" tab and change "Maximum Number" and "Major Units." You can also change the major units here, as well as colors, font, and style.

Right-click on the bars and choose "Format Data Series."

Right-click on the values above the bar and choose "Format Data Labels"; then choose the "Alignment" tab. Change "Label Position" to "Inside End."

Right-click on the data series line and choose "Format Data Series."



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information trends

PowerPoint: Devil in a Red Dress

By Stephen Abram

There are few guaranteed public speaking tips, but here's one. Start your talk by announcing that (a) *you hate PowerPoint (PPT)* and (b) *you're not going to use it today*. I would take bets that this will generate applause and possibly cheers. Too bad the bookie's odds would be too low!

As usual, I find myself out of sync with the common wisdom. Why do I find that, for my purposes, PPT mostly works? Why do I think it's such a useful tool? I worry that some of our colleagues are swinging the pendulum in the direction of avoiding PPT. This would be a shame. On a very shallow level, I sometimes think that the well-educated communities in which we travel have a congenital distrust and hatred of the success exemplified by Microsoft and PowerPoint. It could also be that librarians and information professionals don't think they need the additional learning support that PPT provides because they have huge vocabularies, read very well, and listen intently, to the point of having fine comprehension and understanding on the first pass. Maybe not.

Indeed, the investigators of the Space Shuttle *Columbia* tragedy identified PPT as one of the contributors to that disaster and as an indicator of problems in NASA's culture and communication environment. Wow. Can PPT be that evil? Here's a direct quote from the report (*emphasis mine*):

As information gets passed up an organization hierarchy, from people who do analysis to mid-level

managers to high-level leadership, key explanations and supporting information is filtered out. In this context, it is easy to understand how a senior manager might read this PowerPoint slide and not realize that it addresses a life-threatening situation.

At many points during its investigation, the Board was surprised to receive similar presentation slides from NASA officials *in place of technical reports*. The Board views the *endemic* use of PowerPoint briefing slides instead of technical papers as an illustration of the *problematic* methods of technical communication at NASA.

Those who have seen the over-the-top articles about PowerPoint and NASA might be surprised that it's mentioned only five or six times in a 248-page report, and that the main point is not an indictment of PPT but the assertion that PPT should not be a replacement for more solid content.

As information professionals, we recognize that the responsibility

for effective communication rests with the communicator, not the audience. This means we must understand how to communicate so that the listener can absorb the information and balance what needs to be learned and what needs to be discarded. This is a challenge for ordinary beings! Luckily we are equipped for this. We know that different information formats serve different purposes. We know that no one format is "right," and a combination of formats is usually the best tactic, for example, PPT presentations backed up by website copies; PPT handout pages with room to write; or formal reports distributed with details and back-up. Our users may best be served by an article or two on a topic rather than a long treatise. We might be able to locate a quickie website on a topic, but perhaps a detailed dissertation is called for. Even when we're searching Google, we often limit our results to websites, PDFs, or PPTs because they offer the right level of content. That's just common sense.



information trends

Of course, as the old saw goes, common sense ain't so common!

So rather than irrationally hating PPT, we should learn to use it well. As information professionals, here are just a few of the ways we use it:

- Presenting strategic plans
- Making speeches
- Database training
- Information literacy and searching development
- Project reports

Here are some tips for making the best use of this ubiquitous tool (you'll find loads more tips and cautions in the list of sites at the end of the column):

- Understand your audience's learning style. If they are visual learners, don't shy away from pictures. (Most people are visual learners—we text folks are the minority.)

- Write your first slides with very few words and bullet points—then aggressively attempt to remove half of them. If your talk complements and reinforces your slides—and vice versa—your presentation or training session will have better results.

- To reiterate—remember, the slides are meant to supplement and complement what you are saying or demonstrating. If you remember this you will not read your slides, which is the number one thing audiences hate. (Librarians rarely make presentations to an illiterate audience.) That said, audiences seldom complain that your font size is too big! Stand at the back of the room and take off your glasses—if you can still read the slides, they're fine.

- Learn the neat features of PPT. You must learn how to add visuals. It's easy to practice—open PPT and open your MSIE browser. In the browser, press **CTL PrintScrn**. Then, in PPT click on a blank slide and press **CTL V** (or right click—paste). Voila! You've just pasted a

screenshot into PPT. Easy as pie. There are other ways, and there are few excuses not to include screenshots of visuals of search pages from your databases, websites, digital photos, etc. You can then easily pull in the graphics toolbar in PPT and crop and size your images to fit.

