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Information Outlook, December 2010

Special Libraries Association

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SPECIAL LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION

UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMATION USER

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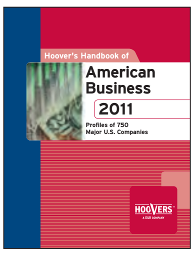

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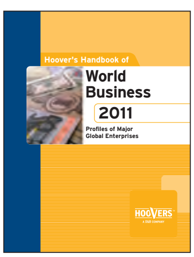

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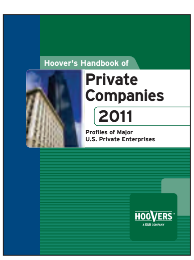

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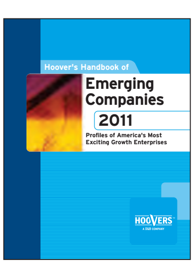

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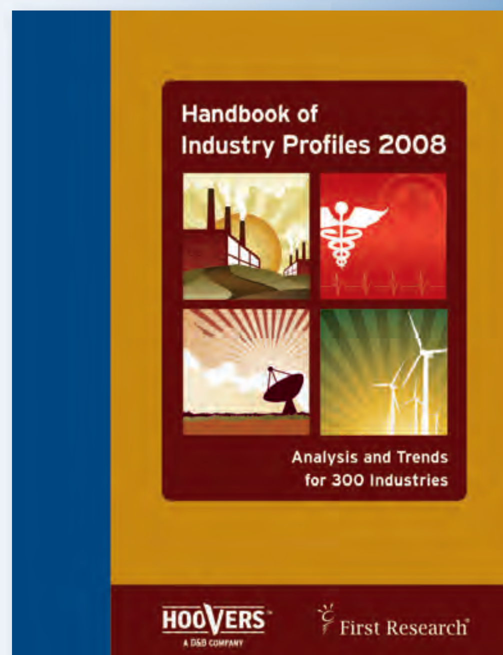

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FOCUS: UNDERSTANDING THE INFORMATION USER

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Vol. 14, No. 08
December 2010

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Information Outlook®
(ISSN 1091-0808) is published 8 times a year (January/February, March, April/May, June, July/August, September, October/November, December) by the Special Libraries Association, 331 South Patrick Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, magazine@sla.org. +1 703.647.4900

Subscription Rates:
Annual subscription, US$ 160 United States; US$ 175 International. Single issue, US$ 20. 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.

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Information Outlook: Subscriptions
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331 South Patrick Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3501
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Periodicals postage paid at Alexandria, Virginia, 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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Keep the Information Flowing

As the demands on information professionals—for more good information delivered more quickly and in more ways—grow, the value of SLA membership will grow as well.

BY JANICE LECHANCE, SLA CEO

The economy in much of the world is still sputtering, and many retailers kicked off their holiday sales season earlier than usual to try to encourage shoppers to open their wallets, but at least one product seems to be recession-proof: information.

Want evidence? Just visit Amazon.com, which recently announced that its e-reading device, the Kindle, is the best-selling product on both its U.S. and U.K. sites. Or check out Apple's iPad, a combination e-book and Web content reader that sold more than 2 million units in its first two months, or the iPhone, a touchscreen smartphone that is on pace to ring up as many as 100 million subscribers by the end of 2011.

Sales figures for these three products (and their competitors) suggest they are fundamentally changing the way millions of us access, consume and share information. Or are they? Ipsos MORI, a market research firm in Britain, recently surveyed more than 8,200 business leaders in Europe and found that while nearly half of them use smartphones to get news and information, an astounding 95 percent still use printed media and 85 percent use television for the same purpose.

Even college students, who prefer to gather and disseminate information through social media channels, are still more likely to own so-called "feature phones" than smartphones. While smartphone use is growing rapidly among younger audiences, studies suggest that these consumers are concerned more about keeping information flowing—and flowing quickly—than about where it comes from or what device is used to access it.

These findings raise several questions for information professionals: Who are your core audiences? What kinds of information do they need? How do they like to receive and consume that information?

Answering these questions is critical if you are to demonstrate your value and further the mission and goals of your organization. You must know who uses information in your organization and how they use it, and how those uses contribute to the organization's success. You must know your core audiences well enough to not just respond to their information needs, but to anticipate them. You must keep the information flowing—to the right people, at the right times, and in the right ways.

In essence, you must find ways to get closer to key information users in your organization and become their preferred resource for news, ideas, trends, and developments. For example, if your firm is re-branding itself, find out who the thought leaders are on that subject and feed their ideas to your marketing and communication executives. If your sales team travels a lot, make sure you deliver the latest competitive intelligence to them in ways that are mobile-friendly. And don't forget the managers and directors in your own department—join their network (either personal or online) and engage them on everything from records management to training delivery to the latest apps for their PDAs.

If this sounds like a tall order, it is. Already, today's information professionals are doing not just more with less, but also *different* with less—everything from knowledge management to social networking to content licensing. And with the success of the Kindle, iPad and smartphones, it is becoming clear that the global appetite for information will only continue to grow, and that more and different media will be available to share it.

Helping you meet these challenges is what SLA is all about. Our educational offerings, networking opportunities, and chapter and division programs can help you become "Future Ready" and keep you on the leading edge of the profession. Our Alignment Project research can help position you to contribute to your organization's success and highlight your value. And our meetings and conferences, like our upcoming Leadership Summit and the 2011 Annual Conference and INFO-EXPO, can teach you new skills that will enhance your SLA experience and translate to your job and career.

Start making plans now to use your SLA membership to maximum advantage in 2011. After all, information will be in greater demand next year. You should be, too. **SLA**

You must know your core audiences well enough to not just respond to their information needs, but to anticipate them.

AWARD WINNERS · FEEDBACK ON GUIDING STATEMENTS

Hulser, Wiggins Receive Member Achievement Award

Two librarians who have served the information profession and SLA in a variety of capacities have been named co-recipients of the 2010 Dialog & ProQuest Member Achievement Award.

Richard Hulser

Dianna Wiggins

Richard Hulser, a longtime SLA member who has worked in the public, private and academic sectors, and Dianna Wiggins, who received her library degree seven years ago but has already worked for two multinational corporations and a leading social services organization, received the award at the SLA 2010 Annual Conference & INFO-EXPO. The award is bestowed annually on one or more SLA members for raising visibility, awareness and appreciation of the information profession and/or the association at large.

Hulser is co-founder of SLA's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues Caucus, which recently celebrated its 15th anniversary, and the founder of the Information Futurist Caucus, which stemmed from his talks using "Star Trek: The Next Generation" to help visualize future information management scenarios. He served as division cabinet chair on the SLA Board of Directors from 1997 through 1999, was named a Fellow of SLA in 2000, and was a member of a group that received the SLA President's Award in 2004.

Hulser started his library career at Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, in 1979. He later worked as a senior librarian, library industry specialist, and technology strategy planning consultant, all at IBM. He then went on to be content development director for Infotrieve and is currently chief librarian at the National History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Wiggins' career as an information professional began when she volunteered for her local public library in the Chicago area. After completing her master's degree in library and information science at Dominican University in 2003, she worked as a research librarian for BP, a substitute medical librarian, a knowledge sharing manager for McDonald's, and a social knowledge manager at the YMCA. She received McDonald's President's Award in 2006.

Like Hulser, Wiggins is an alignment ambassador, working to raise awareness of the information profession and the value of its members. She also is the 2010 president of the SLA Illinois Chapter.

The Dialog & ProQuest Member Achievement Award has been given annually since 2003. For more information about the award and this year's winners, visit www.sla.org/content/SLA/awardsrecognition/memberachievement/index.cfm.

Polling Nearly Complete on Guiding Statements

As *Information Outlook* goes to press, SLA members are casting their final ballots on questions designed to elicit reactions to proposed vision, mission and values statements that will guide the association in the years ahead.

For the past two months, SLA members have had the opportunity to comment on the proposed statements and answer questions about them. After polling ends on December 15, the comments and poll answers will be used to revise the proposed statements. The amended statements will be presented to the SLA Board of Directors at its meeting in January at the 2011 SLA Leadership Summit.

The proposed mission statement for SLA, which prompted roughly two dozen comments, reads as follows: *To serve as the unified voice for the information profession, advocating its value, promoting best practices, creating knowledge sharing and global networking opportunities, and empowering members to become critical assets within their organizations through continuous learning.*

The proposed vision statement for SLA reads as follows: *To lead the information profession into the future by promoting its members as invaluable assets to their organizations. We will continually empower our members to be knowledge leaders who actively contribute to, and drive the success of, their organizations.*

The proposed core values for the information profession are leadership, accountability and results, and service. The proposed core values for SLA are continuous learning and professional development, knowledge sharing and collaboration, and advocacy and empowerment.

For more information about the statements and the SLA Alignment Project, visit the *Align SLA!* portal at www.sla.org/content/SLA/alignment/portal/index.html. **SLA**

TRAINING MATERIALS · LIBRARY FUNDING

IFLA Puts Training Materials, Case Studies on Web

The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has launched a new online learning program that will make training materials and case studies available to its member library associations.

The resources will be grouped into five modules, each containing a series of topics, learning objectives, case studies, and opportunities for self-assessment. The modules are as follows:

- Library Associations in Society: An Overview
- Building Your Library Association
- Sustaining your Library Association
- Developing Strategic Relationships: Partnerships and Fundraising
- Libraries on the Agenda

The program, which will be housed on a separate section of IFLA's Web site, will be powered by Moodle, an open source learning platform. The site will allow IFLA members, including SLA members, to download high-quality training materials and case studies, participate in online learning activities and discussions, and contribute stories of how they have used the program.

The training materials are aimed at library association workers, including staff, volunteers, representatives (such as regional coordinators), and members. Content will be continually rolled out, with each module available for download at launch.

