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Information Outlook, August 2007

Special Libraries Association

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Special Libraries Association, "Information Outlook, August 2007" (2007). *Information Outlook, 2007*. 6. https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/sla_io_2007/6

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

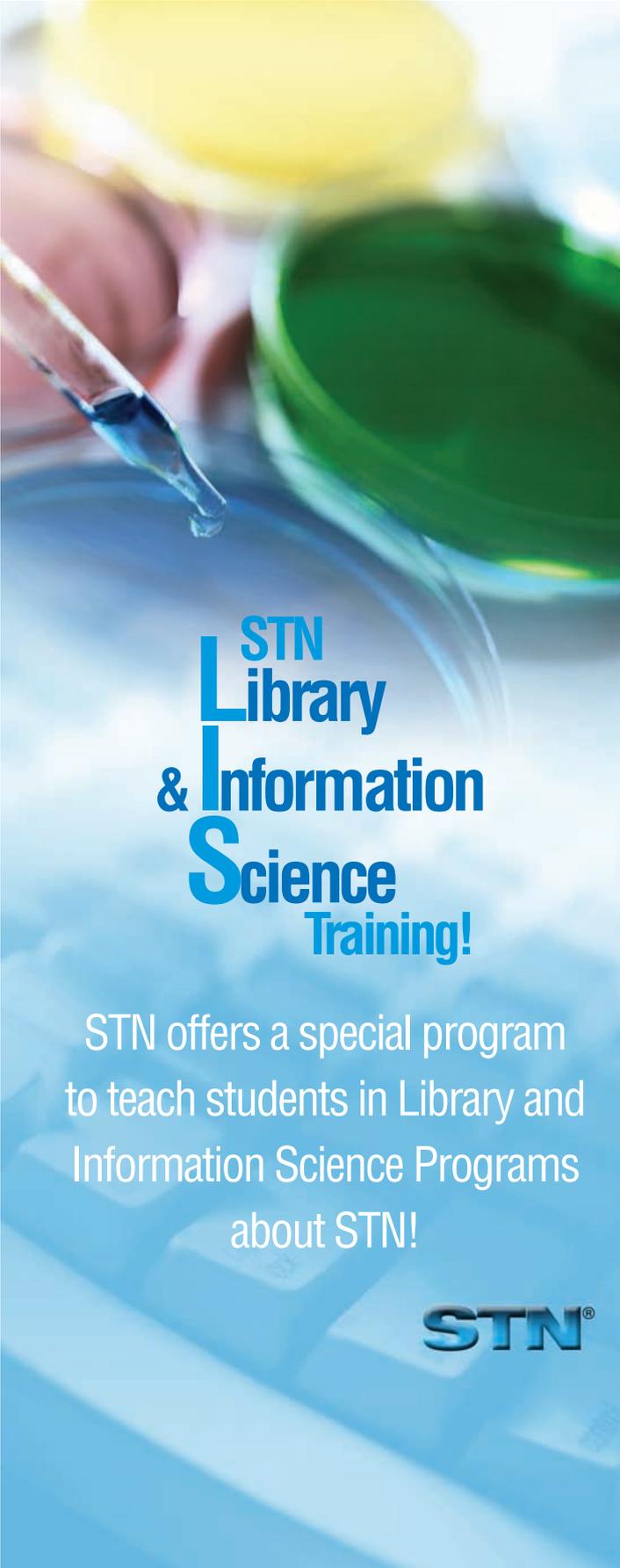
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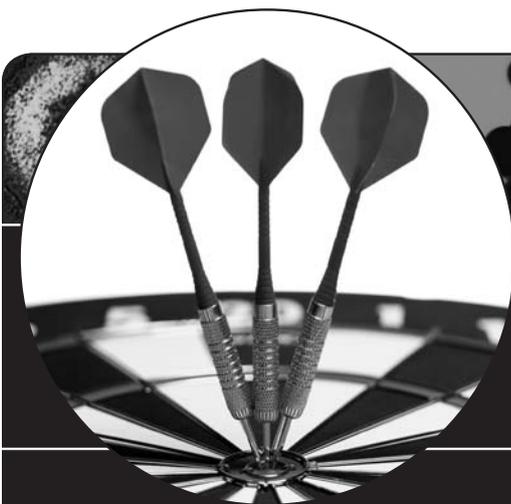
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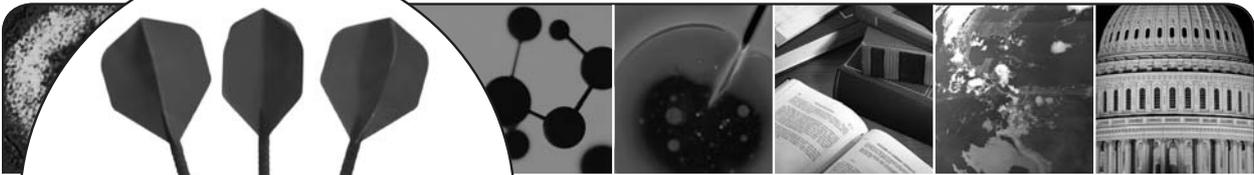
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08

07

V 11 | N 08

information outlook

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION



Focus: Contributed Papers

- 8 SLA's Showcase of New Ideas**
BRANDY KING
- 12 The Power of Storytelling**
SANDY BRADLEY, BARBARA LUPEI,
AND MARY RAY
- 18 Social Search Comes of Age**
DEBORAH RICHMAN
- 26 RSS Feeds Create Added Value for Special Libraries**
LAUREE G. HART

INFO VIEW

- 5 Info Pros Are Perfectly Positioned For Success, Expansion in the Future**
JANICE R. LACHANCE, CEO

INFO NEWS

- 6 Partnership Extends Free-Access Journal Agreement For Researchers in World's Poorest Countries**

INFO SITES

- 7 Check Out the Click University Web Site**
CAROLYN J. SOSNOWSKI

SLA MEMBER PROFILE

- 30 Librarian in Exile**
FORREST GLENN SPENCER

INFO TECH

- 36 Politics and Research: To Run a Campaign, You Can't Have One Without the Other**
STEPHEN ABRAM

INFO RIGHTS

- 38 Monitoring Legal and Illegal Use of Digital Content**
LESLEY ELLEN HARRIS

- 41 Coming Events Ad Index**

INFO BUSINESS

- 42 Developing Your Library's Strategy Requires More than a Once-a-Year Planning Session**
DEBBIE SCHACHTER

INFO MANAGEMENT

- 44 What I Learned This Summer: You Never Stop Learning**
JOHN LATHAM



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information outlook

The Monthly Magazine of the
Special Libraries Association
Vol. 11, No. 08
August 2007

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Information Outlook®

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

2007 Subscription Rates:

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

Postmaster:

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

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Info Pros Are Perfectly Positioned For Success, Expansion in the Future

SLA is here to help, with networking, educational opportunities, technological advances, national conferences, and local meetings.

BY JANICE R. LACHANCE, CEO



It has been said that reflection on the past is a sure way to honor it in the present. As I think about the recent SLA 2007 in Denver, I find myself inevitably returning to the remarks by our keynote speaker, former Vice President Al Gore.

SLA is extremely fortunate to have many bright and successful members and partners who articulate clearly and effectively the value information professionals provide to their respective companies and organizations. Unfortunately, their words sometimes fall on deaf ears. That is why it is reassuring that a person of Vice President Gore's vision and stature, someone with his depth of background in global policy matters and new media, recognizes the critical role info pros play and is passionate about it. I was particularly impressed by his assessment of the changes the information profession is undergoing and how these changes are affecting you directly.

"And, of course, it's not secret that in this day and time you face a challenge not only in keeping up with the incredible explosion of information on every topic relevant to the organizations you serve—but also a challenge in describing to some people who ought to know better who you are and what you do and why it's increasingly important to everyone," the former vice president said.

While Mr. Gore addressed forthrightly the challenges many of you and the profession face, he also made a point of praising SLA for its efforts in public advocacy. "I'm also

very grateful to your organization for taking the initiative to speak up and to speak out about the many information policy questions that have to be dealt with deftly and well if we're going to make our way through the 21st century," he said.

In addition to his previous service in government, Mr. Gore is chairman of Generation Investment Management, co-founder and chairman of the Current TV network and chairman of the Alliance for Climate Protection. He also serves on the board of directors of Apple Computer, Inc., and is a senior advisor to Google, Inc. His knowledge of information technology and the importance of info pros make him an important ally.

Unquestionably, we need more allies like Mr. Gore in companies and organizations throughout the world. But the truth is, no one can explain your value to your organization better than you. That is why it is so important you continue to educate senior management inside your organizations about the critical services you provide and the significant contributions you make. I strongly encourage you to communicate to management whenever you can the business reasons your position should continue to grow and to think strategically about your organization's ultimate goals and objectives as often as possible.

SLA is committed to helping you in this important undertaking. The association understands your need to remain proficient and up to date on the latest advances and trends in

information acquisition, management, and delivery. That is why SLA is committed to providing training designed to increase your professional knowledge and to enhance your career. Through SLA's Click University, we are making available to you easily accessible and affordable online learning programs and are providing you with access to more than 1,000 business, leadership, and management books free of charge.

We also are working hard to provide you with networking opportunities such as the SLA Annual Conference and INFO-EXPO and other local unit gatherings. These events can help you develop a network of contacts who are more than willing to assist you with ideas about a project at work or even help you find a first or next job.

Finally, SLA is making a significant investment in technologies that will increase your ability to collaborate with your colleagues around the globe. While a primary goal of the association's technology efforts is to encourage online networking and collaboration, we also are creating a laboratory in which members can experiment in a risk-free environment with different collaborative tools.

I believe Mr. Gore was correct when he said information will be a key business resource in the future and, "Most organizations that are in a competitive environment now understand that the ability to hire the best information professionals...is a strategic and competitive advantage in today's world."

You are in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills to shape the future of the information profession. I believe you will do just that. **SLA**

Info File

Writing for Information Outlook

Information Outlook welcomes queries from authors about articles of interest to information professionals. For writer's guidelines and a current editorial calendar, see www.sla.org/content/Shop/Information/writingforio/index.cfm or write to editor@sla.org. Please allow six to eight weeks for acceptance.

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Comments on articles or opinions on any topic of interest to information professionals may be submitted as letters to the editor. They should be sent to editor@sla.org, with a subject line of "Letter to Editor." All letters should include the following: writer's name, SLA volunteer title (if applicable), city and state, and phone number. (We won't publish the phone number; but we may wish to call for verification.) Letters may be edited for brevity or clarity—or to conform to the publication's style. Letter writers will have an opportunity to approve extensive editing prior to publication.

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Partnership Extends Free-Access Journal Agreement For Researchers in World's Poorest Countries

Updates on the information profession and SLA.

More than 100 publishers, three United Nations agencies, two major universities and Microsoft have extended an agreement that will provide research journals to non-profit organizations in third-world countries until 2015.

The agreement was announced in July in a press briefing at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.

The three programs—HINARI (Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative), AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture), and OARE (Online Access to Research in the Environment)—provide research access to journals focusing on health, agriculture, and the environment to more than 100 of the world's poorest countries.

Derk Haank, CEO of Springer Science and Business Media, one of the participating publishers, said, "We are here for celebration, not only what we have achieved so far, but the commitment to 2015."

"A lot of things are in it for us," Haank said. "First of all, we want our material to be used. Secondly, access to countries where the buying power is limited. We support countries to develop; we do not support long-term dependence."

Microsoft, which joined the programs this year, will provide updated computer services to users.

Besides Springer, partners in the HINARI program include Blackwell Publishing, Elsevier Science, John Wiley and Sons, Yale University,

and a host of scholarly and research organizations. Together, they make more than 3,750 journal titles available online to 2,500 health institutions in 113 countries. The program operates under the U.N. World Health Organization.

AGORA was set up by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., along with major publishers. It provides access to a digital library collection of 958 journals in the fields of food, agriculture, environmental science, and related social sciences in 107 countries. Partners include Blackwell Publishing, CAB International, Elsevier, John Wiley and Sons, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Nature Publishing Group, Oxford University Press, Springer, Yale and Cornell University.

OARE, launched in 2006, lists three dozen founding partners. Coordinated by the United Nations Environment Program, it provides more than 1,300 titles and reaches 70 countries, with more to be added by 2008.

Access under each program is free to institutions in countries where the per-capita gross national product is below \$1,000 per year. In countries with per-capita GNP of \$1,000-\$3,000 per year, institutions may subscribe to all of a program's journals for \$1,000 annually. Institutions that cannot afford the \$1,000 fee still receive some of the journals for free.

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If You Missed Some Sessions at SLA 2007, Check Out the Click University Web Site

Or if you're looking for free online file converters, or product reviews, or even a list of which countries are likely to fail...

CAROLYN J. SOSNOWSKI, MLIS

Podcasts from SLA 2007

<http://sla.learn.com/learncenter.asp?page=230>

Is there a session from the SLA Annual Conference you couldn't get to? Or, maybe you can't read your handwritten notes? SLA's professional development team has uploaded more than 30 audio recordings (and some of the presentations themselves, when available) into Click University. Hear about copyright, embedded librarians, knowledge management, competitive intelligence, networking, tech trends, mashups, podcasting, and...beer and wine. While you are at Click U, check out the other offerings, too: a la carte Professional Improvement Libraries, the free course of the month, and replays of Click U Live! programs, among other courses.

