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# The SLA Public Relations Committee

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## THE SLA PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

By STEPHEN ABRAM, Chair

My name is Stephen Abram, and I am the Chair of the SLA Public Relations Committee. The committee members are Monica Ertel, Gloria Dinerman, Dareth Murray, and Cindy Hill.

I am a member of a number of librarian and professional liaisons, and I have yet to see one that doesn't regularly develop a thread related to (and usually bemoaning) our public image. I can assure you that lawyer and computer professional listservs (upon which I lurk) also develop these threads—and worry about their images as much as we do! This posting is to alert you to some recent very positive news about SLA public relations activities and to ask for your assistance in an exciting SLA Public Relations Committee project.

### The Good News

With some of the small SLA dues increase, SLA has just hired a professional public relations firm to assist us in mounting a modest campaign to improve the perceived value and image of the special librarian and information professional. This is not a campaign about SLA's image nor is it a campaign aimed at improving our image of ourselves. It will be targeted at high-level decision makers who materially affect an organization's use of and valuing of information professionals. Watch for more information about this initiative in

*Specialist*. This is an exciting project that has been guaranteed SLA funding until December 1996. As with all projects of this nature, it is very long-term, and we will need to build upon our successes and bring new ideas to the forefront. Also, all proceeds of the Second Annual President's Reception in Boston in June will be directed to PR activities (so plan to attend)—similar to last year's funds benefiting our other top priority, research.

### Research

Research—this brings me to our next opportunity. Parallel to our efforts to communicate the value of the information professional to decision-makers, the PR Committee believes that SLA investments over the last few years in research about the value of the information professional have produced amazing facts and information—facts that lie under-used for our personal PR efforts. Unfortunately, most of us are just too busy doing great work, and we aren't able to absorb and use this information readily. On one listserv I subscribe to (SLAMD-L), there was a prolonged discussion about “elevator speeches,” those short opportunities on the elevator (or in the hallway) to highlight our services, ideas, and value. The discussion centered around how to use good information and

statistics in a high impact way. This seed of an idea was picked up by the PR committee. We can massage the key information from the SLA research into practitioner-oriented soundbites—news you can use! One of the precepts of good PR is that you're most empowered when you're armed with a good product and a high impact message. Knowing SLA members and having read the research—we have both! So, you may have already guessed that I'm asking for volunteers to (a) either mail me your favorite statistic (and support it with its reference), or (b) offer to have me send you a piece of research for your review and your commitment to distill out of it the best, high impact, results. Not too hard, eh? It's your basic win/win/win situation—you contribute to your profession, you learn something from research your association supported, and you'll get credit for a job well done. Here's an example of how this might look:

“A 1993 SLA study of research provided by business special libraries showed that 84% of managers and executives reported the use of the library resulted in better informed decisionmaking. Indeed the library research resulted in 54% of respondents changing the way they handled some aspect of the decision. In most cases these decisions had impacts of more than \$1,000,000.00.” (Marshall, Joanne G. *The impact of the special library on corporate decision-making*. New York: SLA; 1993.)

You should also see Professor Marshall's results on the impact of hospital library research on patient mortality!

How about it . . . ? Send us your quotes and offers for help.

We're also looking for ideas on how to best distribute this “research you can

use.” Here's a short brainstorm and feel free to add to it.

1. The SLA e-mail of the day—an e-mail sent to you every weekday with a piece of research you can use to support conversations and reports about the value of the information professional to an organization. Painless absorption of good research!

2. The SLA daily journal—a day-by-day diary with a quote-a-day.

3. The SLA desktop calendar—instead of *The Far Side*—hear the SLA side!

4. An article in *Special Libraries or Specialist*.

5. Sessions at Winter and Annual Meetings.

Please consider contributing. With these two small positive action steps for internal and external public relations—we move ourselves on to the slippery slope of taking collective responsibility for our professional futures.

Please direct your responses directly to me at [sabram@mmltd.com](mailto:sabram@mmltd.com) (and to this listserv if you like see public discussion). The committee will be reviewing all and any suggestions, comments or ideas in preparation for the PR session at the SLA Annual Conference in Boston in 1996. You may also comment to any other committee member or to SLA Director of Public Relations, Mark Serepca ([mark@sla.org](mailto:mark@sla.org)). We look forward to and value your input, any volunteers, and hope to see you at future SLA conferences and meetings.

#### SLA PR Committee

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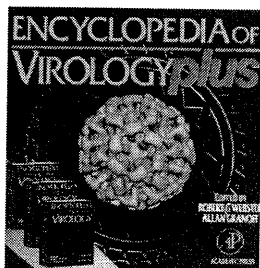
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