- Learn how to draw attention to what you want your audience to see. PPT has easy-to-use arrows, color, bars, boxes, and circles that help you draw attention to specific items. Not everyone sees what you see, so help them out.

- Use the spellcheck function. How surprising it is that folks who would never release a misspelled Word document or e-mail to their executives or colleagues will run a PPT slide set without spellchecking it! Don't you just hate it when a presentation is derailed by giggles over editing errors? Everyone in the audience, not just you, loses their train of thought.

- Last, people are sick of the standard, out-of-the-box, canned PPT backgrounds. If your organization has a corporate standard, you may want to use that, since the design is comfortable for your internal groups. You can also easily design your own template—it's fun and gets your creative juices flowing. There are many places where you can buy or acquire free PPT templates that are professionally done and are less likely to have that "*Oh-no!-Not-Dad's-tie-again*" feeling. Check out these two or search "PowerPoint Templates" (add "free" if you like) as a phrase in your favorite Web search engine:

Presenter's University: <http://www.presentersuniversity.com/>

The Microsoft Office site also offers tips and templates: <http://office.microsoft.com/home/default.aspx>

I have included a few good sites below that offer useful reading or resources. In addition, I highly rec-

ommend this article from Harvard Business School's free newsletter, *Working Knowledge for Business Leaders*:

"Crafting a Powerful Executive Summary," by John Clayton: http://hbswk.hbs.edu/pubitem.jhtml?id=3660&t=career_effectiveness

If you can craft your presentation so that your decisionmakers can understand it quickly and still provide detailed and professional back-up information, you will be well on the way to getting endorsement for your strategic ideas, the funding for those databases your users need, and the technology plan that will allow you to be enormously successful.

References

"The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint," by Edward Tufte: <http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint>

Columbia Accident Investigation Board Report: http://www.caib.us/news/report/pdf/vol1/full/caib_report_volume1.pdf

"PowerPoint Is Evil: Power Corrupts. PowerPoint Corrupts Absolutely," by Edward Tufte: http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/11.09/ppt2_pr.html

Steven Bell's PowerPoint and Presentation Skills Resource Page: <http://staff.philau.edu/bells/ppt.html>

"Survey Shows How to Stop Annoying Audiences with Bad PowerPoint," by Dave Paradi: http://www.usingtechnology.com/articles/pptsurvey_article.htm

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Staying Up to Date in the Ever-Changing Web Search World

Refine Your Web-Searching Skills

By Rita Vine

If google can be a verb, Web search must be a very hot topic. Numerous articles appear in the popular press about search engines, search skills, and "great" Web search sites. These days, it seems that everyone's an expert on Web search.

Web search isn't just hot news, it's big business.¹ The Web search advertising marketplace has grown enormously over the past year, and predictions for future growth of major search properties such as MSN Search, Yahoo!, and Google remain strong. Many people working in and around the search business—including marketing

consultants, search engine optimizers, technology writers, and librarians—are working hard to distinguish themselves from other experts in the field.

The vehicle of choice for many Web search professionals is an electronic newsletter. Cheap, easy to produce, and deliverable in many formats, subscription newsletters that provide news and views on aspects of Web searching are a proven way to reach potential customers. Most are free, so all the reader needs to do is select and subscribe.

The crowded newsletter marketplace makes newsletter selection challenging. There is no one perfect newsletter or updater service. Busy information professionals must select the best updater

Rita Vine is a professional librarian and co-founder of Workingfaster.com (<http://www.workingfaster.com>), which helps professionals break through the clutter of the Internet and access information that matters. Rita teaches Web searching to clients across North America and serves on the selection team of the Search Portfolio (<http://www.searchportfolio.com>), an enterprise product of the 100 top starting points for searching the free Web. She contributes to the glut of Web search newsletters with SiteLines: Ideas on Internet Searching, which is available online, by e-mail subscription, and through RSS feed at <http://www.workingfaster.com/sitelines>.

services for their specific needs, and find the best and most efficient ways to scan their selected services at the desktop. How, in the maze of choices, do you select the best Web search update tools for your personal and professional needs?

Types of Web Search News Services

There are thousands of free online news and current awareness services. Many are devoted to the topic of Web search and search engines; others may include information beyond Web search content. Technological advances enable newsletter creators to deliver news content in several different formats. Weblogs (also known as blogs) are probably the most popular option for update services. Blogging software enables a writer to quickly generate and post an information item in chronological order to a specific Web site without knowing much about Web page creation.

Many blogs are configured to optionally deliver the same content in newsfeed format. A newsfeed is a distribution channel of information through a syndicate for publication. A newsfeed (often called an RSS feed²) allows potential users to view some Web site content without actually having to visit the site.