Wize

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It's never too early to prepare for the holiday gift-giving season. Use Wize to access more than 7,300 sites with product information and reviews. Wize Rank is a score between 1 and 100 that indicates an overall product ranking. You can read a white paper about how the rank is determined, but rest assured it is "statistically sound," and incorporates reviews, expert and user, from many sources, big and small. As with most of the sites featured in this column, there are both browse and search functions to get you where you want to be. In My Research, save product information and notes. I bet you'll discover products you never even knew you needed.

The Fund for Peace: Failed States Index Scores 2007

www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=229&Itemid=366

More than 170 countries have been analyzed for the 2007 Failed States Index, which ranks countries by 12 social, economic, and political influences that affect peace and security. The list is ranked by overall score, but can be re-ordered by any of the criteria. Countries are rated by the CAST assessment system, developed by the Fund for Peace and used by several other governmental groups, to determine their vulnerability to internal conflict. The software uses "hundreds of thousands" of articles and reports to feed the analysis, which is also reviewed by experts. An article in the July issue of Foreign Policy further explains the complexity of the challenges in many of the top-ranked countries.

You Don't Look Like a Librarian

www.librarian-image.net

On the heels of the debut of The Hollywood Librarian and the "hip librarian" article in the New York Times, I thought you'd enjoy this site from Ruth Kneale that brings together Kneale's conference presentations (from SLA

2007: "Spectacles: Librarians and Pop Culture") and other resources about the images of our profession. Check out the links to her column archives, and Librarians @ Flickr (sort by "most interesting").

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GeoBee Challenge

www.nationalgeographic.com/geobee/index.html

If you need a short break in your day, or are preparing for your Jeopardy! debut, take the National Geographic GeoBee Challenge, which pulls questions from the National Geographic Bee. There are ten new questions each day that test your knowledge of geography, climate, and history. If you miss a day, you can access the quizzes from the previous two days.

PodZinger, covered in the October 2006 column, has become EveryZing... with the appropriate change in URL to www.everyzing.com. Now, search both podcasts and video. **SLA**



CAROLYN J. SOSNOWSKI, MLIS, is SLA's information specialist. She has 10 years of experience in libraries, including more than three years in SLA's Information Center. She can be reached at csosnowski@sla.org.



SLA's Showcase of New Ideas

BY BRANDY KING

"We were *really* surprised that our paper was chosen," says Anna Stoute. Anna and co-worker Natalie Waters (McGill University) wrote a 2006 Contributed Paper titled "Getting to Know Your Academic Community: The Approach of New Science Librarians Figuring It Out." Imagine how surprised they were the month after the conference when they were contacted by a publisher! Though they haven't yet taken up the offer to expand their paper into a book, they do hope to collaborate with other new professionals for the project in the upcoming year.

For more than 30 years, SLA has offered organization-wide Contributed Papers sessions at its annual conference. The opportunity to submit an abstract is open to all members, regardless of division, chapter, degree status, or affiliation. The only requirements are that at least one author be a member of SLA and attend the conference to present the paper. In the fall, a Call for Abstracts appears in *Information*

TIMELINE FOR CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

Call for abstracts—Announcements will begin appearing in the September *Information Outlook* and other SLA media.

Abstracts due—December 15

Notification of selected authors—January 31, 2008

Final papers due—May 1, 2008

Presentation of papers—June 15-18, 2008, in Seattle

To see papers from 2006 and 2007 visit www.sla.org/content/Events/conference/ac2006/conference/papers.cfm and www.sla.org/content/Events/conference/ac2007/conference/papers.cfm

Outlook and on the SLA Web site. Members submit one-page proposals in mid-December.

A selection committee chooses the abstracts based on how innovative the ideas are, how well the ideas connect to the conference theme, and how applicable the ideas are to a variety of SLA members. The blind peer-reviewed

selection process levels the playing field between students and professionals, regular contributors, and those who have no previous experience with publication or presentation.

Writers are notified in January whether their topic has been chosen, and if so, they go on to produce a full paper due in May. Authors make presenta-

tions based on their papers at the SLA Annual Conference and INFO EXPO in June, the papers are posted on SLA's Web site, and some are published in *Information Outlook*.

Some of these papers go on to be adapted into articles for *Information Outlook*. In this issue, the articles by Lauree Hart, Deborah Richman, and Sandy Bradley, Mary Ray and Barbara Lupei were all adapted from Contributed Papers presented at SLA 2007 in Denver.

As an author of two past papers, a member of the selection committee for two years, and the chair of the 2008 selection committee, I have seen the variety of opportunities these papers offer, both to the writers and to those who attend their presentations. Read on to learn more and consider submitting an abstract this fall.

Opportunities for Writers

Authors benefit in a variety of ways, including opportunities to:

Engage in scholarship. Many aca-

BRANDY KING is the Information Specialist at the Center on Media and Child Health at Children's Hospital Boston. After presenting her 2006 SLA Contributed Paper titled "Boolean vs. Semantic Search Interfaces: Which Work Better?" she was contacted by Chandos Publishing and asked to write a book explaining ontologies and semantics to librarians, which is due out in December 2007.



ademic librarians are required to publish in order to obtain tenured positions, but those out of the academic sphere are not often expected to engage in scholarship. Since SLA has members in both arenas, the Contributed Papers could provide an outlet for academic librarians to meet their publication criteria while offering non-academic librarians a chance to refine their writing skills, establish best practices, or explore an area of interest in depth. What's more, having a publication on your resume can never hurt.

Speak to an audience of peers. Four to five authors present their papers in

a conference session where they are encouraged to bring their words to life, demonstrating their main points through slides or audience participation. Past author Charles Frey points out that presenting to other librarians at SLA was a "positive and supportive environment" in which to polish his public-speaking skills. Next time he's required to present to a library director, CEO, or client, he'll already have learned from the experience of his paper presentation.

Gain respect at work. Whether your co-workers and supervisor are librarians or not, anyone can appreciate the value of having one's words and ideas



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selected to be published. "Writing and presenting our paper was a good opportunity to equalize ourselves with others in our organization who are always speaking at conferences," noted two of this year's authors, Jennifer Jenkins Szedlak and Camille Clark Wallin.

Become more involved in SLA. Taking on a board position in a division or chapter can be daunting to members for various reasons such as time commitment, lack of experience, or not knowing how to get started. For Duane McCollum, a librarian at Boeing, writing and presenting a paper on Mark Twain and knowledge management in 2005 was a great way to become involved in SLA. "Presenting my paper put me right up in front of other SLA members. There were a number of people whom I had great conversations about the paper with; I don't know that I would have met them if I hadn't presented."

Opportunities for Your Audience

Of course, the people who sit in on your presentation or read your paper will benefit also.

Hear from peers. When a dynamic speaker presents to a large audience at a conference, the session is considered a success. Those speakers are often brought back year after year to speak on new topics; they may or may not be librarians. The Contributed Papers sessions provide an opportunity for attendees to hear from their peers about what works in their libraries day to day and which new trends are worth paying attention to.

Discover best practices and innovative ideas. Some of the best papers in the past have been an analysis of best practices in a certain area or a description of new ideas that have not yet been widely written about. Listening to these kinds of presentations allows audience members to learn how to implement new ideas into their own libraries in the most efficient and productive manner to ensure success.

Learn about a variety of topics in 90 minutes. While many conference sessions follow tried and true formats such as panel discussions or single-person presentations, the Contributed Papers sessions provide an opportunity to hear

four different presenters in an hour and a half. Papers are grouped loosely into themes such as management or technology and one theme is presented each day of the conference.

If this article has piqued your interest in either submitting an abstract or attending a Contributed Papers session next year, I strongly encourage you to follow through. If you're interested in joining a future selection committee or becoming otherwise involved in any aspect of the Contributed Papers, you are welcome to contact me at brandy.king@childrens.harvard.edu. These sessions are a wonderful opportunity for SLA members to engage in scholarship and learn from their peers; I hope that many of you will participate in Seattle 2008! **SLA**

SLA 2008 Board of Directors Election

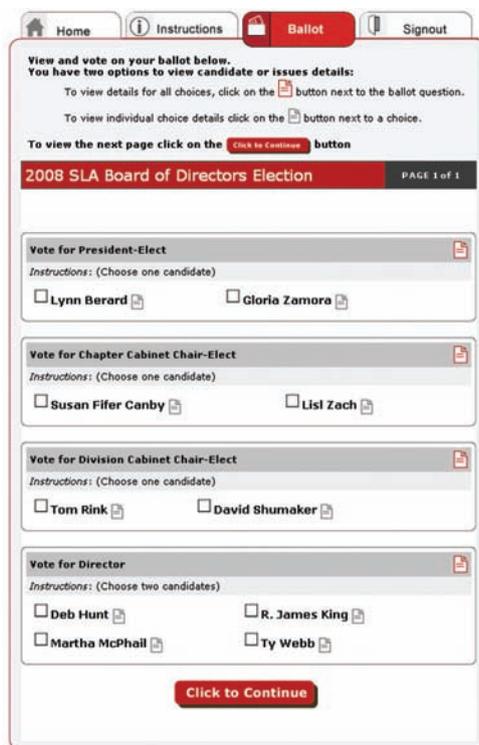
Vote Online Polls open 12 September 2007

All members* eligible to vote and in good standing as of 1 September may participate in the election. Polls will close on 11 October at 5:00 p.m. EDT.

For complete details and information on the candidates
visit www.sla.org/B0Delection



*Excludes organizational, honorary and virtual members of SLA.





The Power of Storytelling

BY SANDY BRADLEY, BARBARA LUPEI, AND MARY RAY

Storytelling has long been a crucial element within libraries and organizations. Current research indicates how powerful and important stories can be in obtaining support for the library and the organization. This paper discusses that power and relates the value of the experience from the Storytelling Program at the NAVAIR Technical Library, China Lake, California.

Libraries are well aware of the value of stories because their long history has included storytelling and storytellers, and the value of capturing stories for the future. They understand how man has used stories to answer basic questions such as: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my legacy for future generations? The answers have been found in Native American, Greek, and Norse mythologies, as well as the sacred books of most major religions, such as the Torah, the Bible, and the Koran. That storytelling legacy continues in communities and organizations as well as libraries.

Organizations use their own stories and mythologies to answer similar questions of identity and values. Current research has made the study and capture of stories in organizations legitimate and timely. Early work by Carl Jung has been expanded by Larry Prusak, Dave Snowden, Steve Denning, Robert Dickman, and others, who have shared the many uses that stories have in organizations. Today, storytelling is used in organizations as diverse as IBM, the World Bank, and the Red Cross. It is reported in the literature of such diversity as the *Harvard Business Review*, *Information Outlook*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

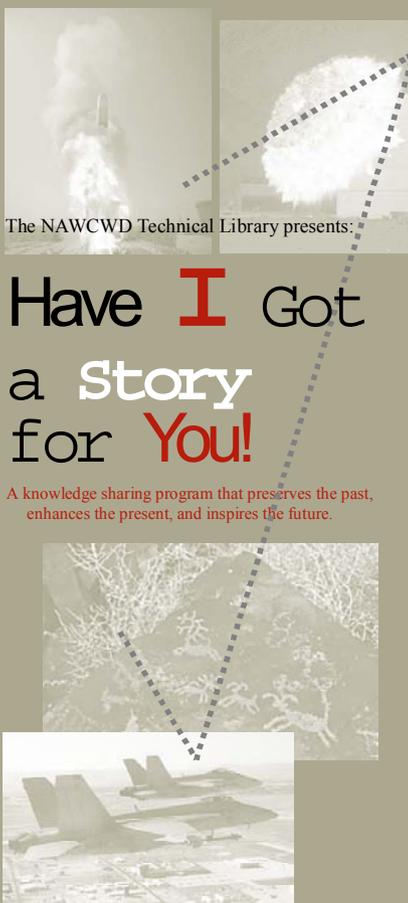
Teresa Bailey has shown us how storytelling can be used in a special

library setting. In the NAVAIR organization, some of the ways stories are used include capturing and sharing knowledge, communicating identity and values, and inspiring and fostering change and action. These are the types of stories that can be shared with others in our messages and in storytelling sessions in the library.

Storytelling at the NAVAIR Library

The idea to begin storytelling sessions at the library came from the organizational development group of the NAVAIR WD organization. They had heard of the storytelling sessions held at the Jet Propulsion Library via their colleague, Teresa Bailey. They suggested that we contact her to find out

It was better than we expected. Not only was the story about the NASA spacecraft interesting, it sparked others in the audience to share their own stories.



The NAWCWD Technical Library presents:

Have I Got a Story for You!

A knowledge sharing program that preserves the past, enhances the present, and inspires the future.

Bob Huntley will be the first speaker in the library's new storytelling series.

Bob will give an informal talk about his experiences flying 100 "Wild Weasel" missions in Vietnam. He and his backseater fired Shrike missiles from the F-105 at enemy radar and SAM's to clear the way for bombers going after their targets. The Shrike missile was developed at China Lake, and this was its combat debut. Several variants were developed in response to warfighter needs, saving lives and aircraft in the process.