Beginning in February 2011, all five modules will be complemented by a range of blended learning content, quizzes, and activities. The program will also include more than 20 research-based case studies that illustrate examples of the work of library associations around the world. This resource will continue to grow, and IFLA will actively seek out examples of innovation from associations.

The learning materials may be used in a variety of ways: within an association (such as at a board meeting or seminar), to run an independent workshop, or for personal learning. Registration is free for members and provides access to the materials and to discussions with other users of the site.

Because of IFLA's international nature, the materials are as open as possible rather than prescriptive. Customization of content due to differing needs is expected.

For more information about the training program and materials, visit www.ifla.org.

Senate OKs Library Bill; No House Vote Yet

A bill to reauthorize funding for library services and technological upgrades and ensure that the Institute of Museum and Library Services is able to provide resources to support U.S. libraries passed the U.S. Senate on December 7, but the House of Representatives had not yet taken up the legislation as *Information Outlook* went to press.

The bill would update the existing library funding law to reflect the increasing education and workforce development roles libraries have been playing during the economic recession, including helping the out-of-work look for jobs. It would also help enhance training and professional development for librarians and promote the development of a diverse library workforce.

In addition, the bill would help build state capacity to support museums by authorizing the IMLS to support state assessments of museum services and the development and implementation of state plans to improve and enhance those services. It would also strengthen museum conservation and preservation efforts. **SLA**

Info File

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The Key to Marketing Success

BY LEARNING WHAT CLIENTS REALLY WANT, YOU CAN AVOID WASTING TIME AND MONEY ON THINGS THEY WON'T USE.

BY KATHY DEMPSEY

When you hear or see the word *marketing*, what comes to mind? Endless streams of television advertisements? Annoying telemarketers calling you at dinner time? Overpaid creative types scheming about new ways to make you desire products that you don't really need?

The fact that marketing has gotten a bad rap in many people's minds is one of the reasons we often avoid marketing in our libraries and information centers. Other reasons commonly cited are a lack of time and money and a belief that marketing is not a core information activity. Some librarians admit to not knowing enough about it.

In this article, I'll explain what marketing really is and show how its focus on understanding information users qualifies it as a core activity. I'll also outline the steps in the marketing process and advise you on how to begin marketing or improve your current efforts. Finally, I'll share some things others have done to market their information centers and services.

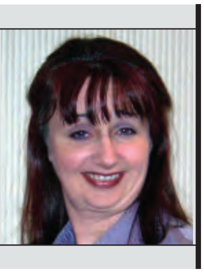
So, What Is Marketing?

Today, the glut of information and delivery devices has made the concept of a librarian seem unnecessary to people outside our profession. You may already be fighting calls to shave hours, cut staff or close your information center altogether. You may be struggling to convince employees in your organization to use your services instead of searching for information on their own.

How can you accomplish all of these things and demonstrate your value to the company's bottom line? The simple answer is "true marketing." And what's at the core of true marketing is a commitment to really understanding your users (and non-users).

Marketing, by definition, is a process in which the ultimate goal is moving goods and/or services from the producer to consumers. But it's much more than that. "True marketing," as I've dubbed my plan, always involves a number of steps that ensure that the consumer will end up with those goods and services.

KATHY DEMPSEY edits a newsletter, *Marketing Library Services*, and runs a consultancy called Libraries Are Essential. She previously served as editor-in-chief of *Computers in Libraries* magazine and has worked in both the publishing and library fields. She speaks at conferences and blogs at The M Word. She can be reached at Kathy@LibrariesAreEssential.com.



In true marketing, you start by asking the consumer what he or she wants. Questioning clients takes the guesswork out of the process and ensures that more people will use what you're offering, because they've already confirmed that it's something they want or need.

In my 16 years of studying, reading and writing about library marketing, I've identified a few major challenges that prevent us from being more successful. The obvious ones are that most library schools teach very little, if any, information about marketing and that the marketing field is misunderstood (and associated with unsavory activities). But learning the basics of conducting marketing the right way can have major effects on your efforts.

To combat these misunderstandings and to help info pros around the world conduct successful marketing efforts, I published a book in 2009 called *The Accidental Library Marketer*. As the title implies, it's for librarians who find themselves performing these sorts of tasks without much training. As I put the book together, I combined research (inside and outside our field) with my own knowledge and created what I call the Cycle of True Marketing (see Figure 1). Here are the basic steps of the cycle:

1. Conduct some research to learn about the people in your organization.
2. Acknowledge that you have many different types of customers. Each is its own "target market" that needs to be treated separately.
3. Set qualitative and quantitative goals for each target market you want to reach.
4. Get to know members of a chosen target market and ask them what they want and need (and what they don't!) from your organization.
5. Create products and services (or identify those you already have) that will benefit each target market according to the wants and needs they've expressed.
6. Figure out what people currently use (instead of your library) to fulfill these needs.
7. Think about ways you can evaluate the effects of giving people what they want. How will you know whether you're satisfying them?
8. Promote your products and/or services to members of their respective markets in ways that will get their attention and encourage them to respond.
9. Deliver the products and services with your evaluative tools in place.
10. Get feedback from individuals to ascertain whether you've really met the needs they expressed earlier.
11. Evaluate the feedback against the customers' original requests and your original goals. Have you done what you set out to do?
12. Use your evaluations to tweak your products, services, approaches, actions, and goals as necessary. Go back to any steps you need to improve and continue through the cycle again.

Can you see why projects that undergo the steps in this cycle are practically guaranteed to work? How can you go wrong by asking people what they want, delivering what they want, asking for feedback, and then improving your offerings accordingly? It's easy for products and services to fail when you don't follow these steps; it's hard for them to fail when you do.

One glance at the cycle graphic illustrates another major downfall of the information field: We usually begin the marketing process by promoting our products and services, a step that shouldn't be taken until you're at least halfway through the cycle. Having never been taught differently, we skip most or all of the beginning steps—the ones that do so much to ensure our success. Realizing that you need to start with customer research can do wonders for your success rates.

> How can you go wrong by asking people what they want, delivering what they want, asking for feedback, and then improving your offerings accordingly?

Make Marketing Work for You

Before we go any further, let me reassure you about something: True marketing does not have to be an all-consuming process. I know it looks like a lot of work, but this cycle is very scalable. You can spend thousands of dollars and countless hours addressing every detail, or you can scratch the surface and still realize some benefit. No matter which way you go, understanding your clients is the first and most important thing you can do to ensure marketing success.

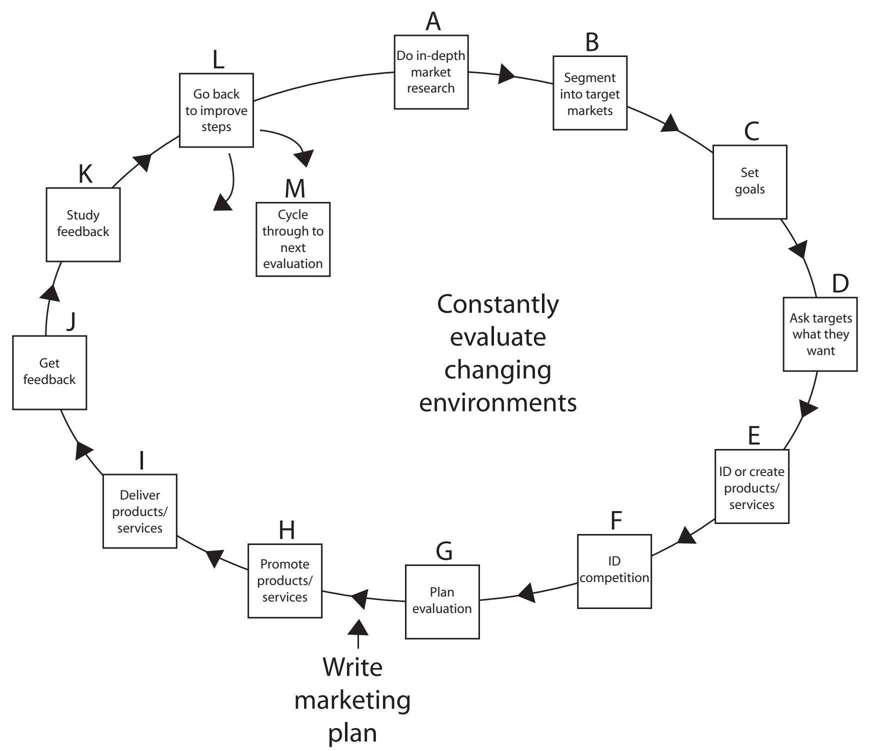
So, let's start at the beginning—the true beginning. This means conducting research on your customers to learn what they need. If you're saying to yourself, "I already know what they need so I'll skip that part," stop right there, because you're committing one of our profession's cardinal sins. The "I know best" mentality can be our undoing (Siess 2003), especially as the "digital native" generation enters the workplace. (What 20-something doesn't believe that he or she can search better than a 50-something?)

When organizations such as Gates, Pew and Outsell conduct research on information-seeking behavior, they often prove how little we understand it. Couple this with the fact that every group of people (teens, seniors, scientists, nurses, engineers, etc.) works differently and that each group wants things customized for their own comfort, and you begin to realize the scope of the challenge of serving them. If this makes the task seem overwhelming, fear not—that's where market segmentation comes in.

Segment for Success

The term "market segmentation" simply means breaking down big groups into smaller, like-minded sets of people so

FIGURE 1: **THE CYCLE OF TRUE MARKETING**



you can develop proper strategies for each one. This is commonly seen in public libraries, where there are different collections, sections, and rules for children, young adults, adults, and seniors. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The next secret of true marketing is that you need to segment your information users much more deeply to achieve success. The more you can customize services for each group, the more likely they are to use them.