The content is coded to display in specialized newsreader software (and many other formats), which permits the reader to update and follow several news services without having to visit several different Web sites.

E-mail newsletters, wherein an author sends periodic newsletters to a mailing list of subscribers, remain a popular distribution option. Newsletters arrive in your e-mailbox. Like weblogs, some e-mail newsletters may also have RSS feed options: this information will usually appear on the newsletter's Web site.

Some Web-based newsletters are available only on the Web—they may be configured as weblogs or simply as Web pages that the author updates from time to time. The onus is on the reader to revisit the site occasionally to see what's new.

While almost all update services have a public Web presence, subscription options vary. Some have RSS feeds for newsreader software; others have e-mail subscription options; others have neither. Newsfeed format is the best choice for ease of access, as well as simplified printing, downloading, and saving of newsletter content. Fully functional newsreader software enables the user to link to a variety of news channels with a

simple URL. Once the channels are linked by the software, one click enables the software to retrieve updated news postings to the channel; mark old postings as read (so you don't end up rereading posts); and make light work of downloading, printing, and saving content.

The example in figure 1 is a screen shot of my own personal newsreader software. I use Newz Crawler (<http://www.newzcrawler.com>), which holds approximately 50 channels that I currently follow for my work as an Internet trainer and Web site selector. The list of channels is in the left-hand sidebar. It looks much like any computer directory. The list includes links from both RSS feeds and basic Web pages, which can also be linked by the newsreader software. The software enables rapid updating and catch-up, and has features that newsletter writers can use to quickly download, transfer, save, and auto-blog to their own weblogs. The software makes it easy to scroll through headlines at a glance and enables me to focus on the news items of greatest importance to me and ignore the rest.



Figure 1. Screen shot of newsreader software: Newz Crawler

Keeping your newsletter subscriptions together inside newsreader software saves a great deal of time. Since most information professionals will want to follow several update services, keeping them together for easy access makes sense. If newsreader software is unsuitable or unavailable, a good second option is to use e-mail subscription services. The easiest way to keep e-mail newsletters together is to create a rule in your e-mail reader software so that new updates are transferred automatically to a special e-mail folder.

Top Picks for Staying Up to Date

Because there are so many Web search newsletters and update services, it's best to select writers who spend most or all of their time either searching, teaching about searching, or consulting on searching. These writers are best able to provide value-added analysis to Web search news and not simply restate a press release or company announcement.

Here are some of my favorite Web newsletters and update services; all are free unless otherwise stated.

News for Information Professionals

Librarian Gary Price's *ResourceShelf* for information professionals (<http://www.resourceshelf.com>) is one of the

best-known update services for information professionals, and the service also has a strong following among journalists. ResourceShelf delivers all the major (and plenty of minor) news on new databases, services, and articles of interest to librarians, and reports them quickly and simply. Because of the sheer quantity of information reported, analysis is minimal, but Price offers a number of helpful comments and remarks on selected items. His "research-is-more-than-Google" bias colors much of his commentary. Information professionals who want a quick take on a broad range of topics (searching, resources, digital libraries, library news, information politics) will enjoy following this service. It is produced in weblog format; readers can also subscribe to a weekly e-mail of highlights or pick up the link to the RSS feed from the Web site.

TVC Alert: Law librarian Genie Tyburski maintains an excellent business and legal search starter site, the Virtual Chase (<http://virtualchase.com>), for Philadelphia law firm Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll. TVC Alert is her almost-daily news service, which includes several short news pieces of interest to business and legal searchers. Tyburski is particularly adept at catching the major news items and ignoring the minor ones, and many of the items in TVC Alert will be interesting to any serious searcher. E-mail subscription options can be found at <http://www.virtualchase.com/tvcalert>; an RSS feed is also available.

LLRX.com is produced and edited by law librarian Sabrina Pacifici and contains contributions by many external writers and researchers. More a law research portal than an update service, the heart of LLRX.com is its links to major legal sources for U.S. researchers. A Web "zine" is a monthly feature of the site, and each issue includes a half-dozen articles broadly related to Web searching, with a focus on legal and government resources. Recent articles have included a guide to U.S. Supreme Court research, Canadian legal sources on the Web, and a guide to the Israeli legal system. Much like TVC Alert, LLRX.com is geared to legal researchers but is interesting to any serious Web searcher. Browse the site at <http://www.llrx.com>, subscribe by e-mail, or add the RSS feed to your news-reader software.