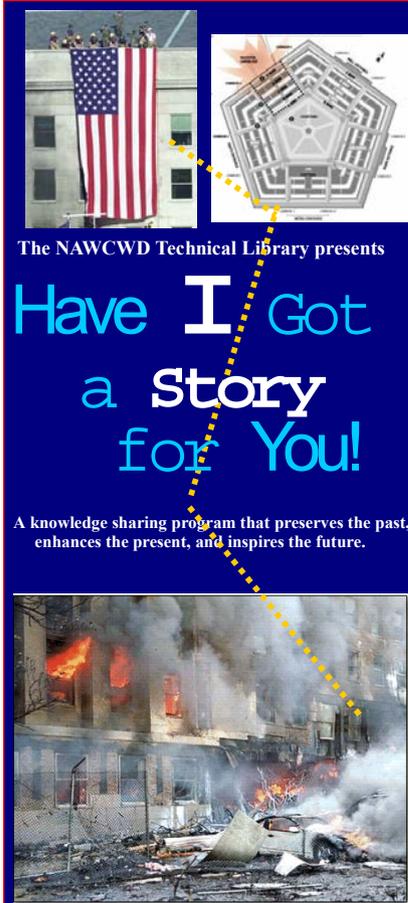
When: Wednesday, Sept. 8th from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Where: Technical Library, Bldg. 02496 just inside the north gate of the Michelson Lab compound

Who: All employees are welcome.

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED!

Call 939-4668 for more information.



The NAWCWD Technical Library presents

Have I Got a Story for You!

A knowledge sharing program that preserves the past, enhances the present, and inspires the future.

A China Laker Remembers... 9/11 in the Pentagon

Larry Luxton understands, more than most civilians, that we live in a dangerous world. On September 11, 2001, he was working in the section of the Pentagon that was hit when terrorists flew American Airlines Flight 77 into the building. Just twenty feet closer and he might not be here to share his compelling story of that day and the aftermath.

When: Thursday, Oct. 19 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Where: Technical Library, Bldg. 02496, just inside the north gate of the Michelson Lab compound

Who: All WD employees are welcome

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED!

Call 939-2313 for more information.

more. We admit to being a little skeptical; like most others, we associated stories with children, milk, and cookies. But then we read about the program, called Teresa, and were invited to visit one of her sessions. When we attended, we were allowed to see the preparations, including the publicity, posters, set-up, feedback forms, etc. Then, we watched the actual presentation. It was better than we expected. Not only was the story about the NASA spacecraft interesting, it sparked others in the audience to share their own stories. The knowledge captured, the shared learning and the entire experience was one we believed would be a great addition to NAVAIR WD. We knew there were many stories that needed to be shared and preserved at China Lake before they were lost.

The decision to hold the storytelling was made between the staff, management, and the Technical Library Advisory Board. We wanted to have

agreement and support to ensure the effort would be a success. We used the experience at JPL to convince most that it was credible and useful for a scientific and technical library to conduct these programs. The staff who joined in the effort volunteered because they were enthusiastic about bringing something new to the library. There were justifiable concerns over the amount of time it took to prepare and conduct the storytelling. We had to allow staff to decide if it was worthwhile, and then we had to scope the programs so that we would not detract from the other library business. The effort was larger than we had anticipated, and there were many tasks that had to be accomplished to develop the program.

History

The storytelling program began in 2004 and continues to this day. As we write this, we have completed a dozen sto-

rytelling sessions. We didn't promise to deliver programs on a regular basis, because we wanted to try them out and learn before we made a major commitment. We also did not hold sessions when we sponsored the SLA Military Librarians Division annual conference in 2005, and when our staffing was lowest. We began by holding them approximately every two months and have tried to keep to that approximate schedule. Although there have been some programs that were more popular than others, all have been well attended and received. The sessions ranged from weapons to mars landers, and to Native American legends, to early archaeology.

The First Story

Deciding on a *first* storytelling session was a big step. It was important to have a dynamic story and a storyteller who could speak well and capture the audience. We had a long list of candidates



The NAWCWD Technical Library presents

Have I Got a Story for You!

A knowledge sharing program that preserves the past, enhances the present, and inspires the future.



Elsa Hennings —
mechanical engineer...or interplanetary
cloth expert?

From China Laketo Mars

How is China Lake tethered to Mars? By a zylon bridle developed for the Mars Exploration Rover mission. The bridle was a vital part of the entry, descent, and landing phase of the mission. Elsa Hennings and her fellow engineers will speak about the team's joint projects with NASA and JPL. Her story will detail how these projects fit into her work on parachutes and a 22-year career at China Lake.

When: Thursday, Jan. 27th from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Where: Technical Library, Bldg. 02496, just inside the north gate of the Michelson Lab compound

Who: All employees are welcome

**REFRESHMENTS
WILL BE SERVED!**

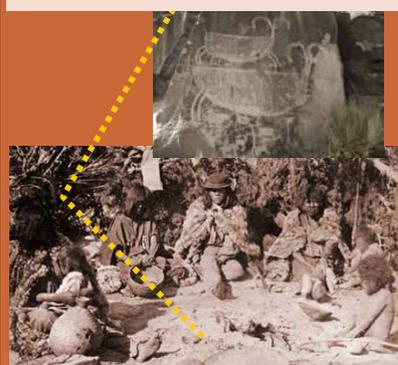
Call 939-4668 for more information.



The NAWCWD Technical Library presents

Have I Got a Story for You!

A knowledge sharing program that preserves the past, enhances the present, and inspires the future.



Paiute Legends of Coso Hot Springs

Richard Stewart will share a story passed down to him from his grandfather about the hawk *Tu'hu kini* and the Gambler at Coso Hot Springs. He will explain how his interpretations of the story differed before and after he visited the site, and how actual experience relates to interpretation of mythology.

When: Thursday, June 2nd from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Where: Technical Library, Bldg. 02496, just inside the north gate of the Michelson Lab compound

Who: All WD employees are welcome

**REFRESHMENTS
WILL BE SERVED!**

Call 939-4668 for more information.

and were sure we would take time to make the right decision. But then we were advised that the candidate we wanted was about to move out of town. Could we get him before he left? We had only a few weeks to set a date, publicize the event, and get ready. What a job! We weren't sure we could even do it. We didn't know how it would be received. In no way did we know how much work it would entail. Initially we even tried to do the filming and editing ourselves.

Although we got off to a rocky start, we were amazed at how well the first storytelling session was received. The session was attended by 75 individuals, which was the maximum room capacity allowed by the China Lake Fire Department. Bob Huntley, a retired NAVAIR WD employee was our first storyteller. We were fortunate to schedule his session just a week before he permanently moved from the area. Without capturing his stories on tape, they might have been lost forever. He

shared his experiences of flying the Air Force F-106 "Wild Weasel" during the Viet Nam War. Few aircrews survived the required 100 missions before the Shrike missile was delivered to them. Using a single note card, he simply told the audience a few of his memories. He personally thanked the team at China Lake for developing the Shrike missile. He credited the Shrike with saving the lives of many pilots during the war and told them that their efforts enabled him to fly more than 100 missions and return home safely.

Benefits to the Library

Storytelling provides value to the library in many ways. It serves to preserve the past and inspire the future, to support the missions of the organization and the library, raise library support and help market library services, gain networking partners, allow staff to expand their skill sets, and produce materials to add to the collection. In the techni-

cal library, we used the storytelling session to provide the platform to initiate these actions. But you can use stories to gain support for the library with or without your own storytelling program.

Storytelling sessions provide easy opportunities to market library services and gain library support. The library used strategic displays of products and services, and the introducer at each storytelling session had the opportunity to mention both long-standing and new services. By sharing the work that is ongoing within the organization, and the special efforts of the past, many people see valuable information being captured and shared. The feedback from the storytelling sessions indicated that the role played by the library was not only considered appropriate, but extremely valuable. The storytellers themselves valued the library and wanted to ensure that the knowledge capture would continue. The positive stories about storytelling inspired more support.

Storytelling sessions also can bring new awareness to library staff of the organization's work. Staff has opportunities to meet and question experts in a variety of topics. When collection development or reference questions arise, they can use their knowledge of who might have the answer. Networking opportunities will grow and staff knowledge will expand, as well. It can be a win-win for the library.

The staff can also try new task areas and expand on their skill sets. Those who enjoy public contact can work with the storytellers and serve as announcers at the sessions. Others who prefer less visible roles can work with reference materials to support the storytellers, develop publicity, and help with audio-visual support including some videotaping and editing. The new roles allow staff to grow or try a new area that might have been unavailable to them before.

Finally, the storytelling can result in the growth of the library collection. Storytellers suggest and sometimes donate written materials to library collections, and the DVDs of the sessions can be added after they are approved for public release. The circulation of the DVDs to those unable to attend sessions will expand exposure of each session and provide value to the entire organization.

Organizational Benefits

After completing a dozen storytelling sessions, we have seen multiple benefits come from the program. These benefits were to both the technical library and the NAVAIR organization. The following paragraphs relate those benefits to specific story telling instances. The storytelling program at NAVAIR WD included a wide variety of storytellers including Native Americans, rocket scientists, pilots, archaeologists, engineers, chemists, and business leaders. The stories were told using panels, questions and answers, slides, films, and physical artifacts to provide a broad range of experiences from which to draw.

To foster change and action, organizations often use stories to inspire and spur the employees.

- The base archaeologist presented a program on how volunteers were able to preserve an old military fort and obtain a historic designation for it. Many in the audience spoke to him of what they might be able to do to help his next effort.
- The professional women's panel demonstrated how much growth had been achieved over the 50-year career history of the five women who spoke.
- One session featured Larry Luxton, an engineer who was stationed inside the Pentagon on 9/11. He told of the destruction, the danger, and the difficulties of getting anything out of the offices and setting up new offices so they could continue their important work. His experience was not unique, but the heartfelt expression of emotion in his story reminded those in the audience of why they worked for NAVAIR and the importance of their contribution to the support of the nation. That story fostered action and the ability to move forward to embrace change to get the job done.

To capture and share knowledge, the NAVAIR storytelling has been effective for both staff and the audience. As the storyteller shares his knowledge, others can learn about special activities in the organization.

- Many people were unaware of China Lake's involvement in the complicated analysis completed for the investigation of mishaps like the munitions train explosion in Roseville, California, in 1973.
- They may not have been aware that NAVAIR worked with NASA and JPL to develop the use of tethers on the Mars landing craft. As people retire, capturing this knowledge can be critical.
- The Native American legends of the

Coso area on the base were shared by an elder of the Paiute tribe. Few people remain to continue those traditions.

- Two of the storytellers, Jack Pakulak and Bob Huntley retired or moved within weeks of their presentations. If the library had not captured their stories, the details might have been lost forever. This knowledge capture and sharing helps build the knowledge base of the organization.

Multiple times, the audience became personally connected to their support of the war fighter, such as when Maj. Tim Burton talked of the importance of NAVAIR testing to upgrade and deliver the AV-8B (an aircraft) to the fleet, and when Lt. Colonel James Hawkins told us that the F/A-18 software and weaponry keep his aircraft safe.

Tasks for a Successful Program

The NAVAIR WD library experience was successful due to hard work and attention to detail. For those who might want to embark on a similar program, the following tasks, along with some dos and don'ts, may be helpful.

Prior to the event

- Select speaker (from current knowledge and from recommendations)
- Contact the potential speaker
 - o Determine requirements for background, sound, slides, etc.
 - o Obtain agreement to make videotape of program
 - o Get slides, notes, videos, etc. and any permissions needed
 - o Determine dates, get agreement
- Determine a place—we kept the sessions in the library to bring people there and to ensure they knew who was responsible—we wanted credit and we wanted them to know what else the library offered.
- Develop publicity (posters, flyers, emails, newspaper articles, etc.)
- Gather resources (chairs, refreshments—optional but desirable—lights, sound, video equipment, volunteers for setup and cleanup)

- Create thank-you certificates, feedback forms, etc.
- Introductions, background, etc.
- Rehearse or try out if possible

Day of the event

- Set-up
 - Update posters and flyers to indicate the session is today
 - Set up chairs, put out feedback forms, food, etc.
 - Set up lighting, sound, other technical and AV support
 - Just before: Turn off phones (forward to other staff), put signs on library doors
- Session
 - Introduce speaker—opportunity to plug other library services
 - Monitor sound, lights, taping
 - At conclusion—give speaker thank-you certificate, gift (large copy of poster)
 - Question and answer period
 - Invite feedback including recommendations for other speakers
 - Introduce next session to come
- Clean-up
 - Collect feedback forms
 - Clean up food, cups, etc.
 - Move chairs and tables as needed
 - Take down signs, posters, flyers, etc.

After the session

- Review feedback—discuss lessons learned
- Send thank-you notes to speakers and supporters
- Edit/develop DVD for circulation
- Send DVD through approval process for public release
- Catalog/distribute copies of the DVD

Lessons Learned

Like most successful programs, the amount of time spent in preparation saves problems later, and ensures success. We learned a lot by holding the events, from feedback, and from meeting to discuss our lessons learned. Here are some suggestions for those who might want to begin a storytelling program:

Sandy Bradley, MSLS, is organizational development practitioner, NAVAIR, Weapons Division, China Lake, California. Barbara Lupei is director of the technical library at NAVAIR. Mary Ray is information specialist in the technical library. All are members of the SLA Military Librarians Division.