Let's say you work in the Information Resource Center of the Greentree Teaching Hospital. Who are your main market segments? You'd probably say they are faculty members, students and administrators, and perhaps some staffers. Think you're finished segmenting? Think again.

Start with the faculty. How many different types of faculty members can you think of? Following are some additional ways to segment them:

- Longstanding members vs. new hires;
- Permanent vs. visiting or short-term;
- Surgical vs. nursing vs. pediatrics, etc.;
- Old vs. young;
- Full-time vs. part-time; and
- Tenure track vs. non-tenure.

These are just some examples of deep market segmentation. You need to remember that the people in each of these groups look at their work a little differently and communicate using different venues, and they are likely to want their information presented differently as well. One-size service absolutely, positively, does *not* fit all.

Keep in mind that these groups represent only the faculty. What about the nurses, students, administrators, and even patients? Once you realize you have 100 small target markets, you might start to panic. Just take a deep breath, choose one market that you want to start serving better, and go from there.

The Rest of the Cycle

The next step in the Cycle of True Marketing is to set goals. This can be very simple. Let's say you just spent $50,000 on a neurology database (NeuroBase), but it's rarely used. Given your investment, you want your neurologists to know about NeuroBase. Start by measuring its current usage (pull statistics from the computer system), then determine how much you want to increase it—say, by 20 percent over a 6-month period. Now you have a measureable goal to guide your future actions.

Next, ask some members of your target market exactly what they want. Chances are they're not going to say, "We want NeuroBase," because they're not aware of that particular product. More likely, they'll tell you they need more information about a new type of brain surgery. Your next step is to find out how they want that information delivered. Once you've gleaned the answer from a few sources in the target group, you can use your expertise to determine the best way to get the information to your clients.

But before you do, you need to ask one more important question, one that librarians seldom ask: "Where do you get that information from now?" After all, doctors were performing brain surgery before you bought NeuroBase. If they are already getting the same information in a fashion that suits them fine, why should they start using your database? What advantages does NeuroBase offer? Be prepared to convince them of its superiority or to stop paying for NeuroBase and put your $50,000 elsewhere. This is how true marketing can save you money.

Get to Know Your Customers

Perhaps you feel you know your customers fairly well. Maybe you serve on committees or advisory boards with them. Hopefully you're part of their meetings or project planning sessions. There's an awful lot to be said for relationship building and political back-scratching, but if you're not asking them specific questions about their information needs and communication preferences, you're missing opportunities to serve them better.

The most common tactics for asking questions are surveys and focus groups. While both of these are extremely valu-

If studying users helps with alignment, marketing, service improvement, and finances, that's enough evidence to make it worth the extra effort.

able, much has been written about them already, so I'm going to discuss other ideas here.

One tactic I highly recommend is simply asking the people in charge of your company for employee data. Since your job is to serve these workers, you need to know who they are and what organizational goals you're supposed to be helping them achieve. You should receive a full list.

After you receive the names, segment them by title or function. For example, how many salespeople are there? If there are 35 but only a few of them ever ask for your help, that means you have a ready-made target market you can educate about resources that could help them increase sales. Likewise, if there are six vice presidents but you're only familiar with one, it's time to reach out to the other five. (Note: It's essential to make administrators one of your most important target markets. Too often, corporate information centers serve the worker bees well, but are threatened with cuts by detached administrators who have never used their services and don't understand how they affect the bottom line.)

Next, identify groups and individuals who are influential. Become familiar with them and anticipate their needs. (For instance, send them messages that say, "I've read that one emerging trend in your area is XYZ. Would you like me to research that and prepare a list of the latest papers?") It can also be beneficial to join professional societies—your clients' societies, not your own—not only to stay abreast of trends but also to encourage your clients to see you as more of an equal partner. Be sure to communicate how your input can help co-workers meet their goals more quickly, save money, or beat a competitor to market with a product.

Not all of your tactics need to relate to office work. Take advantage of opportunities to participate in social events, such as groups going to ball games. Today's growing social media structure also offers a multitude of ways to get to know folks. If you don't want a personal Facebook or Twitter account to be cluttered with co-workers, create professional accounts to remind clients of activities and resources. Post items to see what people will like or re-post. And don't wait for them to follow you—you should follow them. In these spaces, people often reveal tidbits about how they think and work and what their interests and values are. Read their posts and seize every opportunity to learn about them.

Finally, don't overlook the basic idea of hosting an open house. My favorite corporate article in *Marketing Library Services* was written by Elizabeth Bumgarner, a solo librarian for a division of Time, Inc. To introduce her geographically dispersed customers to her library's redesigned intranet site, she hosted a week-long virtual open house. She created a six-screen tour that briefly described the intranet's most important new features and included a "guest book" page where people could sign in, thereby registering for prizes (distributing prizes allowed her to interact with users she never would have met otherwise). Bumgarner was very pleased with the way this increased visibility.

Academic librarians at Mercer University in Georgia have successfully let their students "try it before they buy it." They've involved students in testing possible equipment purchases (e.g., Netbooks and keyboards) and even in taste-testing coffee while choosing the vendor for a library cafe. During a presentation at ALA's 2010 Annual Conference, librarians Louise Lowe and Judith Brook explained how getting to know their users' preferences kept the library from buying things that students would not have found helpful.

The Effort Is Worthwhile

While it's tempting to view all of this as extra work, consider this: If your mission statement talks about serving employees, then marketing is a core activity. But don't forget that it's a two-way street: If you want to get to know employees, help them get to know you. Post your staff directory (with specialties and photos) where everyone can find it, and get out of your space to interact with others in common areas whenever possible. Be accessible!

As SLA moves through its Alignment Project, understanding customers will become even more important. If studying users helps with alignment, marketing, service improvement, and finances, that's enough evidence to make it worth the extra effort. **SLA**

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Taxonomies and the Information User

PEOPLE APPROACH INFORMATION FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, AND A WELL-DESIGNED KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION SYSTEM IS VITAL TO ENSURING ALL OF THEM CAN FIND THE INFORMATION THEY NEED.

BY HEATHER HEDDEN

Special libraries serve the information needs of a diverse range of clients, including researchers, administrators, executives, partners, contractors, vendors, clients, investors, regulators, educators, and the general public. Aside from determining the kind of content to make available to each group, librarians must also decide how the content should be organized, displayed, and searched.

How do we serve these different information users and their diverse needs? A librarian could, of course, interview members of each group and tailor information services to the groups' needs. But the number and types of potential information users have grown far beyond what a librarian can personally serve, and as more and more content providers have begun targeting information consumers, many users have come to assume that they should seek information themselves. Without a librarian as a personal intermediary for every information user, the means of delivering information must be adaptable to a variety of information needs.

Making an information system flexible and adaptable to different information users is not simply a matter of technology but, more fundamentally, of information design and especially taxonomy and indexing. Even before the advent of the Web, flexible, self-service information systems existed. Consider the printed alphabetical index, such as is found at the back of a book. The same topic is indexed multiple ways, because different readers will approach each topic from a slightly different perspective. Even if users think about the same concept, they may use different words for it, so double posts or *See also…* cross-references are used in both book and periodical indexes.

For example, in a cookbook, a recipe for a Mexican-style bean salad would be indexed under the entries for salads, beans, Mexican dishes, and possibly side dishes. This allows different people—a person who wants to fix a Mexican salad, another who wants to fix a bean salad, and so on—to find this recipe.

In online media, a combination of

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information design (based on index and thesaurus creation principles) and information technology helps people find the information they want on their own. Instead of limiting users to a linear, browseable alphabetical index, as is the case with printed products, online media can include hyperlinks that allow topics to be arranged hierarchically, so users can "drill down" from broader to more specific topics and quickly jump to related terms. Additionally, relational databases allow users to select their choice of simultaneous multiple criteria or "facets" of a query to narrow in on the most precise information sources. Whether it's called a taxonomy, a thesaurus, or something else, a knowledge organization system can, if well designed, help a variety of users find the information they want.

Taxonomy Types and Definitions

Controlled vocabularies, thesauri, taxonomies and the like may collectively be called knowledge organization systems, but this designation is rarely used outside of library and information science courses and scholarly writings. While there are defined types of knowledge organization systems (as explained in the following paragraphs), there is no agreed-upon term to cover them all.

Controlled vocabulary. A controlled vocabulary may cover any kind of knowledge organization system, with the possible exclusion of highly structured ontologies. At a minimum, a controlled vocabulary is a restricted list of words or terms for some specialized purpose—usually indexing, labeling or categorizing. The list of terms is "controlled" because only terms from the list may be used for the subject area covered. It is also controlled because, if used by more than one person, there is control over who adds terms to the list and when and how they may do it.

Most controlled vocabularies have a *See also…* or *Use…* type of cross-reference system that directs the user from one or more "non-preferred" terms to the preferred term. Controlled vocabularies may also have other relationships among their terms. A controlled vocabulary may be called an authority file, especially if authoritative sources are provided for each term and/or the terms are proper nouns.

Taxonomy, A taxonomy, in its narrower and original meaning, is a hierarchical classification system. The word comes from the Greek *taxis*, meaning arrangement or order, and *nomos*, meaning law or science. A taxonomy is thus a kind of controlled vocabulary where each term has a designated broader term (unless it is the top-level term) and one or more narrower terms (unless it is a bottom-level term), and all the terms are connected in one large, hierarchical structure.

What constitutes a taxonomy could be either a single hierarchy or a limited set of hierarchies. This structure is often referred to as a tree, with a trunk, some main branches, and several smaller branches off the main branches. Another way to describe a taxonomy is by its characteristic "nested categories." The expression "drill down" is often used to refer to how a user navigates through the trunk and into the branches. Hierarchical taxonomies may or may not make use of non-preferred terms.