The Lowdown on Search Engines

Greg Notess, a librarian at Montana State University, is a well-known writer and speaker on various aspects of Web searching. His Web search showcase site, Search Engine Showdown (<http://www.searchengineshowdown.com>), is an excellent source of information on the major spidered search engines. The site includes a "Features Chart" of the major engines, ordered by database size, with at-a-glance links to reviews (Notess' own), as well as information on third-party databases that serve up algorithmic and paid search results. Notess also maintains an infrequently updated weblog at Search Engine Showdown with key news about the search engines, plus some independent analysis and test results from his own search notes. Notess is one of the true experts on the search capabilities and behaviors of spidered search engines. Every information professional who relies on search engines (and who doesn't?) should visit the site monthly to check out news and features updates. Those who rely extensively on search engines should add the weblog's RSS feed to their news-reader software.

Search Engine Watch (<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/>), part of the Internet.com family of brands, provides analysis of the search engine industry and help to site owners trying to improve their ability to be found in search engines. The site was created by Danny Sullivan, an Internet consultant and journalist, and is now co-edited by Web search consultant and writer Chris Sherman. Like LLRX.com, Search Engine Watch is a portal for search engine information, including but not limited to news about search engines and content providers. A monthly "Search Engine Report" consolidates many of the month's news stories, while "SearchDay" delivers daily news and short features.

The site focuses on information about the business side of searching and developments in the search engine optimization industry. Much of the information on the site is free, but value-added extras, like longer articles and access to key optimization tips, are available to paid subscribers. Search Engine Watch provides announcements of important new search engine features, key business deals between the search engines,



and other business-related news, although ResourceShelf, TVC Alert, and Search Engine Showdown also pick up many of the same headlines. Although clearly intended for Web search optimizers, this site can also be suitable for Web searchers who use a variety of commercial search tools and need to know more about how content and paid results are delivered.

Everything Google

Google is constantly introducing and testing new features, and implements them on the public site without a lot of warning. Google doesn't sponsor its own weblog or other discussion group,³ so a mini-industry of weblogs by Google-watchers has evolved to ensure that the rest of us are aware of anything Google-related. The news is peppered with plenty of Google-love and Google-bashing (a popular topic in the wake of Google's forthcoming initial public stock offering). Alas, because anyone can be a self-declared expert, and Google is such a popular—make that universal—brand, the commentaries put forward may not always be correct—or even informed. Readers will also be surprised at how many stories simply restate the same information (often from company press releases) with practically no elaboration or analysis—so a healthy dose of skepticism is important when following these sites.

If you really need to Google-watch, Watching Google Like a Hawk (<http://wglah.com>) is a good consolidator of Google-related weblog content that allows readers to double- and

triple-check information among a variety of alleged experts. WGLAH links to Google stories from business and technology magazines, optimization newsletters, and personal weblogs. Editor Frank Hayson, a management consultant, hand-picks the items from news aggregators and updates the site several times a day. At present the only way to access the site is via the Web.

Finding New and Interesting Web Sites

Keepers of Web link pages need quick and reliable sources of new search sites to consider for their link pages. ResourceShelf features new sites, but if you want more sources, a few of the major link portals offer notification services of new sites that have been added to their databases. Librarians Index to the Internet (<http://www.lii.org>) has a "What's New?" section linked from the main page, and an optional RSS feed at <http://lii.org/ntw.rss>. Infomine (<http://infomine.ucr.edu>) offers an e-mail-only update service by subscription at http://infomine.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/alert_service_editor?screen_name=main. The long-standing Scout Report delivers a small but choice collection of annotated links every Friday at <http://scout.wisc.edu/Reports/ScoutReport/Current/>. E-mail subscription options are available on the Web site. Marylaine Block maintains Neat New Stuff I Found on the Web This Week at <http://marylaine.com/neatnew.html>, which contains a dozen or so annotated entries each week. E-mail subscription options are available at <http://marylaine.com/subscribe.html>. The El Dorado County Public Library

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maintains What's Hot on the Internet This Week, another selective, annotated list of good Web resources, at <http://www.eldoradolibrary.org/thisweek.htm>. No subscription options are currently available. "New and Noteworthy Sites" is featured in every issue of the Internet Resources Newsletter (<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW/irn/irn.html>). This British newsletter is particularly good at linking to resources from outside of North America that, for some reason, many other site announcement services seem to miss. On the downside, some of the linked resources are too commercial for many library link collections.