Dos

- Get prior approval from staff and managers
- Publicity—cannot do too much
- Videotape and share the session if at all possible
- Get slides and films, etc. ahead of time to ensure workability
- Find out if friends or family want to come, and get permissions
- Thank everyone who worked on the event
- Use experts to help with videotape, publicity, etc.
- See other sessions to get ideas and understand what you are in for
- Include refreshments, and mention that in your publicity
- Select a day and time that encourage attendance and make life easiest for the staff—last hours of the afternoon worked for us
- Encourage audience participation through strategic placement of the speaker, room arrangement, and lighting

Don'ts

- Assume everyone will be a supporter—support needs to be earned
- Take the speakers for granted—stay in touch and work with them
- Try to send out DVDs without all needed permissions (including parts the speaker may not understand needs prior approval or copyright check)
- Ignore feedback or recommendations
- Keep audience in a dark big auditorium—it is a collaborative storytelling not a large conference session
- Get caught without backups—even for the storyteller in a pinch

Storytelling was a means for the library to gain identity and value at NAVAIR WD. We hope this article has

encouraged other libraries to use stories to gain support and demonstrate their value within their organization.

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SLA



Social Search Comes of Age

BY DEBORAH RICHMAN

The Social Search Evolution

In a world of information overload, it makes sense to leverage the collective intelligence of everyone online. Social search uses collaborative filtering to tap into this wisdom and to produce more relevant search results.

Helping Each Other

Social search may be defined as any system that enables people to help others filter and find information on the Web. It's simply an extension of the natural patterns of how humans interact with each other and with information in the real world.

Natural patterns are both explicit and implicit. Explicit interactions depend on people who actively share their opinions, including labeling or classifying Web pages for the benefit of others. Implicit interactions happen when people consume what others have contributed before. An example would be when they see recommendations such as "users who read this article, also read this article."

True social search emerged quite recently, based on the increasing bi-directional nature of the Web. In the earliest days, the Web operated as a one-way system where visitors exclusively pulled information downstream. Now, it has evolved and expanded to two-way conversations, which also depend on visitor feedback upstream. Thus, Web visitors are both consumers and producers of information.

The vision of social search is largely a democratic one. We assume that all Web visitors should be capable of helping to classify, organize, and rank the world's Web pages. They might also have expertise or interest in specific subjects. Thus, the challenge is how to organize user-generated feedback so the "right people" are providing the "right answers" to the "right questions."

Libraries, First and Foremost

In some ways, social search began long ago. Librarians helped us find the information we needed when we went

looking for it. Before the Web, information professionals shared resources among peers as well as patrons. Classification systems, such as the Dewey decimal classification have always made this possible and have served us well for decades. Librarians determined where published information belonged on library shelves, and patrons relied on their expertise.

If you ever worked at or attended a large university years ago, you may also be familiar with a nearly extinct breed: expert cataloguers who knew their particular subject matter best and were proud of the time and effort spent organizing information for easy access. The assumption was that patrons would benefit from this early example of keyword and description tagging from experts.

Private Online Databases

By the mid-1980s, most libraries began offering electronic resources that were not available in their own hold-

ings, including news, journals and other reference tools. Proprietary online services, like Dialog, provided searchable expert abstracts, tagging and unique taxonomies depending on the reference databases shared. For example, D&B databases contained their proprietary company information that could be searched by unique fields including

were defined by librarians and intermediaries who, through their holdings, assessed what was ultimately available and important to patrons. The social interplay was still limited.

Open Web Directories

During the mid-late 1990s, the explosive growth in Web sites made it difficult

During the mid-late 1990s, the explosive growth in Web sites made it difficult to find relevant search results. For the first time, anyone could set up a site and begin publishing.

company revenue, employee count, addresses, year founded, and expanded industry codes.

Most early online content databases were difficult to use and still required assistance from librarians. Not everyone wanted to learn about service files and how to search them uniquely. LexisNexis was (and is) a well-known vendor that made it easier for patrons to conduct their own searches, based on searching content, dates, and sources. This seemed more intuitive than databases previously available to librarians.

Web-Based Libraries

Nearly a decade ago, 24/7 library access became widespread for academic, public, and special libraries. The ability to search when library doors were closed became reality, as long as searchers had passwords to access the information. This new era was exciting, as patrons could search both print and electronic holdings anytime. There was no live assistance for the first time, which represented the proverbial “passing of the torch” from information professionals to patrons.

These were one-way systems where patrons consumed information from libraries. There were no upstream mechanics for providing feedback about data quality or augmenting information gaps. The social environments

to find relevant search results. For the first time, anyone could set up a site and begin publishing. It became challenging to sort through traditional Web information as well as the non-traditional, non-expert sources that proliferated.

The earliest organizers of Web content, such as Yahoo! and LookSmart, sought to provide expert guidance for whatever could be discovered online. At a basic level, they created a feedback loop for Web site publishers. As a webmaster, you could submit your site’s information to be included in their directories. If you were excluded, it was difficult to be discovered by end users. These companies and others offered a mix of searching options through directories, catalogs, and reviews.

The early open online directories created new and elegant taxonomies, which grew into tremendous new resources that could put John Dewey to shame. They organized each Web site into its logical place in the hierarchy, much like their old librarian counterparts. Sizeable armies were hired to do the work. This included information professionals and liberal arts graduates who spent their days working with the latest sites and manually categorizing them.

Self-selected experts volunteered to categorize sites as well. Not long ago, when you set up a new site, you submitted it for inclusion in the first

open-sourced online directories and searches. These experts continued to hold sway with directories, and later search engines, for many years. Some of these open-sources, like dmoz (www.dmoz.org/), still exist today.

Finally, there were other, more pinpointed efforts to find what was important on the Web. Expert guides were developed at About.com and written by a vast network of subject matter experts. These individual editors contributed content and focused on identifying appropriate sites and content within their subjects.

The Rise of Search Engines

A more automated form of Web content discovery came with the emergence of early search engines like Excite, WebCrawler, and Lycos. These engines collected Web pages via “spiders” that followed all available hyperlinks to new information. When a new page was found, it was added to the index, essentially a big catalogue. Each search engine developed its own proprietary algorithms to let searchers query its index.

Google then revolutionized search quality by introducing its PageRank algorithm. PageRank essentially set up a way for Web pages to “vote” for other Web pages by linking to them. For Google, sites are valued based on the quantity of links to their pages. The more links there are from other sites to yours, the more likely it is to rise to the top of the search results list, or at least to the first page.

In addition to Google, many other search engines adopted similar techniques for ranking content. When you think about it, link popularity is actually one of the earliest forms of people-powered search. People (webmasters) built hyperlinks to other people’s pages. Both sides agree to cooperate as well. Links became a form of currency, with value tied to the search results.

Social Layer Needed

What is driving the need to extend search into the social realm, where patrons have a say in what information

is relevant and what is not?

First, Google's approach has been compromised by people who have figured out how to game the system. Tricking search engines and manipulating perceived relevancy has become a worldwide business. Unfortunately, search relevance based on link popularity has never become more accurate than the day it was introduced.

The continued growth in Web sites means that many valuable pages will never be found. These buried pages need to be uncovered more easily. We've seen progress in networks and machine learning. Now the process calls for increased doses of human intelligence to help solve the information organization challenges.

Social search would add a "layer" of intelligence on top of traditional search results, thus enabling users to contribute to the relevance of search results directly. The market has simply been waiting for a few technology ingredients to catch up.

The Rise of Explicit Online Social Sharing

Explicit sharing simply means extending many of our social activities—conversing, labeling information, rating information, or organizing information—onto the online network. When it relates to search mechanics, someone is overtly reacting to a question or problem and is connecting to this knowledge.

Networks facilitate millions of conversations and interactions that probably wouldn't have happened if networks didn't exist. People all over the world, not just the people in the room or the neighborhood, can benefit from the learning in these discussions. With networks in place, anyone online can band together to advance knowledge. Here are examples of how explicit sharing technologies have evolved:

Social Bookmarking

Most people already know how to bookmark Web sites and pages through their browser. Social bookmarking is a similar concept, which allows you to save and share anything online.

Some of the better-known sites are Del.icio.us (<http://del.icio.us>), Furl.net (www.furl.net), Flickr (www.flickr.com), and Photobucket (<http://photobucket.com>)— all launched in 2003-2004. By offering a way to bookmark and tag online materials, these services continue to help users save items privately and share findings publicly with others. Any Web pages can be shared through the first two services; photos are mainly shared through the latter two services.

These sharing services operate as free subscriptions. After users sign up, they may begin saving and sharing Web pages immediately. Users can even annotate pages exactly like catalogue librarians did years ago with print materials. In practice, most users do far less, saving Web pages to a few tags or labels that relate to the pages.

Social bookmarking sites are valuable because humans are again in charge of defining what appeals to them independently. Their tags also are shared and help contribute to folksonomies, or user-generated taxonomies that aid future searching. Thus, a valuable page that ranks poorly with the search engines may become "findable"

ming is still difficult to control.

Ranking and Voting

On the Web, ranking and voting activities are commonplace. Since the first consumer sites appeared, there have been polls that anyone could participate in and then click for results. These were considered a way to draw people into sites and have them understand the opinions of others who visited. While everyone who voted understood the bias, the feedback provided entertainment value.

More practically, people often like to make purchasing decisions based on the feedback from previous buyers. Ranking and voting became a force on the Internet when many retail sites began including purchaser feedback along with product information. Perhaps the most active and comprehensive rankings began appearing on comparison sites like Shopping (www.shopping.com), Shopzilla (www.shopzilla.com), and Nextag (www.nextag.com); as well as on large retailer sites (see Internet Retailer rankings at www.internetretailer.com). For years, shoppers have been asked to rank products and suppliers,

Google's approach has been compromised by people who have figured out how to game the system. Tricking search engines and manipulating perceived relevancy has become a worldwide business.

because a group of users identified and shared it.

The disadvantage of social bookmarking systems is that they require a certain amount of training, understanding, and work to use them. Only a small minority of users takes the time to tag information, so some searches may reflect the interests and biases of a small group. Also, some people spam results by attaching inaccurate tags to irrelevant content. This form of spam-

providing a strong search filter.

eBay may be called a pioneer in creating a community-based reputation system by encouraging all buyers and sellers to provide positive or negative rankings. These are shared, in plain view, for anyone else doing business after the transactions are completed. Feedback loops create a self-policing system.

Today, Yahoo takes advantage of ranking and voting attributes via Yahoo!

Answers, its large-scale Q&A service. Someone posts a question with a deadline for the answer. Other participants may respond to the question. Ultimately, the questioner may select the best response or open it to community voting. When searching the Q&A database, visitors may query it based on the question status, rankings, and other criteria.

Digg (www.digg.com) is a site where anyone may submit articles, videos, or podcasts they see on the Web. These items become more popular if others “digg” them and less popular when “buried” by users. The search reflects these attitudes, and results can be sorted by most popular diggs, date, or relevancy. As an open voting system, there have been issues raised about some users who game the results. There are primary benefits to the articles and sources that have high “digg” votes—and are more visible through the current search engines like Google.

The advantages of voting and ranking systems are that they are ostensibly democratic and the results can often be

can become very rich resources.

Almost anyone can set up a blog and begin interacting within a wider social network based on content sharing. The rapid adoption of blogs since 2004 may be attributed to their ease-of-use and free or inexpensive creation through a variety of hosting companies.

To improve searchability, bloggers actively tag their own entries based on what they believe are the most important or relevant terms. Through blog search providers like Technorati (www.technorati.com), anyone may search by tagged term, blog posting, or an overall blog directory.

The advantage of blogs is that many new and talented voices can be heard around the world. People whose opinions and knowledge would not normally be syndicated through mass media channels can now find an audience. What’s more, these social discussions can be found and accessed through search engines.

The disadvantage of blogging is, again, abuse of the system. Blogging can be the source of defamation and

social networks are a mix of communications and entertainment. In a recent interview, he explained that active users of these social sites consider sending music files fun. This is different from earlier generations who consider these activities separately. (The interview is at www.adweek.com/aw/iq_interactive/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003553655&imw=Y.)

At sign-up, these networks all require users to establish some form of identity. They then encourage users to communicate from there. For example, YouTube asks users to select a channel: YouTuber, director, musician, comedian, or guru. It also asks for preferences regarding whether to accept comments from friends only or from everyone, so privacy is user-defineable.

After signing up to social networking sites, users can engage in reaching out to old friends and meeting new ones who share their interests. As an individual user, there are many interests to discover. It’s possible to wander around the site and find video, music, and more. There are many places to browse, subscribe, and search for content and people.

As a contributor, there are numerous ways to share. Users may comment, upload videos, and communicate with others directly. Depending on the social network, there are differences in what users can share through their account, and how they’re able to define themselves and their digital persona online. For example, a user might want to be a musician on YouTube and simply an old college friend with many interests while on Facebook.

Social networks provide a valuable resource for many people to stay in touch with their friends and to meet new people they otherwise might not have met. Sometimes people can connect with experts in a given subject area when they need advice or help. Much of the value comes from entertainment too.

However, there are some downsides to social networks, including many instances of abuse related to users misbehaving or using fake online identities

The advantages of voting and ranking systems are that they are ostensibly democratic and the results can often be instructive if enough community members vote.

instructive if enough community members vote. Like any voting, however, the results are vulnerable to compromising interests. Many times the systems have difficulty tracking the online equivalent of “ballot stuffing” from organized armies of voters or single voters able to vote many times.

Blog Discussions

Another social phenomenon occurs on active blogs. Here the blogger posts articles or opinions, and readers quickly send comments back. Depending on the interaction, blogs

misinformation. Many times, it is difficult to validate the claims or facts of some bloggers. The community is, however, diligently self-policing.

Social Networking

There are a growing set of Web sites focused on making connections and sharing common interests. The most popular ones today are MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube. These sites have experienced phenomenal growth in the last two years.