Thesaurus. A thesaurus is a kind of dictionary that contains synonyms or alternate expressions for each entry. A thesaurus for information management and retrieval shares this characteristic of listing similar terms for each controlled vocabulary entry. The difference is that in a dictionary type of thesaurus, all the associated terms could potentially be used in place of the entry, depending on the specific context; in an information retrieval thesaurus, on the other hand, the associated terms are designed for use in all contexts within the domain of content covered. The synonyms or near-synonyms must, therefore, be suitably equivalent under all circumstances.

An information retrieval thesaurus must clearly specify which terms can be used as synonyms, which are more specific (narrower terms), which are broader, and which are merely related. A thesaurus, therefore, is a more structured type of controlled vocabulary that provides information about each term and its relationships to other terms within the same thesaurus. Several national and international standards provide guidance on creating such thesauri, including ANSI/NISO Z39.19, ISO 2788 and ISO 2788 (to be replaced in 2011 by ISO 25964), and BS 8723.

A thesaurus could be thought of as having the features of a taxonomy with the addition of associative relationships, thus allowing for a greater degree of structural complexity. This is basically true, except for the extent of the hierarchy. While all terms must belong to a limited number of hierarchies within a hierarchical taxonomy, this is not a strict requirement for a thesaurus. In addition, non-hierarchical related-term relationships may also exist in strictly hierarchical taxonomies, so the distinctions between thesauri and taxonomies can be blurred.

Although most thesaurus terms will have a broader and/or a narrower term, such relationships are not necessarily required for every term. In a thesaurus, the focus is often more on the individual terms than on the top-down structure. A thesaurus might include multiple small hierarchies comprising just two or three terms, but have no overarching "tree" structure typical of a hierarchical taxonomy. The greater detail and information contained within a thesaurus help the user find the most appropriate term more easily.

To best serve the information user, an information professional needs to select and develop the right type of taxonomy for a given content/information resource. For example, where proper nouns are significant, a simple controlled vocabulary without hierarchical or associative relationships between terms would suffice. A hierarchical taxonomy is appropriate in situations where the hierarchical classification of terms (such as in product categories) is natural for the content and intuitive for the intended users. A thesaurus is especially useful for a relatively large controlled vocabulary that involves human indexing and/

> Taxonomies help bring users and content together, and the many structures and displays of taxonomies help serve different users' needs.

or supports a list of terms that the end user can browse.

Varied Terms for Varied Users

The use of non-preferred terms is what makes a taxonomy especially valuable in helping information users approach content through different routes. As in a book index, the same concept can have multiple, essentially synonymous variants that reflect the diverse ways in which different information users might think of or describe a concept. The taxonomist designates the concepts to be included in the taxonomy and then identifies, for each concept, terms that mean essentially the same thing. The taxonomist chooses one term to be displayed as the preferred term and designates the others as non-preferred terms. (In cases where the taxonomy is never actually displayed to the user but serves to match searches, it is not necessary to designate a preferred term.)

Non-preferred terms help make content accessible to different groups of people who think of and/or describe the same concept differently. Examples of such groups are as follows:

- Subject area experts and laypersons;
- People with library training and those without;
- People who use different languages or dialects; and
- People with various cultural, religious, political, or socio-economic perspectives and biases.

Non-preferred terms can be thought of as synonyms, but they include more than just synonyms. The relationship between a non-preferred term and a preferred term is one of equivalence, but this does not necessarily mean that the terms have to be "equal" or synonymous. First, it is the *concepts*, not the terms themselves, that are equivalent. Second, the two terms merely need to be sufficiently similar with respect to the nature of the content being indexed—that is, too much redundancy, ambiguity and confusion would result from trying to maintain distinct terms and thus, for the purpose of indexing the content, they should be treated as the same.

Non-preferred terms can be near-synonyms, acronyms, spelling variations, foreign language terms, phrase inversions, or even antonyms or broader terms. Examples of synonyms are *doctor* and *physician*, *car* and *automobile*, and *film*, *motion picture*, and *movie*. Near-synonyms include *junior high school* and *middle school*, and *foreign policy* and *foreign relations*. The decision to designate a word as a non-preferred term rather than an additional preferred term will depend on the nature of the content and the people who will use that content.

Spelling variations can be non-preferred terms if they are accepted dictionary variants or British/U.S. variations, such as *defense* and *defence*. Foreign language terms can be non-preferred terms in an English-only taxonomy if they are sometimes used in English, such as *Islamic law* and *Sharia*, or if they are proper nouns, such as *French Academy of Sciences* and *Académie des sciences*. Phrase inversions that involve putting a noun before an adjective, such as *photography, digital*, are acceptable and helpful non-preferred terms when an alphabetical sorting of the taxonomy or thesaurus is provided.

Antonyms can be non-preferred terms in cases where both terms describe essentially the same issue, such as *literacy* and *illiteracy*. Finally, a narrower term (such as *wind power*) can serve as a non-preferred term for a broader term (*alternative energy*) because the latter can always be used for the former. Narrower non-preferred terms should only be used in the absence of supplemental keyword searching, which can make use of concepts that are not in the taxonomy.

Hierarchies and Facets

The way in which a taxonomy is structured and organized can also help it serve different users. Hierarchical taxonomies have become common because hypertext supports them well, but hierarchies are not suited to all kinds of taxonomies or all kinds of users. A hierarchy assumes a common understanding of how concepts are organized and relate to each other, but not everyone shares the same perspective. For example, some people classify industries according to their SIC or NAICS codes (natural resource producers, manufacturers, transportation services, wholesalers, retailers, and services), whereas other people look at industries as vertical fields or professions (such as health care, technology, energy, consumer goods, etc.).

One way that a hierarchical taxonomy can serve different information users with different ideas about a hierarchy is by including polyhierarchies. In a polyhierarchy, the same term has more than one broader term, meaning that it appears in more than one hierarchy and thus can be found under more than one broad category. For example, *whales* could be listed under both *mammals* and *ocean life*, while *Egypt* could be found under both *Africa* and the *Middle East*.

When creating a polyhierarchy, it is important to keep in mind that a term's meaning and usage must be identical in both locations in the hierarchy. The objective is to provide two paths to the same result. Thus, including *paint brushes* under both *home improvement supplies* and *artists' supplies* is incorrect, as the different locations imply different kinds of paint brushes linked to different content.

Although polyhierarchies make hierarchical taxonomies more useful to different audiences, a hierarchical taxonomy should not be so full of polyhierarchies that its overall structure is lost. A dominating hierarchical structure is still needed so that information users understand the organizing principle and can navigate more quickly to the desired term instead of getting lost among numerous hierarchical relationship paths.

A taxonomy organized into facets provides another method for people with different perspectives to find the information they want, especially about more complex and detailed topics. For example, if a user is interested in identifying the marketing strategies of the leading laptop manufacturers in Europe in the late 1990s, a facet could exist for each of the following:

- Business activity (with the selected term marketing);
- Industry (computer industry);
- Product type (laptops);
- Geographic region (Europe); and
- Time period (1990s).

Not only do facets support more complex queries, but users can choose any facet in any order. Some users might think along the lines of business activity > industry > place > time, whereas others might think of place > industry > time > business activity. Result sets become further limited at each stage, so facets also allow information users to limit or broaden their search depending on how many or few results they want.

Hierarchies and facets are not mutually exclusive. The controlled vocabulary within a given facet may be arranged in a hierarchy, and hierarchical taxonomies may be structured so that their top terms reflect facets (although it's up to the user whether true faceted searching is actually performed).

Investing Time and Effort

Taxonomies help bring users and content together, and the many structures and displays of taxonomies (alphabetical, hierarchical, faceted, and various combinations thereof) help serve different users' needs. Non-preferred terms, polyhierarchies, and non-hierarchal associative relationships between terms are the key features of taxonomies that allow them to serve the different information needs of varied users.

Implementing a taxonomy, especially as part of an enterprise content, document, or knowledge management strategy, requires time and effort. A well-designed taxonomy should be intuitively easy to use and should not require users to have any special training or review any documentation. (It is always a good idea, however, to provide documentation for the minority of users who will read it.)

The fact that good taxonomies are easy to use and, thus, appear simple to users does not mean they are effortless to create. A considerable amount of thought and attention must be invested when designing a taxonomy to save users time and effort later. **SLA**

Successful Paths to Knowledge ROI

IMPROVED SEARCH PRODUCTIVITY AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW YOUR ORGANIZATION'S STAKEHOLDERS ACCESS AND USE INFORMATION LEAD TO SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND REPUTATION MANAGEMENT.

BY MARTIN MURTLAND AND BRIGITTE RICOU-BELLAN

In recent years, the nature and speed of communicating has changed, making it easier for anyone to become an influencer. As a result, the volume of available information has exploded, and this information is becoming increasingly fragmented. With a growing wealth of information (and information sources) available to customers, employees, investors, and the public, it is more critical than ever for organizations and their librarians to stay on top of both traditional and new media and understand how their stakeholders are finding and using information and interacting with each other.

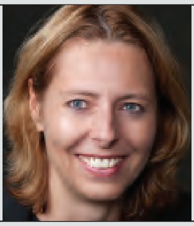
When monitoring social and traditional media, it is important for organizations to rely on information that is both accurate and actionable. This new landscape has become a high-risk zone for brand and reputation damage, and companies across the globe are struggling to uncover, understand and react quickly to opportunities and threats.

Finding this information among incredible volumes of irrelevant information can often be difficult, time consuming and frustrating. As a result, industry giants and small start-ups alike are putting their business research in the hands of professionals and turning to sophisticated search technologies to figure out who's talking, what's being said, and how these conversations are affecting their brand and reputation.