Finding Current Awareness Services

If you need to go beyond the list of services in this article, NewsisFree (<http://www.newsisfree.com>) has a good searchable list of RSS feeds on all topics. Arlene Eis of InfoSources Publishing produces the Informed Librarian (<http://www.informedlibrarian.com>), a monthly e-mail update with links to more than 100 online journals and news services for librarians. LibDex maintains a list of RSS feeds for almost 100 library-related weblogs at <http://www.libdex.com/weblogs.html>. Steven Cohen and Blake Carver keep a similar list of about 50 of the most popular library-related RSS feeds at <http://www.lisfeeds.com>.

What Are Your Goals for Current Awareness?

All information professionals need to stay up-to-date on Web search—but everyone's current awareness needs are unique. For example, an independent business researcher who uses the Web extensively may need to keep up-to-date on new business and statistical search sources, plus information on new advanced search techniques for Google. A teacher librarian may need to stay current with the best sites for online lesson plans or search sites that have preselected resources for children in elementary school. An academic librarian who uses the Web occasionally to supplement a large online database and licensed journal collection may need only to make occasional and minor adjustments in her Web search toolkit and may not need to exploit the Web fully on a regular basis.

Goals help you stay on track and stay focused on your real needs. They provide benchmarks that enable you to test the update tool against the stated need. Don't try to stay up-to-date on everything. (You never will, and you'll

give up in frustration.) Instead, select the services that best meet your actual needs, and carve out a small amount of time each week to track the accumulated news of the services that you select. Periodically reassess the services you subscribe to—did the service that looked so great two months ago produce any really important news for you? If not, reconsider the value of including it in your update portfolio.

Keeping Up to Date—An Essential Part of Professional Life

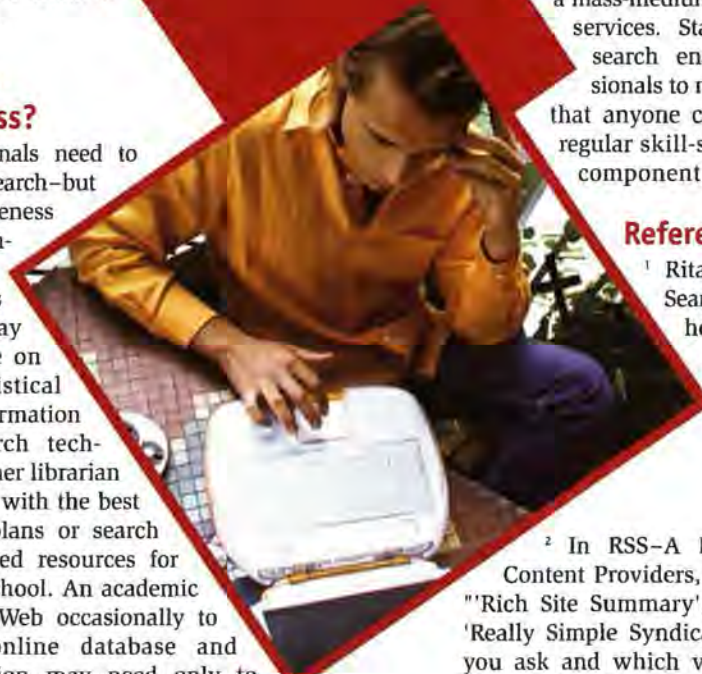
Many information professionals worry that their users know more about the Web than they do. Refined skills in Web search are critical in a consumer-driven information world where everyone thinks they can search the Web by popping keywords into Google. Expertise in Web search includes not just awareness and use of advanced search features of search engines, but the knowledge of high-quality alternative Web resources for online information retrieval. Unlike books, which are static once printed, the Web is a moving target—good Web search sites go bad, others change their focus, and some disappear altogether. However much we wish that the Web would slow down a little so we could catch up, that's unlikely to happen as the Internet achieves the status of a mass-medium marketplace of goods and services. Staying up-to-date on Web search enables information professionals to move beyond the mythology that anyone can do a Web search, and regular skill-sharpening is an essential component of professional value.

References

¹ Rita Vine, "The Business of Search Engines: Understanding how Web advertising, partnerships, and the race for market dominance affect search tools and search results." *Information Outlook* (February 2004).

² In RSS—A Primer for Publishers & Content Providers, M. Moffat defines RSS as "Rich Site Summary", 'RDF Site Summary' or 'Really Simple Syndication' depending on who you ask and which version they are speaking about." http://www.eevl.ac.uk/rss_primer/, last visited January 14, 2004.

³ The sole exception is GoogleGuy Says, a thread of posts from a Google employee, reproduced on <http://www.markcarey.com/googleguy-says/> from GoogleGuy's posts in the webmaster forums of WebMaster World (<http://www.webmasterworld.com/>).