Safa Rashtchy, who covers search at Piper Jaffray, made the point that

to deceive others. There have also been other cases where personal information has been divined through online conversations, leading to crimes and problems offline.

So far, this paper has presented social search that depends solely on explicit interactions. While these interactions can improve search and content discovery experiences, there are intractable issues about participation, gaming, and skewed results that can't be ignored. These issues affect search relevancy. Implicit approaches address some of the problems with explicit interactions.

The Emergence of Implicit Online Social Sharing

When using implicit systems, online visitors are never asked outright about their opinions. Instead, their attitudes, tastes, and preferences are captured or implied from online behaviors and activities. The old saying that "actions speak louder than words" is true here. Some systems require actual sign-ups, while others can deliver social searches based on anonymous navigations.

Voting with Your Mouse

Implicit data collection begins when a person starts clicking around a site. This data is often used to narrow Web pages to those most likely to interest that particular person. For example, if a user searches on the word "java" and subsequently looks at pages related to coffee, and not computer programming, it could be inferred that this person should receive coffee-related pages when she searches on the word java the next time. Personalization gives search engines guidance on which results to emphasize and which results to filter out.

In the simplest terms, search engines can use the items and pages users click on to paint a picture of a given user's tastes or preferences. This effectively creates a profile reflecting the user's interests. The profile can be used as an additional set of information to filter search results.

Some fine tuning is involved, since

not all tracked behaviors are related to a user's interests. People may mistakenly choose a page, or they may go to a page that has nothing to do with subjects that interest them. Often, a certain amount of unrelated "noise" may be introduced into the system. However, given

few to influence the results, and there should be far less abuse and spam – if at all.

Building Communities

All this implicit data should help publishers gain new perspective about

Implicit systems take advantage of the dialogue already happening between a Web site and its audience, rather than burdening individuals with unfamiliar, disruptive ones.

enough data, systems can be tuned to recognize a person's true preferences over time and any aberrations can be filtered out.

Implicit Benefits

Implicit sharing creates an excellent, high quality feedback mechanism. Users aren't asked to do extra work like tagging, rating, or bookmarking. Implicit systems take advantage of the dialogue already happening between a Web site and its audience, rather than burdening individuals with unfamiliar, disruptive ones.

All visitors to an enabled site participate, in contrast to the minority of people willing to tag or rate actively for the benefit of others. This creates a much richer data set. An implicit system is more efficient and capable of operating in real-time, because it doesn't rely on users themselves to initiate feedback.

Implicit social search systems are just beginning to emerge. There are significant benefits to the users of these systems. There's greater search accuracy based on actions. Since implicit feedback systems gather a more complete data set, there is no survey bias, and the search results and recommendations tend to be more accurate.

By definition, implicit systems are fully distributed and used by 100 percent of visitors to a publisher's site. That means it is difficult for the actions of a

the interests of their visitors, as they are able to observe hundreds of unique communities. These communities are little bit like "intelligence farms." They reflect people with common interests, along with these attributes:

- **Segmented.** Groups of individuals with the experience and knowledge to provide the best advice on specific subject areas.
- **Organic.** Communities that form and dissolve based on "hot spots" of interest somewhere on the Web. There are no artificial taxonomies.
- **Invisible.** Members may not be aware of other community members. In addition, they are often unaware of their own membership.
- **Dynamic.** Membership that rises and falls based on activity. Communities form from a "critical mass" of interest, but dissolve when interest falls off.
- **Meritocratic.** Individuals who are "joined to" a community based on their contribution value and behavior, such as expertise or interest in a subject area.

Communities Matter

For Web publishers and their visitors, communities matter. The basic notion of the Web is that every possible community can be served or discovered. Site publishers have entered all kinds

Forrester Research reported in April that 48 percent of U.S. adults participated in some form of social computing.

of vertical markets and appealed to many targeted audiences. Even within a market, there are endless subjects and interests. Publishers are challenged to define and respond to all these interests and are increasingly turning to companies like Collarity (www.collarity.com) for site search and content discovery.

Implicit communities naturally mirror all active interests, via searching and browsing behaviors. Someone may want to solve a problem, research something newsworthy, address an immediate need, pursue a hobby or passion, get some work done, go shopping, or finish some repetitive task. Within a site, there could be differences among people visiting for the first time, occasional visitors, and frequent returnees.

Communities are influenced by their visitors, but are no longer dependent on knowing exactly who's present. For example, grade schoolers doing homework differ from high schoolers, college students, or adults. Other demographics may come into play too, as interests vary depending on family status, income, education, geography, and other factors.

The communities are important because they can respond to any individual, even anonymously. Using collaborative filtering, the searcher will receive guidance from different communities as needed. Thus, communities are critical for improving search relevance. Without them, everyone would still see the same, one-size-fits-all results.

In the end, visitors have much greater control and flexibility through implicit sharing approaches. They can personalize their search results, get advice from communities of experts and like-minded searchers, and see results impacted by all users of the system.

Summary: Power to Consumers

The most logical way to advance search relevance is for search engines to give users the opportunity to participate more broadly in the system. Explicit forms of information sharing suffer from survey bias and low participation rates. Emerging implicit social sharing systems hold the potential to increase accuracy and control for users.

During 2007, the outlook is very strong for social search overall. That's due to the confluence of increased social computing activity by end-users, expanded demand by publishers and new capabilities from social system providers.

End users have grown accustomed to interacting online. In addition to reading, listening, or viewing, they are spending time sharing and communicating too. While it's well known that college students and teenagers spend substantial online time engaged with others, recent research shows that adult participation has reached mainstream levels as well.

Forrester Research reported in April that 48 percent of U.S. adults participated in some form of social computing. Some 13 percent have uploaded content, 19 percent posted comments, 15 percent bookmark and tag, and 19 percent participate in social communities. Forrester found that 33 percent are spectators or the audience for user-generated content such as blogs, podcasts, and videos.

The Pew Internet and American Life Project looked at online and cell phone users. A study released in May

found that nearly 19 percent of U.S. adults have uploaded or shared content online, including artwork, photos, videos, or stories. About 18 percent post comments too. Overall, the report said, 31 percent of adults are elite tech users who are heavy and frequent Internet users who are also engaged with user-generated content.

Web publishers of all sizes are expanding beyond their own content and services. We are witnessing an arms race where publishers compete by installing various user-generated content sharing features in an attempt to increase page views, time spent, and to grow revenues in the expanding marketplace.

Add all this user-contributed content together with Web publisher content, and you have information overload that must be managed more effectively. It's safe to say that suppliers of social systems will be kept very busy. To succeed, they are developing and delivering easily implemented services on sites. There are clear opportunities related to site search, whether across the publisher's own content or their new social networks. Site content discovery and recommendation tools are also being delivered to publishers.

Consumers are the ultimate beneficiaries in this early race to include their feedback into search algorithms. The technologies that prevail—whether explicit, implicit or a combination—will be the ones that enable consumers see their intentions reflected in their search results, not just their keywords. **SLA**

Deborah Richman is senior vice president of Collarity, Inc., in Palo Alto, California.



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RSS Feeds Create Added Value for Special Libraries

BY LAUREE G. HART

While many people are familiar with using RSS feeds to read news information, XML RSS feeds also can be used to offer additional library services via the library Web site by delivering content to targeted user groups with specific information needs. This information may include updated guidelines, current awareness news, tables of contents, podcasts for continuing education, research articles, library news, additions to the collection, and organizational reports and information.

Selecting, evaluating and organizing this information in a central location saves your target audience precious time as they focus on their main responsibilities and goals.

What are RSS Feeds?

RSS—Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary—allows a producer of information to broadcast the information across an intranet or the Internet. It is created using XML, or extensible markup language. XML allows the information producer to “tag” information creating metadata (data about data). The metadata allows the specific information to be pulled from the document, converted into a script, and displayed on a Web page. XML RSS feeds can also be read through an RSS

CONVERTING AN RSS FEED TO JAVASCRIPT FOR HTML

Most information producers using XML RSS will place an icon on their Web pages to indicate the feeds are available. The icons are usually on an orange background with the text “XML” or “RSS.” Right click on the icon or link to “copy shortcut.”

After finding the XML RSS feed, it will need to be converted to a script for inserting into an HTML Web page. This can be done using an RSS conversion template on the Internet or by developing and hosting the template in house.

Feed2JS is a free conversion tool available online. Go to <http://feed2js.org/index.php?s=build>, enter your XML link in the template, and follow the instructions to format the feed.

With the template, you can control the appearance of the feed output. Use the template to choose whether to show the publication date, the description, and the title. Or you can limit the output to show only the title, which will save content space on your Web pages.

After formatting the output, preview the results by clicking on the “Preview” button. Then click “Generate JavaScript.” It will appear in a text box. Copy all of the script in the box as the textbox scrolls. Then paste the script into your HTML document where you would like the information to show.

reader. Some of these readers include NewsGator, FeedBurner, Bloglines, an Internet provider’s personal home pages, Google Reader, and the latest version of Internet Explorer 7x.

Identifying User Info Needs

To ensure the most appropriate infor-

mation is identified and meets the need of the user, an information audit should be conducted. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare Libraries’ information audit was conducted in the form of a user group survey. Users were asked whether the information would be used to perform job responsibilities, to provide



ADVANTAGES OF RSS FEEDS

For information producers, the advantages of RSS feeds are:

- Increased traffic to Web site.
- Ability to push information to users and subscribers by using the broadcast method.
- The ability to distribute information automatically to users when it is updated.
- Increased visibility and access to information, such as links to full-text articles of subscribed information
- Savings on development time for webmasters.

Web content managers also may find advantages because RSS feeds:

- Deliver selected targeted information to specific user groups.
- Offer Web site users the latest information from various sources.
- Provide an efficient way to update Web pages.
- Offer the ability to deliver value-added services without over taxing current staff, e.g., electronic tables of contents, current awareness, and news.
- Permit information to be pulled from catalogs or databases, converted into an RSS feed, and displayed on Web pages.

Information users also may benefit because:

- RSS feeds can be discontinued as desired.
- Once a user subscribes to a feed, the desired information is delivered automatically to the user.
- RSS feeds can be read through an RSS reader or placed as web content; thus, e-mail boxes are not overloaded with additional information.
- Advertisements and spam are not included in feeds.
- They can stay up to date on information they need.

However, there are a few issues to consider in using this technology:

- Not every site offers RSS feeds.
- Some RSS feeds expire after a specific time (PubMed, EBSCO).
- RSS content may not be used to its full potential.
- Copyright may be an issue.
- Librarians must apply selection criteria and evaluate resources to reduce irrelevant results.

patient care services, to pursue continuing education, or for current awareness. Users were also asked how they access this information now and whether they used library services to retrieve the information. The survey asked users to identify by name the resources they used and frequency. More than 400 people responded to the survey—many included the core audience of physicians, nurses, and leadership.

Results indicated users were most interested in receiving information for current awareness, tables of contents of journals, safety and health alerts, patient education, guideline updates, and continuing education. The best resources to meet the needs of the targeted group

were identified. A visit to the Web sites of the original information publishers confirmed whether the information source offered the XML RSS feeds or not.

Considerations

RSS feeds for use as Web content need to take into consideration the following:

- Does the information contained in the feed meet the needs of the user without containing numerous irrelevant results? Obtaining the information via a feed from the original publisher will help narrow and provide focused information.
- Not all information is offered through a feed. If the information you seek is not available through the original informa-

tion publisher, request an RSS feed and explain why it would benefit the target audience.

- Do you have a subscription to the resource with IP authentication for full-text? Many resources, especially from information publishers, require subscriptions. Having a subscription with IP authentication or a URL with an embedded ID and password will allow users easy click-through access to the full-text resource.
- How often is the information in the feed updated? A feed is a dynamic tool and users generally want the most recent information.
- Does the RSS feed expire? Some publishers of RSS feeds have developed the feeds so that they expire after a specific time. Feeds from PubMed expire after six months and feeds from the EBSCO database expire after one year. If a feed expires, an error on the Web page may occur unless the feed is recreated.
- Another consideration in whether or not to use a specific feed is copyright permissions. Using feeds from publishers with whom your organization has a license or agreement to link to and use the information is recommended. The use of free resources from government sources is another way to provide your audience with authoritative and updated information. Numerous government sources offer RSS feeds or are willing to develop them.

How To Use RSS

The most familiar use of RSS feeds is for current awareness news. However, feeds can be integrated into the library's Web content to provide value-added library services. Some ideas for RSS feeds in the special library include:

- Consumer and patient education.
- Helping the user stay current on available library services, such as upcoming library training programs or new resources.
- Current awareness and news.
- Guideline updates.
- As resources in learning management systems.
- To announce new books in the library

catalog.

- Local health alerts.
- Broadcasting library news and events on the organization's intranet or Internet pages. Library information is not just for library Web pages.
- Podcasts for continuing education.
- Safety alerts.
- Table of contents service.

If your library works with teams focused on a specific project or journal club, try the following resources for group collaboration. Then incorporate the feeds produced from these resources into Web pages focused on the team project.

- **RSS Calendar** (www.rsscalendar.com). Allows you to create a calendar on the Web, then publish the calendar and create a feed using JavaScript to copy and paste into Web pages.
- **To-do lists** (www.tadalists.com). For creating a project to-do list organizing a team's tasks and deadlines, and sharing the list on a Web page.
- **Reading lists and shared bookmarks.** Sites like Del.icio.us (<http://del.icio.us>) create a list of Web resources to share with team members. An RSS feed can be created from this site to share with team members and library Web site users.