Influencing Audiences through Social Media

Social media's rise to prominence has already called into question the most basic assumptions of traditional business models. While its trajectory was influenced by other factors—among them increased globalization, a more stringent regulatory environment and economic turbulence—social media's emergence and subsequent proliferation have single-handedly revolutionized the way stakeholders search for and find information and communicate with organizations and among themselves.

Traditional business approaches, dependent upon top-down, one-way messaging, stopped resonating with

MARTIN MURTLAND and **BRIGITTE RICOU-BELLAN** are both vice presidents and managing directors of Dow Jones & Company.

companies' stakeholders once they found themselves with platforms for talking back. Empowered by these platforms—including blogs, social networks and Twitter—they suddenly found themselves capable of quickly affecting companies' reputations and bottom lines, both for better and for worse. Executives, who for so long had controlled these drivers of success, faced a new environment in which all stakeholder groups wielded influence.

But it just so happens that the core goals of social media weren't (and still aren't) much different from those of traditional communication channels: conducting transparent conversations, building authentic relationships and, most important, developing reputations built on trust. The emergence of social media gave communication executives a new focus, and it had far more to do with strategies than tactics. As corporate leaders realized the immutable influence of communication on reputations in the context of newly empowered stakeholders, they began repositioning the communication function, moving it out of a silo and integrating it across all organizational units.

Identifying and Engaging Online Influencers

Because of the online universe's size and scope, engaging undefined audiences blindly is inefficient and ineffective and also goes against the very nature of social media. The umbrella term "social media" refers to any Web platform that facilitates the creation, dissemination or exchange of information and depends upon dynamic content, meaningful interactions and authentic relationships. Thus, when shaping messages for dissemination, executives must identify influential audiences, consider the specific information preferences and consumption habits of these audiences, and develop strategies for communicating with them in meaningful ways. Otherwise, they run the risk of alienating these audiences or, worse, inciting reputation-damaging reactions.

While the Web is loaded with information (much of it excellent, but even more of it unreliable), separating the wheat from the chaff can be dauntingly difficult. Evaluating the relative merits of different information sources requires understanding the context of the underlying information. Many people "use" information simply by listening to what others say—but it is important for organizations to realize that people only listen to a select group of sources.

For example, consumers now enter the social media world to gather information from peers and experts who actually use the products and services they're considering. By doing this, they can get great advice on what to buy, where to buy it and how much to pay for it. In essence, they become participants in a global conversation about the things they want to purchase. That can present a challenge for organizations, but it also means that if they successfully target the right influencers, the others will follow.

At this point, it's important to underscore that the first step in any engagement effort is to determine your goals and objectives, as these will guide you throughout the initiative and also be used to measure effectiveness. To define objectives, identify your target stakeholders, the key influencers over your brand, and the online forums in which these influencers communicate, share and consume information.

To fully understand this process, executives should consider the experiences of those who have gone before them. For example, Dell's reputation took a huge hit in June 2005 when a single influential blogger, Jeff Jarvis, complained to his readers about the computer manufacturer's dismal customer service. Hours later, the conversation had been magnified by others who chimed in with their own "Dell Hell" stories. By the time Dell executives were even aware of the situation, it was too late—the blogosphere had committed the company's missteps to memory, and it wouldn't soon forget them.

Fast forward to 2009, when Dell was ranked #2 in the Altimeter Group's "Most Engaged Brand" ssurvey and cited as a textbook example of how to create brand ambassadors by giving external audiences unprecedented access through social media channels. Ultimately, the path of redemption led Dell to "hell" and back again, but not before imparting a few critical lessons.

Manage Your Reputation in a Social World

Dominos Pizza is one of many organizations whose reputations have been negatively affected by this powerful social surge. A video of two employees engaged in an unsanitary act involving customers' food orders went viral on YouTube and Twitter, leading to numerous complaints from disgruntled customers. This incident clearly proves how social media can magnify a seemingly minor act and cause severe damage to your reputation.

If you've ever searched for your organization's brand name on the Web, you've almost certainly touched the virtual equivalent of an exposed live wire. The shock comes as you uncover ideas, thoughts and missives about your organization that may be entirely inconsistent with your carefully packaged brand message.

Dell's experience clearly illustrates why the first step in any engagement strategy is to identify those information users who hold the most influence over your brand, reputation and bottom line. Dell's marketing/communication team, for example, was forced to learn the power of one influencer the hard way, but they helped the company's brand bounce back by taking a series of strategic steps. First on their agenda: Start engaging influential audiences through proactive outreach initiatives, beginning with a blogger outreach program that launched in early 2006. The goal was to humanize the brand, regain trust and build relationships.

This example leads to best practice number one: Build successful blogger relations. This requires conducting authentic and transparent discussions with bloggers. Using public relations and marketing "speak" will not only alienate online audiences, it will enrage them. You can't "spin" your way to a blogger's heart.

Respect and engagement are essential. If you invite bloggers to share their ideas about your brand, you might succeed. To get them involved, give them something of value. The prize for getting it right? The stakeholder becomes a brand loyalist and tells other people.

"Inviting bloggers in" is exactly what Dell executives did next, with both the July 2006 launch of the Direct2Dell blog and the February 2007 launch of Ideastorm.com, a site that encourages users to post potential product and service ideas, the most viable of which are considered for development. This move into crowdsourcing—an engagement technique also used by Starbucks—dismantled the wall that had always separated Dell's consumers from its corporate executives. True, it opened the company up to criticism, but it did so in Dell's own domain, giving brand managers an opportunity to engage critics in conversations that could ultimately turn them into advocates.

Searching vs. Listening

In less than a generation, the Internet has unlocked a treasure trove of information that is now widespread, easy to access, and—most significantly—free. While free information is a welcome resource, it also represents a challenge for enterprises that depend on trustworthy, actionable information to make critical decisions, reveal risks and identify revenue opportunities.

As mentioned earlier, the volume of information is huge. On a given day, a large organization may receive more than 400,000,000 mentions across all media. To read every article would take hundreds of years, even assuming an around-the-clock effort.

While technology in some ways has contributed to this incredible volume, it's also helping to solve the problem. New text-mining, discovery and visualization technologies can help you cut through the noise and identify the significant trends or issues to which you should pay attention. There are a number of tools on the market, including Dow Jones' Insight, that make it easy to listen to conversations so that you understand how customers, activists and other stakeholders are talking about your brand or company. These tools can help you stay on top of emerging news and issues and keep your organization's communication strategy current and nimble.

The Info Pro's Role

Some of these tools can also help organizations address the needs and concerns of their internal stakeholders. Basex, a knowledge economy research firm, has conducted studies indicating that at least half of information searches fail to produce relevant results. Worse, of the 50 percent that seem successful, half produce either inaccurate or outdated results. In other words, only one-quarter of a worker's search time produces actionable information for his or her organization.

Compounding this problem, the explosion of social media has quadrupled the vast amount of information that was already present on the World Wide Web, making productivity for information workers an even more daunting task. To improve search productivity, and thus uncover looming risks and opportunities, the modern-day enterprise should follow three steps.

1. **Improve the search pool.** During an interview with Dow Jones, Basex analyst Jonathan Spira said that the first and most important step toward improving search quality is to "start searches within a body of authoritative content." In a world of information overload, we need to work within an information set that has been vetted—by editors, librarians and other professionals—for quality. "Skilled professionals pre-separate the wheat from the chaff," Spira says, "making successful results more likely."
2. **Hire professionals.** In any information-intensive enterprise, librarians and other information professionals are a key resource for reducing costs and improving organizational efficiency. According to a study by Outsell, Inc., an information industry research and advisory firm, in-house librarians save an average of nine hours and $2,218 per each request for information.
3. **Apply tools to knowledge.** Effective enterprise knowledge tools include those that—
   - Visually represent information through charts and graphs that rapidly communicate the meaning of large volumes of data;
   - Filter for relevance, allowing users and enterprises to restrict queries and results to narrower, and therefore more relevant, areas of interest; and
   - De-duplicate references so that results aren't cluttered with multiple instances of the same source material.
4. **Take action.** Share your information with the right groups within your organization. Use the information to act on opportunities or to mitigate risks (e.g., revise your communication strategy). Engage with stakeholders in social media.

Better Returns on Intelligence

Today's business environment presents incredible challenges to organizations across all industries. Many challenges are either a direct result of, or are exacerbated by, the emergence and subsequent proliferation of social media. But communication executives are also discovering the silver lining built into the challenges of social media—brand loyalty, grass-roots evangelists and even product roadmaps.

Your knowledge has real power. In order to realize its full potential, you need to identify the gaps between your internal data and the sea of relevant external information. By monitoring this information using appropriate tools and technologies to develop efficiencies, and engaging with key influencers and stakeholders, you can bridge those gaps within the new media landscape and realize a true return on intelligence from your information. **SLA**

10 Questions: Julie Takata

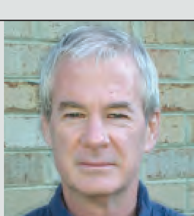
AN UNCONVENTIONAL PATH TO A LIBRARY CAREER HELPED LAND JULIE TAKATA A JOB IN A MOST UNCONVENTIONAL MUSEUM LIBRARY.

BY STUART HALES

More than 40 million people are expected to travel globally on U.S. airlines during the winter holidays, and for many of them, the experience will be stressful at best. Long lines, security procedures and inclement weather will test the patience of even the most seasoned airline passengers. At many airports, harried or delayed travelers can seek refuge in onsite shops and boutiques, but these typically are small and have a limited supply of products.

San Francisco International Airport, on the other hand, offers a more civilized form of respite—a museum. Located in the International Terminal, the Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum and its accompanying library are housed in a facility modeled on the airport's passenger waiting room from the 1930s. The museum's collection—more than 17,000 artifacts and 8,000 books as well as periodicals, photographs, drawings, and archival materials—is dedicated to preserving the history of commercial aviation and its development in the bay area.