Valuating Information Intangibles

Measuring the Bottom Line Contribution of Librarians and Information Professionals

by Frank H. Portugal, Ph. D

A determination of the bottom line value of libraries and information centers has proven difficult due to the intangible nature of the value and the use of archaic accounting systems that for the most part focus on tangible or physical assets rather than intangible ones. The problem is that the intangible value of libraries and information centers may be orders of magnitude greater than their tangible value. To overcome some of these measurement difficulties this workbook presents four different approaches to the intangible valuation of information resources.



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Everything I Know About Promoting the Library I Learned from Bad Sales Reps

By Adam Bennington

On the Behavior of Vendors

Human behavior is fascinating. Spend an hour or two watching people in a coffee shop, a bar, on the street, wherever, and you'll see some interesting (and sometimes scary) things. The behavior of salespeople—particularly that of library vendors—is especially interesting. Some will bend over backwards to make the sale through a pleasurable "transaction experience." Others are akin to a sleazy used car salesman, whose sales skills are, shall we say, "less developed" than those of their counterparts. Fortunately, librarians can learn from both types of salespeople. This article focuses on certain vendor behaviors I have witnessed and what I've learned from them about promoting the library.

Setting the Scene

My boss likes to say I am a "punk kid" librarian, meaning I'm a young, freshly minted

MLIS. I work in the State Farm Corporate Library and Information Center, and in one year on the job, I have seen numerous representatives from library support and supply companies walk through the doors. Because we are attached to a large corporation (which creates the illusion that we roll around in money in our cubicles), lots of companies try to sell us products. Some representatives have been excellent. Others have been dreadful. The dreadful ones really surprised me. I thought representatives from the companies I heard about in library school would be very slick and polished. But after meeting some of them, reality slapped me in the face and I realized that not all reps exhibit good salesmanship or even polite behavior. Call it country boy naiveté....

Adam Bennington earned his MS in library and information science from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He is a librarian at the State Farm Corporate Library Information Center in Bloomington, Illinois, and can be contacted at adam.bennington.i6gl@statefarm.com.

While watching the minutes of my life drip away during a presentation I have since filed in the "don't ever do this to a patron" category, I started thinking about how I could do things differently with our clients. It was kind of

like when you're a kid and you promise yourself you will never, ever do to your children what your parents just did to you. I tried to imagine how I could make the transaction experience between the librarian/library and the client something clients would feel good about and talk about to their friends and co-workers. The actions I came up with seemed like simple, but realistic, methods to provide "value-added" service that would please clients and lead them to promote the library through word of mouth.

Disclaimer!

Before I get to the juicy stories, I want to state that I have no intention of naming names. That would be petty and invite litigation. In fact, I've tried to be as vague as possible when describing events. All vendors are, therefore, referred to as Vendor X and using the male pronouns. It is enough to provide these anecdotes as examples of what librarians should not do to our customers. It's also fair to note that along with meeting a few really bad salespeople, I have also met some really outstanding ones. In fact, most reps fall somewhere between "Okay" and "Great." One even went to the trouble of getting me parking information for a nonbusiness-related trip I took to her city! (I hope she is reading this and knows who she is.) I learned good interaction techniques from these people and have tried to incorporate them into my interactions with clients as well.

Case Study 1: I'm sorry, was I in the room?

It was time for our annual visit from Vendor X. We don't see this vendor often, but we don't buy a lot from the company either. My boss was in another meeting when X arrived. I met with the vendor, showed him to our conference room, and introduced him to the other two staff members present. Vendor X immediately and almost solely addressed the oldest staff member. This staff member specifically told X she did not use the product. That didn't seem to faze him; he continued right on giving the sales pitch directly to her. My colleague and I obviously fell into the "punk kids" category and were almost completely ignored. When our boss entered the room, everyone ceased to exist but her. The coup de grace was when the rep turned his back on the rest of us to address the boss for a half-hour or so. This did not go unnoticed, especially by the boss.

What I Learned: I learned when addressing a group, it's good to address everyone in the room and make eye contact with each person on a regular basis. This makes clients feel I'm trying to connect with them, that they are important to me. Paying attention to people always generates positive feelings. No one likes feeling left out, and people notice when a friend or colleague is snubbed. Even though one person in the room may be higher on the food chain than the others, they are all clients or potential clients. And the person "in charge" is



probably relying on the opinions of others to make a decision on whether to use library services. Also, the manager may not be the person to make the final decision. What's needed is good presentation skills. Get them. Impress and connect with everyone, and you'll make new friends.

Update: This year Vendor X sent not one, but two very knowledgeable reps who were pleasant to deal with. We even bought another product from them!