Finding XML RSS Feeds

There are now several search engines where one can search for feeds. However, it is recommended one go to the original information publisher's Web site to obtain the most relevant feeds and reduce irrelevant results. Many publishers are now offering feeds. In addition, there are several government sites offering feeds to free government information.

Here is a brief listing of information providers offering feeds:

- **Databases**—EBSCO, PubMed.
- **U.S. Government sites**—CDC, Census Bureau, Department of Homeland Security, EPA, FBI, FDA, FEMA, Government Printing Office, National

Guideline Clearinghouse, Library of Congress, Medicare, Medicaid, National Institute of Environmental Health Science, Transportation Security Administration, U.S. Copyright Office.

- **Journals**—Blackwell Synergy, JAMA, NEJM, BioMed Central, Nature, Lancet, Ingenta, Lippincott.
- **Search engines**—USA.gov (formerly First.gov), RSS4Medics, MedWorm, Science.gov (search using the term "RSS feed").

Conclusion

Using RSS feeds to provide library services is an effective way to provide targeted users groups relevant information as well as an efficient method to provide dynamic Web pages. Developing selection criteria to determine and identify the best sources of RSS feeds for a targeted user group provides users with authoritative current resources in a timely manner.

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SLA



Innocent Awasom in the reference section at Texas Tech.

Librarian in Exile

INNOCENT AWASOM LEFT HIS HOME IN CAMEROON FOR A CONFERENCE IN CALIFORNIA. HE HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO RETURN.

BY FORREST GLENN SPENCER

Innocent Awasom

Joined SLA: 2000

Job: Science Librarian, Texas Tech University, Lubbock

Experience: 11 years as a professional librarian, but actively involved in libraries since 1984 in high school.

Education: B.S., zoology, University of Ibadan; M.S., zoology (hydrobiology and fisheries), University of Ibadan; master's in information science, African Regional Center for Information Science, University of Ibadan 1995

First job: Assistant librarian, University of Ngaoundere, Cameroon

Biggest challenge: Getting the university authorities to recognize the value and place of the library as well as professional librarians in the university system in Cameroon so as to provide adequate funding, give librarians a free hand in running university libraries, and treat them as members of faculty—and funding the library school program. Walking the fine line between advocating for libraries, not to be confused with being a radical. Also getting faculty members to embrace the advantages open-access initiatives brings to scholarship in developing countries.



When Innocent Awasom came to the United States in 2002, he had no intention in staying. But while he was attending an SLA/Association of College and Research Libraries workshop in Monterey Bay, California, he got word from a colleague in his native Cameroon that, as Awasom described, political thugs were after him, and his life would be in danger if he returned. Awasom became a librarian in exile.

Cameroon is a French-supported unitary republic in Western Africa. According to Awasom, the tight political clan that rules the country considers him a threat for his past activities. He says he could have been jailed and forgotten, or he could have simply disappeared, if he had not been out of the country at the time. His troubles came to a boil with the government when he was at the University of Northern Cameroon. For six years, Awasom was head of the research library and university information service. During that time, he fought with school officials in charge of the library budget over



Innocent Awasom with Angela Davis at the Towards Africa Without Borders conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 2004.

the purchase of books and other services. They claimed books have been ordered but Awasom charged that funds were never spent on books or personnel needs for the library. The fraud was soon exposed. Rather than receiving praise for uncovering the truth, Awasom found life had become precarious. It was the final incident in a reoccurring struggle for him and university officials.

"I couldn't manage the library the way it's supposed to be managed because of external interference," Awasom said. "Some university authorities with the connivance of government agents were using library funds for other things besides what they were meant to be used for. I was regularly disappointed. I told the university president what had been going on for years. There was a lot of tension and down the line, people got fired. It had a ripple effect. I was the scapegoat now; I was the small man. I was really in danger. I did not realize that it was all about the financial scandal and that people higher up in the system were involved in the conspiracy."

It was then that Awasom traveled to the U.S. for the SLA/ACRL workshop on benchmarking. Now it has been five years since he has been home and seen his wife and two children.

However, with the help of information professionals from SLA and other organizations, Awasom has made a new home in America, albeit a temporary one until he can be reunited with his family.

Today, SLA member Innocent Awasom is a science librarian at Texas Tech University in Lubbock with liaison responsibilities for agriculture, chemistry, range, wildlife and fisheries management and the International

Awasom noted that one of his gifts is the ability to organize people. He is a man of presence. The rich timbre of his voice draws others in; you can sense the intelligence, the soul of a fighter, and the conviction of beliefs within the man.

Center for Arid and Semi-Arid Land Studies. His job includes reference services, collection development, and library instruction to students and faculty. He has been with Texas Tech since January 2006.

"Becoming a librarian was an irony of fate," said Awasom. "I was trained as a scientist—a zoologist—but because

of my involvement in activism I didn't have a scholarship to continue my education from the Cameroon government. But I got a scholarship from the International Development Research Council of Canada that funded information sciences institutions in Africa training science librarians or science information managers. That's how I got into information science." Awasom did his internship at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria and the United States Information Service Yaounde under Claudette Bristol and Emmanuel Nwaimah, who both showed him the ropes early in the profession. After that, he wanted to become a professional librarian because he realized that the library profession in Cameroon was virgin territory.

Active in Community

Wherever he has traveled, he has been part of civic or political activities, something that has been an integral part of his life, second nature in many ways, and a family trait. His father was president of a local party in Cameroon during the era of colonialism, but that ended when, upon the country's independence, all political parties were banned and the Cameroon Nation Union was formed as the single political ruling

authority. Awasom, who is now 43, has lived the majority of his life under that kind of government.

"When I went to Nigeria in 1986, it was an eye-opener to me," he said. "It's a more democratic society, starting with the university system. That's really where you train students to become leaders, getting involved

in clubs and associations alike. The club I cherish the most is the Junior Chambers International, a leadership and management-training club.

"I eventually became secretary general of the International Students Association, president of Cameroon Students Union at the University of Ibadan, and ultimately national president general of the Nigeria Chapter for two consecutive terms. It was the early 1990s and it was a critical time for us during the wind of change in Cameroon, the advent of multiparty democracy. Being bilingual, I could reach out to the French and English populations, but down the line, I was blacklisted within the system in Cameroon. It's my own personal convictions. I come from a middle class family and I wasn't lacking as my father instilled certain values in us that it was important to make life comfortable for the average person: allow people to work hard and let excellence to prevail. These are some of the virtues that I carried on."

Awasom recalled how one of his brothers was chased out of the university system in Cameroon for conducting research on the constitutional history of Cameroon. "Today, he is a renowned professor of history at the University of Gambia," Awasom said. "He's doing well out there. In your own home country, they don't accept you. But go elsewhere and given the right conditions, you can excel."

Awasom noted that one of his gifts is the ability to organize people. He is a man of presence. The rich timbre of his voice draws others in; you can sense the intelligence, the soul of a fighter, and the conviction of beliefs within the man.

When Awasom lived in Minnesota, he was able to organize others from his country living in the diaspora. "We come from Bamenda, which is considered the bastion of the opposition in Cameroon, so many of us are living in exile forced by circumstances beyond our control," he said. The group had its first convention in August 2006 and a second one in July.

"With information and communications technologies, it was easy to get them together. I believe in getting people together, even in my church. I was the first director of the West African

ty, they didn't want me in the capital. They placed me in the north, in the Muslim region, where they hoped the Muslims would cloud me down, since I am a Christian, and I would have little

"I was originally recruited to teach in the main library school in the nation's capital. But because of previous political activities at the university, they didn't want me in the capital."

Choir at St. Peter Claver Church in St. Paul. It's very strong and dynamic choir today, spreading the good news in songs and dance."

After earning his master's degrees in information science from the Africa Regional Center for Information Science and in zoology at University of Ibadan in 1995, he landed a job in northern Cameroon at the University of Ngaoundere.

"I was originally recruited to teach in the main library school in the nation's capital. But because of previous political activities at the universi-

following.

"When I got there, the administration didn't know I had a background in the sciences. I was active as an adjunct faculty member for six years but they would not make me a full-fledged faculty because it was obvious I was going to be made the university librarian or dean of the libraries, as is the case in the U.S. It's not a tenured position; it's an appointment from the presidency, so they have control over the budget. I didn't have the staff that I needed but I had to do what I needed to do."



Innocent Awasom with conference participants at the Towards Africa Without Borders conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 2004.

Small Staff

Awasom said he was the only trained professional on a small staff in a library designed to serve 4,000 students. The library was not properly structured to serve others. "You cannot compare libraries in Africa and libraries in the United States. In the U.S., it's automated, and libraries have access to many resources. In Africa, we managed with the resources we had. You need a library run by professionals and this library had too many non-professionals. I did what I could to train people and to do their job, but the administration felt I was interfering. And ours was not a lending library. We didn't have enough books, so the students had to use the books on-site." Part of Awasom's duties

included ordering books. But when phantom shipments arrived and orders were not processed, that's when he blew the whistle and his ongoing trouble grew to the point of endangerment.

"Just before I came to the U.S. in 2002 it was becoming uncomfortable and unbearable," he said of those times. "They spied on me, regularly changed my computers at the library. They wanted to get rid of me. People were going to lose their jobs and everyone knew that. It wasn't just at my university but other institutions and some highly placed members of government too. It was serious."

Soon, he was warned by a colleague not to return to Cameroon and found himself exiled in the U.S.

Awasom spent some time in California and then moved to Minnesota where he had friends. Through the help of the Scholars at Risk Network and University of Minnesota Libraries, especially from his mentor, Peggy Johnson, and UMN Vice President Rob Jones, he was able to secure a position at the university as a reference librarian.

"I came unprepared for Minnesota," Awasom recalled. "I had never been in the snow in my life. I went to Minnesota and started there as a reference librarian. That's where the library world is wonderful. Everyone was understanding. Colleagues got together and got warm clothing for me, got bus tickets for me, and so forth. I now consider Minnesota my home in the United States. I go there when I can now to see my friends."

For three years, Awasom worked at the main library on the central campus under a grant from Scholars at Risk Network and under the university's sponsorship. He was involved in reference services, collection development activities, and library instruction to students and faculty in the College of Agriculture and the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

His duties included marketing library products and services, providing training and translation services to graduate students, and conducting user surveys to assess needs of international clientele. "It was a wonderful experience for me coming from my previous university. It was almost information overload for me. It was a huge learning curve coming into a U.S. library, but I like challenges. I had to learn pretty fast. But in no time, I was very comfortable."

As Awasom's contract with UMN was ending, he heard about a job opening for a science librarian at Texas Tech. In January, he became one of three members on the science team attached to the library, and one of 15 attached to information services.

He gives science students one-on-one reference assistance and demonstrations on the databases, or helps



Innocent Awasom with graduates of the Certificate in Documentation course he coordinated at the University of Ngaoundere in Cameroon in 1999.

them track down material for their research projects and papers. Awasom assists the science faculty in developing their curriculum by inserting library research components into course outlines. He also works the faculty to develop the library's science collection, or tutors them on new databases.

He and his associates also host online chats, answering questions from students. "It's always light at the beginning of a semester," Awasom said of his workload schedule, "but there's always a rush come mid-terms and prior to and during finals. But I love my job in Lubbock. Texas Tech is a young university and the future is very bright, and I'd like to pursue a career here."

Awasom is able to continue to work and reside in the U.S. under an H-1B visa for professionals. He is still working on to obtain political asylum status, but he has found that to be an expensive challenge. "When I first came to the U.S., I had to go to the immigration judge," he said. "There was an article about me in the American Libraries Association magazine, and colleagues from far and near raised money for me, which I used to initiate the asylum process and pay the legal fees. Of course, it wasn't enough, but enough to get me started. That's when I was working part time in Minnesota. It's been much like a hand-to-mouth existence." Since arriving in Texas, Awasom has been saving money with the desire to take his case up again with the immigration officials.

And, of course, there's the matter of his family. Awasom knows he cannot go back to Cameroon anytime soon. "I talk to them often. I have to stay up until midnight to make telephone calls. It's a struggle to make phone connections at times. My eldest daughter doesn't always understand and is sad that I'm far away and I have to say, 'Do you want to have a daddy who is alive and living somewhere, or prefer to have me there - in jail or dead?' And they both understand.

"Their maternal grandfather is

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involved in politics and currently in jail. He's involved with the Southern Cameroon National Conference. I tell my younger daughter that 'Daddy is in school and you need to be in school, too.'" His daughters could come to visit, but a round-trip ticket would cost \$2,000. "If I go back," he said, "there's a system where you'll be picked up and just disappear. There are no accounts of anything, and anything can happen. People disappear and nobody questions."

Recognition

Since he's been in America, Awasom has been recognized for his work as an information specialist. He is this year's winner of the prestigious Karen J. Switt Leadership Award from the Leadership and Management Division of the Special Libraries Association. Last year, he was awarded with a scholarship from the Mortensen Center for International Library Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and in 2004; he won the SLA Diversity Leadership Award presented at the annual conference in Nashville. In addition, he continues his academic writings and conference presentations, mainly on the status and prospects of library services in Cameroon, and the prospects of open access technology in developing countries.