SLA member Julie Takata is the librarian at the museum as well as its archives manager, educational programming developer and tour guide. *Information Outlook* spoke to Julie about her duties, her involvement in SLA, and how her college degree in architecture was a perfect springboard to her career as a librarian.



STUART HALES is publications editor at SLA and editor of *Information Outlook*.

Q: People generally don't think of museums when they think of airports. Why does San Francisco International have a museum, and how long has it been open?

San Francisco International Airport's aim is to be the airport of choice for travelers. The museum is a department within the airport, and our mission is to provide and support a broad range of exhibitions and programs for the traveling public, to humanize the airport, and to create an ambience that reflects the sophistication and cultural diversity of the city and county of San Francisco and the bay area.

This department has been operating within the airport and putting on exhibits in terminals for over 25 years. With the opening of the International Terminal in 2000, a dedicated museum space was created to house an aviation museum and library. Incidentally, we're celebrating our 10th anniversary this year!

I think our museum program plays a very important role in humanizing the airport. An experience in an airport can be quite stressful, and the museum's exhibits can provide passengers with an unexpected respite from that stress. Ours is a professional museum-level experience that has been inserted into an unusual environment—one that combines the acts of checking into flights, making your way through security, and perhaps eating and shopping—so there are many opportunities to divert people's attention away from the immediate environment.

So while it may be true that we have a captive audience, hearing comments such as, "Oh, I almost missed a flight once because I was so engrossed in looking at an exhibit," and "I really look forward to traveling through so I can see your displays" means that people are pausing and connecting to what we do. I think these comments prove we're pretty successful.

Q: How is the museum different from, and similar to, traditional museums?

We're very proud of the fact that we were the first airport museum to be accredited by the AAM, the American Association of Museums. We're a non-traditional museum in that we don't have conventional gallery spaces—instead, we have dedicated places in high-traffic areas throughout the airport where we either have photographic displays on walls or a series of stand-alone vitrines or cases. And although our work is visible, for the most part we are an invisible department. We don't have the opportunity to interact directly with our visitors, since we install exhibits and then disappear.

Although we're in a non-traditional environment, we do offer traditional museum programming. Until the opening of the aviation museum and library in 2000, our programming consisted almost exclusively of items that were borrowed from collectors or from other museums. This kind of programming is what we call our "general interest" programming, which is aimed at both the domestic and international traveler.

We strive for a balance in our topics, so our subjects range from popular culture to anthropology to natural history. We've had shows about pinball machines, folk art, shoes, Danish silver, African masks, North American baskets, majolica, gemstones, eyewear, surfboards, baseball, architecture, cartoons, and ballet, to name a few. Right now there's a show from the Asian Art Museum on Japanese pottery and another show about the symbolism on Chinese porcelain. There are also shows about masks from around the world and miniature monuments.

When our International Terminal opened in 2000, a museum space was planned within the terminal. So now there's also a dedicated aviation museum and library in addition to the galleries throughout the airport. Our museum is focused on the development of commercial aviation in the Pacific Rim area, with an emphasis on the history of aviation in San Francisco.

Julie Takata handles archives materials.

In SFO's International Terminal, a series of banners that promote the history of the airport provide a contrast to the modern architectural space. These images are from the aviation archives' photographic collection.

Within the museum, there are three galleries, an area for photo exhibits, and an archives room. Although it is not a traditional archive, it's called an "archives room" because it's a repository for all of our two-dimensional items, which are basically things that are printed on paper. The library is a non-circulating research library that consists of a special collections area, stacks and a reading room.

Together, the components of this collection represent the socio-cultural experience of commercial aviation, from airline and airport employees to administrators and passengers. This means that we're interested in labor agreements, employment records, flight logs and manuals, flight crew uniforms and insignia, as well as everything that a passenger would come into contact with—flight bags, meal service items, models, tickets, air sickness bags, safety cards, luggage labels, menus, and so on. We also have a large photographic collection that we're in the process of digitizing, and an oral history program that began when we started interviewing flying boat captains who flew in the 1930s and 1940s.

It's really fun to be a part of a collective effort to illustrate the entire commercial aviation experience. The registrar I work closely with, Kenn Yazzie, and I get very excited when we meet potential donors and share our excitement over the treasures that they may have inherited or been storing for years. By donating to our program, former airline or airport employees or their children have an opportunity to see that their items are contributing to a legacy. It's very gratifying to be a part of that.

Q: How long have you been with the airport museum? Did you work at museum libraries before taking this job?

I've been at this museum for 4 1/2 years now. Prior to coming here, I was the evening supervisor at Stanford University's Art & Architecture Library. I worked there while I was pursuing my MLIS degree at San Jose State University, and it gave me exposure to academic library practice.

However, I was very interested in digital librarianship. When an opportunity became available, I transferred within the same building to the Department of Art and Art History, where I was the curator in the Visual Resource Center. There I was involved with the digitization of the slide library into digital files and making them available for faculty and student use. I also learned about other aspects of taking a collection to a digital format: storage, naming conventions, working with an image database, original cataloging, providing tutorials in how to use viewing software, and creating workflow systems to handle digitization requests.

Q: How did you get involved in art and architecture?

My bachelor's degree is in architecture, with a lot of art and architectural history included. In fact, there was a point in my studies when I had to decide whether to pursue a minor in art history or take a semester abroad in Northern Italy. That wasn't a tough choice for me! Choosing a semester of travel and study really ignited my passion for travel and for visiting museums, monuments and exhibits.

Julie Takata in the special collection room.

So, while my path from a college student to a library career at a museum might seem a little disjointed, it's actually quite logical for me. My study of architecture really emphasized two disciplines—an understanding of the physical environment, and an understanding of conceptual and theoretical design principles. This was a good basis, as it turned out, for my future jobs.

After graduating from architecture school, I worked at an architectural firm in the graphic design department, collaborating with architects and interior designers to create "way-finding" systems—in fact, I worked on a lot of airport signage systems. From there, I started my own design business, where I focused on way-finding and exhibit work. After a time, I realized that what intrigued me the most was guiding people to or through information. That's when I decided to pursue my MLIS degree.

I'm fortunate that I've been able to apply different facets of my education—my bachelor's degree, for example—to my interests and other work experiences, all of which I see as steps in a process to get to where I am now. A lot of people, when I tell them what I do but don't explain the process of how I got here, say to me, "You majored in architecture?" But to me it's very logical, and it really makes me believe that every experience can be relevant and assembled in a meaningful way.

Q: During the time you've been at the museum, what have you learned that has made you a better librarian?

I would say that I've really had to learn to work in a cross-disciplinary mode, to listen carefully, to identify opportunities to further the collection, and to be resourceful.

With our museum facility housing the library, museum and archives collections, I perform tasks that each have their own standards and processes. While I administer the library in a very traditional way—we catalog and organize according to the Library of Congress system, we are a research library, and we maintain subscriptions to periodicals and perform reference services—I also manage the archives portion of the collection, and those items are catalogued and organized according to museum principles. That's something I had to learn when I came here.

With our permanent collection, there is a possibility that every accessioned item will go on display. And so we

Photo by Gabriel Branbury

The architectural design of the museum and library is based on the Spanish Mediterranean style of the original 1930s passenger terminal building at SFO.

catalog every single item—every stamp, luggage tag, and air mail label—individually, instead of by box, as a typical archive would. Along with object handling and storage according to museum standards, I had to learn certain aspects of the museum registration process, including conservation, insurance, object marking, and documents.

Also, my time here has made me really focus on the purpose of this collection and how it supports the mission of this department. The library and archives provide historical perspective to our aviation exhibits, as all of the shows in the aviation museum incorporate archives and/or library materials to create the socio-cultural framework that establishes the significance of the story we are illustrating through an exhibit. For example, we exhibited a show on the history of this airport, and everything that was incorporated into it came from our collection. It really illustrated the story of the formation of SFO, from the leasing of the land, which was grazing pasture, all the way through the process of creating and modernizing a leading international airport.

Q: As you think of your career as a librarian, in what areas do you think you'll need to learn more to stay competitive?

Since we're in the process of digitizing our photo collection, I know that copyright is going to become an issue and that I'll need to become more knowledgeable about it. We provide reproduction services for publication use to our public, and that's something I also handle—from generating a letter agreement that outlines usage, to making sure that the forms traverse the appropriate channels within our airport, to scanning and delivering the image. I think that as we become a resource for photographic images, with more requests for collection usage, there will be more issues surrounding copyright that I will need to understand.

Another focus, and one that I think affects all librarians, is emerging technologies. In attending conferences, I've noticed that there is a lot of discussion on how to make use of technology to anticipate and respond to user needs. I think that's also going to be a big focus for me, especially as we are thinking of ways to include more opportunities for visitor interaction with our program. I'm very excited about the possibilities that technology will give us to create a larger community and invite more interaction from our visitors.

Q: How long have you been a member of SLA, and why did you join?

I've been a member since December 2006. I'm a solo librarian, so I'm not really exposed to a large library community on a daily basis. The SLA community helps me feel plugged in to the library world.

I first met some SLA members when our facility was being used for a chapter meeting. When I spoke with some of them afterwards, I realized they were people I wanted to connect with on a regular basis. I joined SLA and then was asked to serve as the chair of the Hospitality Committee for the Bay Area Chapter. It was a great way to meet other librarians and also to become familiar with the other collections in the area.

I've attended some SLA conferences, and I'm very much looking forward to taking part in Click University's copyright compliance program. I'm also very fortunate that my supervisor, John Hill, our assistant director of aviation, is the person who encouraged me to join SLA, and he's very supportive of me furthering my training and growth.