Case Study 2: Over-share

Over-sharing is relating information inappropriate for the setting or the type of relationship between two parties. For example: You are sitting by yourself or perhaps talking with colleagues when another person, who you really don't know very well, launches into a discussion about relationship problems, an obsession with occult objects, or how he has stolen pages of rare manuscripts from libraries around the country. In our case, a rep who we'd just met went into a tirade about how proud he was that he had recently upset a local government official. The conversation then migrated to drinking preferences. The comments were way off the topic at hand and far too informal for a professional discussion among relative strangers.

What I Learned: I learned that as a librarian I need to be friendly, but professional. Over-sharing with clients can make them feel uncomfortable. If people are not comfortable, they won't take away a pleasant experience from the library, won't open up with their information needs, may not get the information they need, and probably won't darken my cubicle threshold again. A friendly but professional attitude makes people feel comfortable and makes the librarian look credible. Friendly draws people in, professional satisfies their information needs.

Case Study 3: Cud

Have you ever watched a cow eat? For those of you who grew up in rural areas or had friends who raised cattle (I did both), it's a common sight, but not necessarily a pretty one. I couldn't stop thinking that was what Vendor X looked like when he smacked and chomped his way through an hour-and-a-half demonstration. It was more than a little distracting and affected the rep's ability to speak clearly. At least X's breath was minty fresh, which is much better than the cow's.

What I Learned: I don't need to eat when I'm giving presentations, tours, instruction, or working the reference desk. I'm typically a messy person as it is, but grease and bits o' Big Mac on my face and shirt are not the image I want to present. Nor do I want to give clients the impression my chili cheese fries are of greater importance than their information needs. When I give clients my full attention, they seem pleased.

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Eating/drinking/chewing also affects the ability to speak clearly, which just makes you look like a twit. On the other hand, offering cookies can be enormously rewarding. (See Case Study 4.)

Case Study 4: Beware those not bearing gifts

College and grad school taught me the true meaning of the word "scavenger." I crashed department parties and receptions (not necessarily my own department, mind you) for food and dinnerware. I really enjoyed a free mini-weenie on a toothpick and the pack of dental floss being given out in the student center for signing my name away. When vendors come and don't bring something, my scavenger instincts kick in. How dare they enter my library without a gift! Perhaps that's going a bit too far, but some vendors fail to bring product literature or even business cards. On the other hand, the reps from one company we buy from nearly always bring pens or sticky notes or informational literature or something. We are always glad to see them.

What I Learned: I learned that I am, by nature, a greedy person... and there are others like me. More important, I learned that if the budget allows, bring people "stuff." "Stuff" goes a long way toward making both the librarian and the library visit memorable. If nothing else, clients get a physical reminder that the library exists. And by gifts I'm not talking about first edition copies of *David Copperfield* for everyone in the room. I'm talking little things like logoed pens, bookmarks, and notepads. If you have money for those items, that's great. We don't, so instead we sometimes give out candy, cookies, instructional handouts, or at the very least, informational literature about the library. My boss has been known to simply make a couple of bowls of microwave popcorn for meetings with clients. We also try to keep a small jar of candy, which typically disappears quickly, on the reference desk. And never underestimate the power of a two-dollar box of brownies. But try to be creative. If the client has 40 pens or has eaten his weight in brownies, it's time for something different. Giving people things is a gesture of goodwill that generates goodwill in return and creates a pleasant experience. Clients are getting more than a book. They are getting a brownie and a book. Does it get any better than that? (Perhaps a beer and a book, but that violates our company policies on alcohol.)



Case Study 5: Trash talkin'

We crowded in anticipation around a computer terminal as, you guessed it, Vendor X began the spiel about Acme Library Products. To heavily paraphrase X: "Our president is nuts. He's just crazy to have put together this product. I mean, to search through all those books and enter this data? And he's nuts about detail and accuracy, too. He's weird." This comment portrayed X's boss as an anal vulture watching over his data entry staff like a shopper looking for a parking spot at the mall the day after Thanksgiving. It also downplayed the importance librarians place on accuracy. But wait, the antics continued. Later in the demo, we ran across the name of a doctor in the database being demonstrated that was distinctly Middle Eastern in origin. Upon encountering this name, X said, "Ah... You probably don't want to go to this guy. Sounds like he wears the towel." Jaws dropped.