"Technology has fertilized our landscape and changed the way we look and do things," he said. "Technology has changed how we access and store information. We have to embrace change, or we perish. You hear people saying we're moving to a utopian society with computers doing this and that, and where librarians will become

useless or redundant! I don't see that happening. Librarians will always have a central or pivotal role to play. We need to embrace technology, learn about technology."

Awasom believes library schools will need to change their curriculum to adapt to current trends, and points out how SLA offers opportunities for learning. "It's an exciting profession, but you have to love the profession," Awasom said. "It's challenging, but you must strive to look ahead and find mentors who can guide you. Get involved in the activities of your local organizations. And don't forget to market yourself.

"There's a publication published by SLA I encourage everyone to read, *Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century*. Some of my colleagues call it 'The Bible.' That's a real good document and useful in ways on how to keep up to date. We need people to direct us and to hold us. I, myself, have had my mentors; but in SLA there are a great many people who have helped me and I'm getting e-mails from colleagues in Africa, I don't even know asking me questions or seeking collaboration in certain areas. An African proverb says, 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with people.' We need to reach out to one another." **SLA**

Politics and Research: To Run a Campaign, You Can't Have One Without the Other

Are you up to speed on all the new ways to gather political intelligence? Here's a guide to Elections 2.0.

BY STEPHEN ABRAM

I recall a situation, very early in my career, actually my first job. I was working as head librarian for one of the largest accounting and consulting firms in the world (when they were the Big Eight). I was called, for the very first time, up to the office of the chairman. He was a quite substantial figure and quite well known and respected in Canada. His office was the opposite of the modern clean lines of the rest of the office—antique desk, paneled office and no fluorescents. I went to meet the tall, white-haired partner with some trepidation. Whatever research could he want? He normally sent his secretary or other minions for his information needs. So off I went to the “executive” floor.

It turns out that he had advance knowledge of a coming election in Canada. (For you U.S. folks, Canada is on a parliamentary system and an election can occur at any time as long as our Queen agrees through her representative in Canada, the Governor General. Thankfully, elections are legally limited to something like 35 days from the dropping of the writ, with strict financing and donation rules.)

I was sworn to secrecy and then told my services had been volunteered to assist with the campaign fundraising. Luckily, I wasn't too conflicted since he was working for the party I supported. (The firm across the street was for the other guys.) Anyway, I was given some assignments to create mailing lists and target donor lists. It was interesting and, oh, so secret. The best news is that he became a great library supporter.

I have since discovered my experience is quite common. Talk to a few fellow SLA members at a conference and you'll find many have been dragooned this way. I

don't regret the research. Indeed, I loved it and was quite engaged. It wasn't the titillating secrecy aspect. I'd done loads of highly confidential work and secret projects with government policy or with the mergers and acquisitions group. It was the nature of understanding influence and how the political machine works.

Either way, I am still fascinated by the political process. And I know many of our members work in political organizations, supporting the local, state, or national political process. Others are just involved people and informed voters. What's interesting today is the shift that's happened in political influence—driven largely by the new range of Web 2.0 tools as an opportunity to communicate with the citizenry and involve, motivate, and engage them.

To keep you up to date on the key electronic tools being used by politicians everywhere, I thought I'd use this month's column to list the main tools that you'll need to be aware of in case you are asked, as I was, or volunteer to do political research.

What is supplementing the traditional tools for politics, like brochures, websites, ads direct mail, flyers, billboards, and lawn signs?

Here's a modest list. (I haven't included URLs since they're easy to find and I've blogged about many of these at Stephen's Lighthouse.) Most of these, as you've already seen, have had an effect on U.S. elections and have figured prominently in many other jurisdictions.

YouTube

- Every candidate in Canada and the U.S. in the last two years has had some form of YouTube video. Sometimes they're planned and

produced and sometimes they just happen, driven by the competition or the amateur audience and citizen journalists.

- Have you learned how to track and discover this content source? If it has influence, you have to discover it and respond in time, or the river of public opinion moves on.

Second Life

- IBM has 400 (!) employees working on environments for this site. Companies, libraries, and charities are having early successes here.
- I am told that every U.S. presidential candidate has a presence here. Indeed, John McCain's Second Life site was vandalized by a feces-spewing robot.
- Could you have discovered events and speeches here as seamlessly as you do for blogs and mainstream news?

Facebook

- This is the sweet spot for some politicians since it attracts the majority of first- and second-time national voters.
- My 22-year-old son's Facebook site got him interviewed by the Canadian Press newswire.
- Understand the power of Facebook groups, political party links, friends' networks, and event features to political parties and event organizers.
- Are you there and reviewing how you might provide research on trends in support and opinion there?

MySpace

- This is the granddaddy of big social networks. It's more entertainment and socially oriented, but the average age is reported to be 32 and that's significant.
- Get on MySpace to learn more and look at its use for special markets. Advertisers are big there—politics follows quickly.
- How are your MySpace searching skills?

Flickr

- Collect your pictures in one place and share them with teams? It's a natural concept for political rallies and engagement.
- Are you ready to develop tagging rules for political use? Can you approve pictures or decline the use of others?
- Can you collect your volunteers' pictures so you'll recognize them?

Podcasts

- Check out ODEO or the myriad of other podcasting tools.
- Remember that iTunes is both a platform and distributor.
- Telling stories is at the heart of the political process to make your arguments passionately and with color.
- Can you find podcasts and search the spoken word?

Wikipedia

- Remember, you can create your own wiki with PB Wiki and Media Wiki.
- Check out the Wikipedia entries that matter to your political situation (or create one). Check out the competition too. Check out the issues. Are the entries balanced?
- Can you set up RSS feeds on the Wikipedia entries that matter to you? Beware of vandalism.

Ning

- Create communities within communities. Organize your teams and provide them with access to your community's videos, podcasts, blog posting, links, etc.
- Build a team, private or public, to share information in the context of a political campaign

Twitter

- Too poor to afford walkie-talkies on the convention floor or at an event?
- Try Twitter (or Jaiku) on your phone or laptop and you can keep everyone in contact and informed.
- Get ready for the trend in micro-blogging!

Mozez

- Looking to build a smart mob? Try building a texting system to local cell phones (e.g. local press, teams) so that you're connected.
- Can you build a messaging dashboard tied to mailing lists for communicating news, events, ideas, positions...?

NowPublic

- Check out more about the revolution in participatory news gathering.
- Maybe try playing with the new Truemors.com site.
- Push your own news or information.

MyBlogLog

- You'll need to connect with local people. Here's a way to do so.
- Can you build a community focused on success?

Blogging

- Yeah, blogging seems a no-brainer in the political space. But vanilla blogging isn't enough.
- You need to make sure it's populated—probably by more than one voice.
- Are you ready for picture blogs, video blogs, link blogs, and more? All at once?
- Connect your blog to a city or institutional agenda (e.g. Chamber of Commerce/Board of Trade) for extra points.

Tagging and RSS

- Learn the major tagging styles so that you can use them for more powerful searching.

- Are you ready for tagging to your standards to meet the needs of the major search engines?
- Set up Technorati, Bloglines and Google Alerts, etc. to ensure you're actively listening to the political conversation.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization

- Learn how to do this or hire someone to. It's essential.
- Keep it up to date and make sure that your points of view end up in the major Web conversations.
- Search your issues on all search engines (including maps).

LinkedIn/Plaxo

- Most reporters are there—are you?
- Get yourself connected beyond libraries and into new realms.
- Check these out in a political context (e.g. for candidates, bond votes, propositions, etc.)

What can you offer with these 2.0 tools? First, you are an information professional and you'll need the format and container independence of this millennium. You'll need to know not only how to use each, but also how to search their trails, create alerts, develop search strategies, and provide advice. After all, our organizations exist in a socio-political context, and it's a valid use of our time to actively scan the environment for threats and opportunities everywhere.

Sound familiar? I thought so. Another great opportunity that transfers into much of our regular work **SLA**

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Monitoring Legal and Illegal Use of Digital Content: How Can Your Enterprise Effectively Keep Tabs on Use?

Your license agreement is your first stop. Read it carefully to determine who can use what and how they can use it.

BY LESLEY ELLEN HARRIS

After months of negotiating with a digital content owner, you have now signed on the dotted line and everyone in your organization is keen on using this newly acquired content.

Now you can do whatever you want with that content, right?

Wrong.

You have not purchased the digital content outright, but have licensed that content according to certain agreed-upon terms and conditions. Hopefully, you have understood those terms and conditions to which you have agreed, and are now ready to “unleash” the new content, under the conditions in which the content may be used.

Read Your License

Most everything you need to know about the legal use of your digital content is in your license. Read it. Specifically, examine the sections on who is an authorized user, what are authorized uses, and all the licensee (library) obligations with respect to monitoring use of licensed content.

Who May Access the Content?

Your license agreement will set out who is an “authorized user” of the content. This may be all employees in your enterprise, and it may also include consultants and part-timers. If your organization has its headquarters in one city or country and offices or employees (who work remotely) in other cities and countries, then it is likely that these others are authorized users and have been included in your written agreement. If the public is accessing content from your

enterprise’s Web site, and can access licensed content as well, make sure this is permitted in your license.

Can You Redistribute Licensed Content?

Can your enterprise create handouts for a conference using the licensed content? How about including articles found in the licensed content in a research paper to be distributed to the public? There are at least three sections in your license that you will want to review to answer these questions.

First, the section of your license on “rights granted” will set out what rights you have in the licensed content. These rights may include the right to view, reproduce, store or save copies, search, browse, display, download, print, and forward electronically to others.

May you e-mail a copy of a licensed article to yourself? Sometimes this is specifically stated as a right, and sometimes you have to examine the general rights as set out above to see

if it is included, for example, as part of the right to reproduce the content.

Second, review the “authorized uses” section of your license. Usage may refer to such things as personal, noncommercial, scholarly, research, scientific, education, review or comment, private use or research, electronic reserves, class package and training courses, and internal research. Some of these terms may be defined in the license.

Third, examine the section in your license on “usage restrictions” to ensure your use is legal. For example, the license may restrict substantial or systematic copying, or modifying or altering the content. This section should be read in conjunction with the authorized uses section of your license.

Educating Users

After signing a new agreement, it may be helpful to summarize the terms and conditions and post your summary in a place where those accessing the licensed content can easily view it. To go further, you could ask authorized users to sign a notice agreeing to the accepted uses before they can access the content. As a general precaution, you may want to educate users on how to spot illegal usage and to notify those in charge if they suspect illegal usage by way of an internal reporting form.

LESLEY ELLEN HARRIS is a copyright lawyer who works on legal, business, and strategic issues in the publishing, content, entertainment, Internet and information industries. She is the editor of the print newsletter, *The Copyright and New Media Law Newsletter*. If you would like a sample copy of this newsletter, email contact@copyrightlaws.com. She is a professor at SLA’s Click University where she teaches a number of online courses on copyright, licensing and managing copyright and digital content for SLA members. See www.clickuniversity.com.



Monitoring Usage

Your enterprise should not be required to police all unauthorized uses of content but merely to have certain mechanisms in place to ensure your uses are within the license terms and conditions. Check your license for your obligations. Are you required to issue passwords to authorized users? Hopefully you were not asked or did not agree to track usage of content as this may be an invasion of privacy—not to mention staff time and equipment to conduct this monitoring.

Safeguards

Monitoring digital content use involves several steps. Some safeguards include the following:

- Each reproduced article states the content owner's name and email address along with a copyright notice or warning.
- Whenever licensed content is accessed, the end user should be explicitly warned about copyright law and license agreements. For example, a copyright notice should be posted near a computer terminal. Where access is remote, a copyright notice should appear prior to granting access to the content.
- Your library should make information on copyright law and license agreements easily available through links to relevant Web sites and by having an in-house library of relevant sources.
- Where feasible, summaries of license agreements as well as the agreements themselves should be available to authorized users. **SLA**

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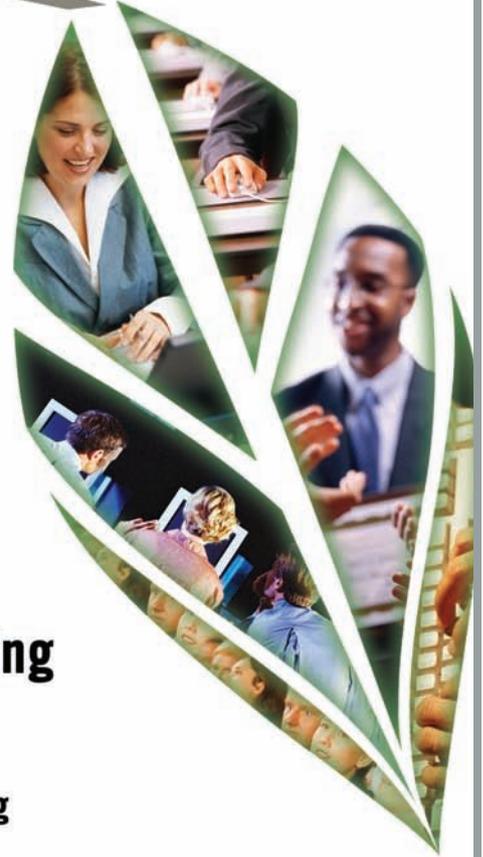
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Moving to Knowledge Services: Managing the Change and Identifying Advocates and Champions
 22
Financial Management of Information Projects

SEPTEMBER

- 12
Surveying as a Planning Tool, Part 1
 26
Surveying as a Planning Tool, Part 2

OCTOBER

- 9
Web Searching: Advanced Techniques for Google and Beyond
 23
Project Profile: The Hub of Clear Project Communication