I have to say that through working with SLA, I've become really impressed by how collaborative and generous librarians are—with their time, with their commitment to helping other people, with hooking up other professionals with resources. Having worked in other sectors of the economy, I'm really impressed by how much librarians in general are willing to go the extra mile to help others.

Q: What are the major challenges facing museums, and how can libraries help address those challenges?

I've been to a number of conferences regarding museums, and a lot of the focus seems to be on the necessity of museums to define their community and connect to it, and to show how the museum is a vital place within the community. That's something I would like to use as a jumping-off point, because a lot of people don't even know that our aviation collection is here. People who have traveled through SFO can connect with our general interest program that occurs throughout the airport, but many do not know that this program also has an aviation museum.

Aside from creating a larger presence within the groups that know about us—for example, historians, scholars, aviation enthusiasts, airport administrators, and current and former employees of airlines—I want to expand our community. In the past year and a half we've developed an educational program that dovetails with children's field trips to the airport. The museum is one of the stops on the field trips, and I develop an activity based on the exhibit we're showing at that time so the children can interact with the exhibit. I also try to connect the activity to either local history or the history of airline development or aviation in general, in a way that they can relate to as citizens of the 21st century.

For instance, we have a new exhibit about the China Clipper, which established the first service from San Francisco to Manila. In this time of globalization, where the world seems to be a smaller place, we try to impress upon kids that at one point, within the lifetime of their grandparents, it took 22 days to cross the Pacific Ocean on a boat. We contrast that with the 6 days it took for the China Clipper—stopping at Honolulu, Midway Island, Wake Island, and Guam—and then with today's jet service, which takes 12 hours. We impress upon them that these were major strides, something the whole world was watching, to give them a little more perspective about the importance of these events.

Q: When you travel, do you visit museums to see what they're doing and get new ideas?

Absolutely. Traveling is my passion—it's the reason I work, and I feel very fortunate that my interests overlap with my job. I definitely include museums in my itinerary when I travel, and in my daily life as well.

For me, a museum isn't just about objects—it's also about the environment it is sited in, experiencing the space and navigating through it, as well as the overall design of the exhibits. I've visited everything from traditional museums that were constructed specifically for that purpose to reinvented museum spaces, such as former factories, churches, schools, and government buildings. One of my favorite types of museum experiences is architecture as museum—whether monuments or small, jewel-like residences. All qualify as a museum experience to me.

Because I coordinate and work with the other professionals within the museum, I have a more complete perspective of the museum process. I definitely appreciate museums more than I did before I took this job. When I look at an exhibit now, I'm very aware of, and I really pay attention to, the didactics and the exhibitry and the overall design and the curator's intent. Understanding these aspects of exhibit work has really added to my overall enjoyment of museums.

Julie Takata works with museum registrar Tomohiko Aono on three-dimensional aviation museum objects. This storage case houses a selection of flight bags and amenity kits from various airlines.

I also like to see how museums innovate with their exhibitry, how new technology is incorporated into exhibits, the subject matter that is chosen, how it is curated, and how museums invite interaction with their community. I always ask for information or collateral for children's activities, because I'm always looking for different ways to engage kids and design activities for them.

Q: What would you tell library students today that you wish someone had told you when you were in school?

I'm really lucky to be able to work with interns—I have three fantastic interns now. I tell them about my career path as an example of how to take disparate parts of life and work experience and apply them to a job that I really enjoy. The intersection of museum work, public service and librarianship is, for me, very gratifying.

One of my favorite sayings is, "You never know." It would have been helpful to know that, although I couldn't foresee what opportunities would be out there, I could prepare by taking a wide range of classes so that I had a base of understanding, no matter what role I might end up in. Also, it is important to learn to identify and create opportunities. It may require some creativity, but in cultivating your interests and searching for ways to integrate different aspects of who you are, both as a person and a professional, you may be able to identify a nexus of ability and interest that will keep you motivated and engaged.

One way to do so while still in school is to intern or volunteer at collections or facilities. It will also give you experience, and sometimes you need to do that to identify what you don't want to do. It also gives you the chance to talk to people already in the field about their career paths, and help you figure out your next step.

I can't stress how important it is to meet other librarians and prospective librarians and network with them. It's how I got one of my first library jobs—by talking to other students in class and letting them know what I was interested in doing. It turned out that a fellow student was working at a library and they were interviewing! When I say that I'm impressed by the generosity of people in this field, I speak from personal experience. **SLA**

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Gee! Oh! Am I Geo Ready?

Geosocial applications have the potential to transform market research, data collection, maps, and other things that are critical to libraries.

BY STEPHEN ABRAM, MLS

Geo is hot, hot, hot! It started long ago, but went big when the U.S. military stopped scrambling the geolocation signals from satellites and services like General Motors' OnStar were born. Before that happened, I was privileged to see GPS in action on my brother-in-law's fleet of ships on the Great Lakes, where he knew, at all times, the location of every ship within six inches.

Today, all of the cool kids are playing with Foursquare and becoming mayors, or they're collecting badges in Gowalla. They're divulging their locations for every Starbucks venti latte or bagel place on Twitter and Facebook. Lordy!

Is this just another waste of time, or does it have the potential to change the face of the Web yet again? Can it provide helpful information for special librarians in specialized settings, or is this just about contextual savings coupons for retail consumers in Groupon?

My take on geo is that it's a little of both. As is the case with so many other technological programs and systems, playing with geo tools and features in a casual way can help us evaluate and understand their potential and maybe even spark our own imaginations. So this month's column is a return to my favorite theme—play.

Understanding the Lingo

It's good to get the lingo straight so that we can at least sound smart about geo. Wikipedia does a fine job with the basic definitions.

Geolocation: "… the identification of the real-world geographic location of an Internet-connected computer, mobile device, [W]ebsite visitor or other."

GPS (global positioning system): "… a navigational system involving satellites and computers that can determine the latitude and longitude of a receiver on Earth by computing the time difference for signals from different satellites to reach the receiver."

GIS (geographic information system): "A geographic information system, or geographical information system, is any system that captures, stores, analyzes, manages, and presents data that are linked to location."

Geo-IP: Geographic Internet protocol address location services can help you identify a virtual mobile or Web visitor's geographic location information (country, region, city, latitude, longitude, ZIP code, time zone, connection speed, ISP and domain name, IDD country code, area code, weather station code and name, and mobile carrier) using an IP address look-up database and technology.

Geotagging: Also called geocoding, geotagging is "… the process of adding geographical identification metadata to various media such as photographs, video, websites, or RSS feeds and is a form of geospatial metadata."

Geocaching: "Geocaching is an outdoor activity in which the participants use a GPS receiver or other navigational techniques to hide and seek containers (called 'geocaches' or 'caches') anywhere in the world."

Now you have the basic words for a conversation. Let's move on and talk about how geo affects librarianship.

The Potential for Libraries

I've been playing with several geosocial apps for about a year. My personal experience is that they're fun and that there is an enormous potential here for libraries. We've become very used to search engines like Google and Bing sensing our country and serving up a geo-located interface. This is different—it exploits a much finer granularity.

I loaded Foursquare and Gowalla onto my iPhone (although they work on other smart phones and the iTouch as well) and personal computer. I tried to get Loopt, but it wouldn't load on a Canadian phone (I'd enjoy hearing from anyone who has tried Loopt or any other geo-application). I have also permitted Twitter and Facebook to know my location and provide geolocated experiences and ads.

I use these services in certain spe-

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Understanding the opportunities inherent in geolocation features serves to open our minds to the continuing hybridization of library strategies as both physical and virtual.

cific situations. For example, I always use them when I'm at one of the 100-plus conferences I attend annually. I use them in airports, too. I've made it my goal to change my location on my iPhone every time I move about a conference or the world. It took some time to develop this habit, but I can place my mark in seconds. I probably can't make this a daily routine, but I feel that the experiment has been worth the effort.

So, what have I learned from doing all of this?

1. I've earned a bunch of badges and virtual prizes and rewards. I must have been trained well as a kid by free cereal box and Cracker Jack prizes, since I found the rewards surprisingly helpful at letting me know that I was learning the apps. (We must be able to add this concept to library training and intranet and orientation programs.)
2. I've felt more connected to conferences as a whole (I get this feeling with conference Twitter hashtags, too). I can't be everywhere at once, but I do enjoy knowing what's going on. I've even learned a few social insights—for example, librarians will tell you when they're at a Starbucks, but they're less likely to do so when they're in the lobby bar!
3. When friends checked in at the Starbucks near me or at noteworthy bagel and doughnut places, I could sometimes meet up with them. (I found cool local doughnut places this way that I wouldn't have found otherwise.) I was also able to find random friends nearby who I didn't know were there.
4. I like Foursquare better than Gowalla, but I'll continue to try both. I found Foursquare easier to use, and its sites inventory better than Gowalla's.
5. I am pretty sure I'll always use these services at events and when I travel. At this point, my home and neighborhood activities might stay quieter online, but you never know.
6. I wish I could quickly or more easily message someone through Foursquare or Gowalla, like I can with Facebook and Twitter. I suspect this will come to pass.
7. I see a whole lot of library potential in geosocial apps. I wonder if we can integrate features into library sites, along the lines that Facebook, Digg and Twitter and others are integrated into Foursquare and Gowalla. Are there ideas about improving social "glue" here?
8. Lastly, I continued to blog, tweet, and use Facebook throughout conferences. Random meet-ups worked socially, too. I connected with friends at various airports, since we found each other through those means and had nice conversations before and after the conference. It made airports nicer places and provided additional opportunities to hug friends.

For the time being, I will reserve judgment on the long-term implications of so much of the Web going geosocial. I will state, however, that I strongly believe that this is a major part of the future of search, Websites, ads, and more. Part of being social is being together.

What might this mean for libraries? Things like Gale's AccessMyLibrary iPhone and Droid apps have the potential to have social interactions built in (book clubs, recommendations, hmmmm…), and just ask yourself if you know who's the mayor of your library.