What I Learned: Don't talk trash about anyone, ever. There is a joke among State Farm employees that we are "inbred," meaning multiple family members, and in some cases whole families, work for the company, perhaps even in the same building or unit. (How husbands and wives do this, I'll never know.) You never know who knows whom exactly, so it's important to watch what you say about other people. The same is true in any setting. Further, when people hear a slur against a friend or a group they are part of, they often get defensive and possibly hostile. If your client is already upset about a situation like this, you can pretty much forget about the person opening up with his information needs during the rest of the reference interview. He may be afraid that you're going to badmouth

him later. This is going to be obvious to most, but not offending clients by making derisive comments helps them to have a pleasant transaction experience. Enough said.

Case Study 6: Eye of the... dairy cow?

This one is for you children of the '80s or those who had children in the '80s. Remember Ben Stein's character from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*? He briefly, but memorably, plays an economics teacher with all the enthusiasm of a dairy cow. He drones on in his monotone voice while writing on the chalkboard. His students appear equally excited as they literally drool on their desks from boredom. We've had vendors visit the library and show about as much enthusiasm for their products as Ben's character showed toward economics. These proved to be very long demonstrations, and typically we were not impressed with the products.

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What I Learned: I learned to have mercy on my audience by showing enthusiasm for the library and its services! The well-worn phrase "enthusiasm is contagious" is true. If you believe the library and its services are great, you can transmit that belief to others. You can make people feel good about the library and their experience with it. Enthusiasm helps convince clients that the library's services are necessary and they are making a good decision by using them. You don't need to be a peppy head cheerleader, but a smile, inflection in your voice, and some gestures go a long way toward creating a good transaction experience during demonstrations, tours, and reference interviews. If nothing else, they help to keep people awake.

Case Study 7: Why did you bring a knife to the gunfight, or unfulfilled desires

At this year's SLA conference, I noticed Vendor X's news database had a really neat new alert service. We already subscribe to the news service, so I picked up some of the literature and approached the representative. Unfortunately, the rep informed me the service was available only to school (K-12) libraries. Although I'm sure there were primary school librarians in attendance, most of the librarians I met were attached to, well... special libraries: corporate information centers, historical societies, hospitals, law firms, and so on. The package, although high on the coolness scale, was therefore useless to the majority of attendants. I was really disappointed and thought the vendor was a dope for advertising a product to several thousand people, most of whom could never use it.



What I Learned: I learned to put the library's products and services in a context that fits the user's information needs. In other words, I make sure I'm talking about the right services and resources to the right people. People are pleased when you give them what they need. Offering the wrong items for the work at hand makes people think the library doesn't have what they need or that the librarian is incompetent. I also learned it's a good idea to gather a little background on clients before going into meetings or tours, so I can tell the clients about the services and resources that may most interest them. No sense offering ice to Eskimos in January or dangling a heater in front of them and then pulling it away.

Why make the client's transaction experience pleasant?

Marketing is currently a hot topic in all types of libraries. Part of marketing—the final part—is promotion. Pleasing our clients (patrons, customers, or whatever we are now calling people who use the library) is the best way to promote the library, the librarian, and the library profession and hence plays a subtle, but incredibly important, role in marketing all three entities.

Think about it. If you have a bad experience at a restaurant, will you go back? Probably not. And if you're like me, you go on endless tirades to anyone who will listen about what a terrible experience you had (while avoiding the offense of over-sharing, of course). Conversely, you'll probably spread positive information about a restaurant you liked and continue to spend your money at that establishment. The same is true for the library and the librarian. Word gets around about both bad and good deeds. Read any marketing text (library-related or otherwise) and you'll find that providing positive transaction experiences trumps all other promotional methods because word of mouth will spread about these experiences.

No, making brownies and being enthusiastic isn't going to suddenly show the Powers That Be how the library is worth every penny being spent on it. You are going to need very different tactics for those battles. The point of the actions above is to make a good impression so clients will remember the library and the librarian favorably and seek out both when they need information.

Conclusion

As you can see from these anecdotes, pleasing clients isn't difficult (at least most of the time). Pleasing people and promoting the library is sometimes as simple as not annoying clients in the first place. Many of the "insights" above are simple aspects of good customer service with a little something extra tacked on. Although they seem like common sense, these stories show that some people haven't quite figured out these principles. I'm sure you have had similar experiences. I therefore challenge you to take those experiences and learn how to use them to gain "prophetic" insights that will better satisfy your clients. So go forth and aim to please and to promote. Remember, if you don't, someone else will! ●

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March 9
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Computers in Libraries 2004
March 10-12
Washington, DC USA
<http://www.infotoday.com/cil2004>

📍 **Intranet Research, Analysis & Marketing: Now That You've Built It-Get Them to Come**
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SCIP
March 22-25
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<http://www.scip.org/boston/index.asp>

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May 21-26
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2004 Information Resources Management Association International Conference
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