NOVEMBER

- 7
Managing Digitization Projects: Lessons Learned—Best Practices Developed, Part 1
 14
Managing Digitization Projects: Lessons Learned—Best Practices Developed, Part 2

DECEMBER

- 5
90 Minutes to a Great Taxonomy, Part 1: Taxonomy Basics
 12
90 Minutes to Beyond Taxonomy, Part II: Taxonomy Advanced

OTHER EVENTS

AUGUST

- 13-16
Sixth International Conference on Conceptions of Library and Information Science Swedish School of Library and Information Science
 Borås, Sweden
www.hb.se/colis

- 19-23
73rd Annual World Library and Information Congress
 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
 Durban, South Africa
www.ifla.org/IV/ifla73/index.htm

- 27-31
International Conference on Dublin Core and Metadata Applications
 Dublin Core Metadata Initiative and National Library Board of Singapore
 Singapore
<http://www.dc2007.sg/index.asp?section=intro>

OCTOBER

- 4-7
LITA National Forum Library & Information Technology Association
 Denver, Colorado
www.ala.org/ala/lita/litaevents/litanationalforum2007denver/callforproposals.cfm

- 7-11
International Conference on Information Society
 IEEE
 Merrillville, Indiana
www.i-society.org/

- 8-9
Internet Librarian International
 Information Today
 London, U.K.
www.internet-librarian.com/index.shtml

- 11-12
Second International Conference on Metadata and Semantics Research
 University of Alcalá and Ionian University
 Corfu, Greece
www.mtsr.ionio.gr/

- 18-25
American Society for Information Science and Technology Annual Meeting
 Milwaukee, Wisconsin
www.asis.org/Conferences/AM07/am07cfp.html

- 20-22
Book 2007: Fifth International Conference on the Book
 Common Ground
 Madrid, Spain
<http://b07.cgpublisher.com/>

- 22-24
Third Rizal Library International Conference
 Ateneo de Manila University
 Quezon City, Philippines
<http://rizal.lib.admu.edu.ph/2007conf/index.htm>

- 23-26
EDUCAUSE Annual Conference
 Seattle, Washington
www.educause.edu/e07

- 24-27
Deutsches Competitive Intelligence Forum/SCIP Competitive Intelligence Conference
 Bad Nauheim, Germany
www.dcif.de/en

- 28-31
Fourth International Conference on Knowledge Capture
 ACM SIGART
 Whistler, British Columbia, Canada
www.csd.abdn.ac.uk/kcap07/index.php

- 29-31
10th Interlending and Document Supply International Conference
 IFLA
 Singapore
www.nlbconference.com/ilds/index.htm

- 29-31
Internet Librarian
 Information Today
 Monterey, California
www.infotoday.com/il2007

SEPTEMBER

- 9-12
LIANZA Conference 2007—TRANZFORM
 Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa
 Rotorua, New Zealand
<http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2007/index.html>

NOVEMBER

- 2-5
International Conference on Web Intelligence
 IEEE, WIC, ACM
 Fremont, California
<http://www.cs.sjsu.edu/wi07/>

- 5-8
KMWorld and Intranets
 Information Today
 San Jose, California USA

- 6-7
Enterprise Search Summit West
 Information Today
 San Jose, California
<http://www.enterprisearchsummit.com/West/>

- 8-9
Taxonomy Boot Camp
 Information Today
 San Jose, California
<http://www.taxonomybootcamp.com/>

JUNE 15-18

SLA Annual Conference

Seattle, Washington
www.sla.org

- 6-9
16th Conference on Information and Knowledge Management
 Association for Computing Machinery
 Lisboa, Portugal
<http://www.fc.ul.pt/cikm2007/>

- 7-10
XXVII Annual Charleston Conference
 The Charleston Information Group
 Charleston, South Carolina
<http://www.katina.info/conference/>

- 10-14
2007 American Medical Informatics Association Annual Symposium
 AMIA
 Chicago
<http://www.amia.org/meetings/upcoming.asp>

- 27-29
4th Annual Gilbane Conference Boston
 Lighthouse Seminars
 Boston, USA
<http://gilbaneboston.com/>

DECEMBER

- 1-5
Annual Course on International Law Librarianship
 International Association of Law Libraries
 Mumbai, India
<http://www.iall.org/fall2007/>

ADVERTISING INDEX

Annual Reviews	1
American Chemical Society	C2
Chemical Abstracts Service	2
Thomson Scientific	C4

SLA PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

2007 Annual Conference	4
Click U - Competitive Intelligence	25
Click U Live!	40

Developing Your Library's Strategy Requires More than a Once-a-Year Planning Session

BUSINESS CONDITIONS CAN CHANGE ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE. TO KEEP UP, YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE THE PLAN STILL MATCHES THE GOAL.

BY DEBBIE SCHACHTER

A significant amount of time and energy are focused on developing and updating business strategy, including the effort that goes into traditional strategic planning activities.

In the past, strategic planning was known as “long-term planning.” That was before the rapid changes in modern industries and the realities of the global economy made the concept of “long-term” planning not quite obsolete but certainly of a much shorter timeframe. Planning beyond one or two years is still important, but in most industries plans becomes less and less reliable the further the planning horizon. The trend for a number of years has been to focus on “strategic planning” and “strategic decision making,” and more and more it is apparent that strategy development cannot be considered solely an annual event. It must better reflect the fluidity of other business processes—continuously evolving and adjusting even within the developed strategic plan.

As with all management trends, strategic planning “must-dos” of the past decade are now becoming obsolete. Some of the business literature even goes so far as to propose a complete revamping of how strategic planning should be undertaken. Michael C. Mankings and Richard Steele write, “Many executives have grown skeptical of strategic planning. Is it any wonder? Despite all the time and energy most companies put into strategic planning, the process is most often a barrier to good decision making, our research indicates. As a result, strategic planning doesn't really influence most com-

panies' strategy.” (“Stop Making Plans, Start Making Decisions,” *Harvard Business Review*, January 2006).

Many organizations are devolving the strategic planning processes to incorporate more regular analysis and redevelopment of strategy. This is contrary to the more traditional approach of waiting for the annual strategic planning review and redevelopment, as results from the current plan are taking shape. The heavily structured and controlled strategic planning review and retreat processes of recent years now seems to be too cumbersome and ineffective for developing effective strategy.

As you may know, the term “strategy” comes from the vocabulary of the military and then taken on by the field of management. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines strategy as “The art of a commander-in-chief; the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign.” How the term is defined in the business environment adds

some clarity: “In (theoretical) circumstances of competition or conflict, as in the theory of games, decision theory, business administration, etc., a plan for successful action based on the rationality and interdependence of the moves of the opposing participants.”

Applying this aggressive type of win-or-lose concept to the library world seems almost inappropriate. But we always have and always will create strategies to ensure our success and continuing value in our organizations. We don't do this in isolation but based on our purpose within the organization and the needs of our customers.

The strategy for your library is taking what you want to achieve and determining how best to achieve that end. Good strategy is about how best to deploy your scarce resources to achieve your objectives. It can only be developed through a thorough understanding of your mission and purpose and with access to accurate information about your clients and their needs, and awareness of the competition (if any).

Undoubtedly, your organization as a whole has a strategic plan, and you must develop your goals to align with the broad organizational goals. The tactics that you devise to reach your objectives are, of course, unique to the library. Your strategy doesn't need to



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be unique or revolutionary, but it must be entirely fitting to your library and organizational context.

Strategies cannot be static. It seems that the most important thing about strategy development is to understand that it is an ongoing process. You devise a strategy for achieving a particular goal, but that strategy may only be valid for a short period of time, whether you expect it to be or not. Depending on your environment or what you are trying to achieve, you may have several strategies for achieving a broad aim.

For example, if you have determined that your long-term strategy is to have the library better integrated with the departments it serves, you may devise a variety of short-term strategies to achieve that goal. Your short-term strategy may be initially to have staff members invited to make presentations to specific decision-making or cross-functional teams within the organization. You may then have a longer-term strategy to gradually have staff members permanently join cross-departmental teams. Sometimes the success in one area leads to acceptance in another, and the strategy is realized through effective planning. Sometimes the strategy is not effective, and by monitoring the situation, you can determine this and make better use of your resources.

Reactive or Proactive?

Review and analysis are the basis of good strategy development. You can't base your strategy on what you would wish but what you should achieve, based on your library's mandate and vision. You need to be looking at the macro and the micro levels at the same time. You should never be buried too deeply in the tactical plans that you can't come up for air and see whether your overall strategy is actually achieving what it is intended to achieve. Remember that the world is

changing around you, even as you are laying out your own plans based on historical evidence.

Good strategy needs to be well thought out. Joseph H. Cady describes this process as reflective thinking: "Reflective thinking is the ability to thoroughly weigh an issue or question against all relevant information, and detect emerging patterns, where they exist, from apparently disparate data. It is to be highly valued during the crafting of strategy." ("Beware of the Planning Retreat," *ABA Banking Journal*, 98(9), September 2006.)

Sometimes we have so little time in the day that we are unable to do anything other than react to the requests and respond to the work as it arrives. Strategy development starts at this fundamental level, where we can see and understand what is driving the requests for assistance and realize what is being left behind or ignored due to lack of time. As more and more businesses are coming to realize, strategic planning needs to be crafted in the context of the day-to-day; it shouldn't be solely seen as an annual event. As needed, strategy should be re-evaluated and modified during the course of the fiscal year to ensure that you meet your goals, rather than wait for an annual strategic planning event.

Being solely reactive, however, is not an effective way to develop quality strategy (other than simply coping strategies). Although the strategic planning process sets out annual or longer-term goals, the reality is that the operational plans and the strategies that drive them should be flexible enough to respond when milestones are not ultimately attainable, or the goals are clearly misplaced. As well, sudden changes to the corporate environment, such as shutting down a division, or a change of focus due to market changes, may require change if the special library strategy is to remain

in tune with the changing organizational strategy.

Developing effective strategy is based on information: the information about your users' needs, information about any competitors and their competitive services and products, the information about your resources, and the means to deploy those resources most effectively. As we all know through reference work, information cannot always be complete, but you can usually get a sense of the trends. These revealing trends in your market are what you need to be attuned to in order to make assumptions about the future. Combining the on-the-ground changing experience with the more reflective and thoughtful analysis and review helps to craft the most effective strategy. **SLA**

What I Learned This Summer: You Never Stop Learning

I also learned that bibliographic control is especially important in managing digital content.

BY JOHN LATHAM

I spent two days last month at the Library of Congress attending the third and last public meeting of the working group on the future of bibliographic control as SLA's representative.

I was overawed at first by the title of the group. What do I know about bibliographic control, and how does it actually affect me? Perhaps I should have concentrated harder in my cataloging class at library school. Well, guess what. It is all about what we do every day. It's all about description and access, and thesauri and taxonomies, and even I know how important they are. It's not just about cataloging books and serials in the large academic libraries, but about Google, digital materials, films, photos, and managing e-mails and internal documents.

The Library of Congress set up a group of representatives from the major library associations, national libraries, and organizations closely involved in the issues, such as Google, Microsoft, OCLC and the Coalition for Networked Information. The group's charge was to present findings on how bibliographic control and other descriptive practices can effectively support management of and access to library materials in the evolving information and technology environment; recommend ways in which the library community can collectively move toward achieving this vision; and advise the Library of Congress on its role and priorities.

It was clear from the outset that the group needed input from as many people as possible to assist in preparing this important report, and therefore we set up three public meetings to obtain feedback on three broad categories: Uses and Users, Structures and Standards, and Economics and Organizations. Information

about the working group and the three public meetings, including how one can submit comments is found at www.loc.gov/bibliographic-future.

The public meetings were very well attended, and many thought-provoking presentations were given and comments received both in writing and from the floor. Although this column may not be available until after the deadline for submissions on July 31, there will be a final opportunity for comment when the draft report is published at the end of September or early October.

José-Marie Griffiths, dean of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in accepting the position of chair of the working group, stressed what an important opportunity it was for different sectors of the information profession to examine a common problem and recommend solutions that will benefit librarians and users. What a great opportunity for special librarians, who represent the widest sectors of information professionals, to influence the workings of this important project. I have found this whole ongoing experience fascinating, and have learned so much about the different ways people access and use information.

Working with this great group of people reminded me just how important it is within one's own organizations to serve on task forces or working groups such as

these. However up to date you may strive to be, you can never stop learning about what is going on within your organization, and what are the issues of concern to your fellow workers and management. Just interacting with and getting to know sections of management with whom you do not regularly have contact is worth the time and effort, and increases your own exposure within the organization. If you can be co-opted to committees or groups at an industry or profession-wide level, so much the better.

SLA Research Grant

SLA's newly-formed Research and Development Committee has recently announced that SLA has pooled its research funds and now is offering a new SLA Research Grant incorporating the Steven I. Goldspiel Memorial Research Grant Fund.

SLA supports two types of proposals. The first are research projects focused on the needs and concerns of information professionals in special libraries and related venues, with its current focus on evidence-based practice, as in the SLA Research Statement, "Putting Our Knowledge to Work" (www.sla.org/researchstatement). Awards may be granted up to \$25,000. The second set of projects would directly benefit the operations of SLA and its units, by furthering the scientific, literary and educational purpose for which the association is organized and operated. Awards may be granted up to \$10,000. Information about the SLA Research Grant can be found at www.sla.org/slaresearchgrant. **SLA**



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