There have been some great tests of these geosocial apps at the Computers in Libraries and Internet Librarian conferences, complete with prizes. People were very competitive! Feel free to friend me and see if we can connect in this way. It's fun to play with new features and apps and have a discussion. This would make a great unconference or hot topic session at SLA 2011 in Philadelphia.

The Importance of Place

Place is important in libraries—for centuries we were almost entirely about place. Branches told us that geography was vital to good customer service. Unfortunately, many libraries have had trouble transcending their image as a place in the virtual world. Understanding the opportunities inherent in geolocation features serves to open our minds to the continuing hybridization of library strategies as both physical and virtual.

Where is geo important? It fits very nicely with changes in the research and technology environment—an area where we excel, too. If you work on gaining some playful personal experience with geo, you'll be a step ahead instead of a step behind, playing the game rather than playing catch-up.

Following are some of the issues and concepts that geo is affecting rather quickly:

Advertising: You can target ads based on geo-tagging in most SEO and SMO sites.

Market research: You can quietly collect data and information about user behaviors.

Geo-authentication: You can remove barriers to accessing information, sites and databases using geo-authentication rather than passwords, bar codes, etc.

Surveying and data collection: You will gain a deeper understanding of the latest data capture techniques for segmenting user data, such as where your intranet or site hits are coming from and what's being hit.

Maps (mines, forests, etc.): Map librarianship has always been a key part of our field, and geolocation is creating employment opportunities for librarians in both the public and private sectors.

Domains as diverse as urban planning, crisis control, elections, surveys and polling are interested in geodata.

Location is a piece of metadata, and we're all about that!

So, how do I get to know geo better? It's easy and free. Here are some sites and applications I'm playing with these days. I recommend you try a few of them, too.

- Foursquare (foursquare.com/)
- Gowalla (gowalla.com/)
- Twitter (twitter.com/)
- Twitter Location, Location, Location (blog.twitter.com/2009/08/location-location-location.html)
- AccessMyLibrary (www.gale.cengage.com/apps/)
- Facebook (www.facebook.com/)
- Facebook Places (mashable.com/2010/08/18/facebook-launches-its-location-features-live/)
- Loopt (www.loopt.com/)

If you're a catalog or metadata specialist, you know that librarianship is already ahead of the game with standards and metadata rules. Even the venerable MARC standard has fields for geospatial location (342) and frameworks for digital geospatial metadata crosswalks.

Developers of all stripes are using location-aware API's and maps to drive innovation in many of the standard offerings and are inventing new ones as well. We need to provide intelligent and informed advice and opinions on this. Privacy, safety and security issues are all in play again, and we're well prepared to comment.

Geo is, at heart, an information application, and we should have an informed opinion to guide our host organizations. Playing with geo apps will be a net gain that gives us experience, authority and a solid foundation for our recommendations and guidance. We really do rock—and now we can know exactly where that rock is! **SLA**

Understanding the Information User

Keeping up-to-date profiles of your main users and challenging your existing products and services will help you increase usage and expand your customer base.

BY DEBBIE SCHACHTER, MLS, MBA

New information and telecommunication technologies and access to an almost endlessly increasing supply of information have led to much discussion about the changing role of information professionals and information centers. An integral part of clarifying the meaning of all of these changes is understanding our customers better. I'm not suggesting that we don't understand our users now, but we must always be asking ourselves how information users will expect to interact and work with us in the future.

A wealth of research has been conducted on the information-seeking behaviors and expectations of information users. Often, the research seeks to answer two questions: how do people expect to obtain the information they need, and how do they want to access it? Some research looks at how people process information and specifically how much they read online versus in printed materials. Generational differences are explored and assumptions are made about technical ability, interest in online and virtual worlds, and more.

Information professionals need to be aware of the results of this research and the trends in these areas that will help us make changes in our operations. Research is only so useful, however, given the diversity of working environments. Most librarians also support a wide range of information users: we may assist engineers with their technical project needs, human resources personnel with compensation schedules, and the executive suite with strategic planning. Many of us work in organizations that have an aging workforce or serve an aging clientele.

Over time, however, expectations and information needs change, and we must change with them. Most importantly, we need to continue asking our users to express their changing needs, in a variety of ways.

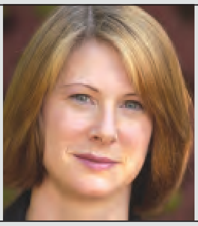
Community Engagement

When you look at the literature on understanding your customers better, you find many reports, articles and books on the topic. What seems to resonate within most of these resources is that, in a changing online environment (and thus a changing business paradigm), we need to be early adopters of technology and social networking opportunities. Few of us, however, seem to know how best to position ourselves for enduring success.

Just as in commercial marketing activities, it is important for you to create and maintain updated profiles of your information center's main user types so you can evaluate which types of services these different users will request, pay for and value. To create these profiles, you need to gather information from your users, which isn't always easy. Often, those who are most interested in your services will take the time to respond to a survey, while those you want to reach but who do not currently use your services will remain inaccessible to you. Try to gather information through in-person interviews, online surveys and focus groups as well as through simple surveys.

Once you have created a series of profiles, you can test them against your assumptions about the types of services that different users value and how they want to access and read information. Keep in mind, however, that you must provide more than just what your users are asking for. To refer (again!) to the Innovators Dilemma, providing excellent customer service and understanding your users' current needs can actually lead you into disaster because you may ignore or become oblivious to trends that are emerging or changing. Users themselves often seek out the new and the innovative, so you need to invent your own "disruptive technologies" from time to time. This means challenging existing services and products (even when your users seem satisfied with them) to see whether you can increase usage or expand your customer base.

Once you know a bit more about your users and non-users, you can start to understand the communities within which they work—the formal and informal networks that exist within each organization. Interacting with these



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communities has implications for the continuing relevance of the information center. In addition to connecting with the individual users themselves, you need to participate in their communities of practice.

At a recent panel discussion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of SLA's Western Canada Chapter, a question was asked about future trends. The most significant trend the panellists identified was that of community engagement activities. This is a more formal approach to marketing than we have been using in the past, with the specific goals of identifying and connecting directly with communities that may or may not be linked to the information center. Information professionals in corporate, academic and other types of environments are seeing the value of using community engagement activities, particularly in the online arena, to develop a better understanding of their users and to help develop a new profile for information professionals in the workplace.

Learning from Others

Information professionals are proficient at learning from each other. One of the best ways to better understand your own information users is to see how other librarians are serving their customers—the products or services they are providing and the distribution and communication streams they are using. Another benefit of this approach is that it reduces the potential for missing a changing or emerging trend, because your colleagues in other organizations may already have identified it. Your network of information professionals is your community of practice, and it should be a primary source of information on innovative practices.

Understanding the information user has always been an important aspect of the work of information professionals. With so much change taking place in our work environments, it is only natural that the expectations and needs of our users will change as well, sometimes rapidly and unexpectedly. Participating in your users' communities and using traditional methods of gaining information about their needs are two excellent ways you can increase your knowledge of the needs of your current and potential customers. **SLA**

CLICK U webinars

Click University copyright courses will begin again in January 2011 with CCM100, "Introduction to Copyright Management Principles and Issues." Visit the Click University Web site [www.clickuniversity.com] for registration and program information for the open house and the 2011 CCM courses.

For more information about the SLA online seminars listed below, or to register for a seminar, visit **www.sla.org/clicku.**

LIVE WEBINARS:

1 December
Moving into Management & Team Leadership Roles (1)

8 December
Moving into Management & Team Leadership Roles (2)

16 December
Creating Your Own ROI Dashboard

Can't attend a live Webinar? You can view Webinar REPLAYS. These 90-minute seminars from our Click University programs were recorded as they occurred, so you'll get the complete experience of the original session. Visit **www.sla.org/clicku** for more information.

OTHER EVENTS

DECEMBER

13-14
Expert Conference on Open Access and Open Data
Leibniz Library for Research Information
Cologne, Germany
www.oaod2010.de/

13-15
INEX 2010
Initiative for the Evaluation of XML Retrieval
Amsterdam, Netherlands
www.inex.otago.ac.nz/

JANUARY 2011

11-13
International Conference on Digital Library Management
The Energy Resources Institute (TERI)
Kolkata, India
www.teriin.org/events/icdlm

19-22
SLA Leadership Summit
Special Libraries Association
Washington, D.C., USA
www.sla.org

28
Third Annual Symposium on Scholarship and Practice
Catholic University of America School of Library and Information Science
Washington, D.C., USA
slis.cua.edu/symposium/2011.cfm

FEBRUARY 2011

14-16
International Conference on Digital Libraries and Knowledge Organization
Management Development Institute/ Indian Association for Special Libraries & Information Centres
Guragaon, India
www.mdi.ac.in/ICDK/Home.html

APRIL 2011

27-28
International Conference on Information Management and Evaluation
Ted Rogers School of Management
Ryerson University
Toronto, Canada
www.academic-conferences.org/icime/icime2011/icimeII-home.htm

MAY 2011

11-13
Mobile Technologies: Information on the Move
Emerald Group Publishing
Brisbane, Australia

JUNE 2011

12-15
SLA Annual Conference & INFO-EXPO
Philadelphia, Pa., USA

24-27
Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries
National Hellenic Research Foundation
Athens, Greece

JULY 2011

4-8
International Society of Scientometrics and Informetrics Conference
International Society for Scientometrics and Infometrics
Durban, South Africa
www.issi2011.uzulu.ac.za/

OCTOBER 2011

16
Smart Content: The Content Analytics Conference
Alta Plana
New York, N.Y., USA
smartcontentconference.com/

19-22 JANUARY 2011

SLA Leadership Summit
Washington, D.C., USA

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