

InfoView Column
Due June 21, 2008
Information Outlook, July 2008 Issue

SLA at the Tipping Point by Stephen Abram

I am writing these columns while I am on the plane home from our conference in Seattle. And what a conference it was! I was hopeful that I would see signs of change throughout the conference – in sessions, in divisions, indeed in members. Was SLA changing and adapting to the environment around us? Was the SLA value proposition increasing and aligning with member needs? Were our member colleagues ready to adapt to the biggest changes happening in information and library land – possibly ever?

I am happy to report that I saw good things. I even found a few things to change in myself! (Amazingly I even got to a few sessions myself!) Just a few things that delighted me:

- Charlie Rose interviewing Vint Cerf and Vint giving his views on the work he's doing for the development of the protocols for the inter-planetary Internet. How cool is that? I'll bet not many of us had even thought of the information applications he was studying.
- Would you have expected an SLA member produced Machinima at the Opening Session? The members' avatars look beyond cool and it was a talkie! And seeing the SLA Second Life site develop was just too exciting. Some folks were suggesting a 2009 celebration of our Centennial in Second Life or creatively suggesting that everyone get a free membership in the Second Life Chapter.
- I got to meet Seth Godin before everyone else got to hear him. I was thrilled that he raised the tenor of the conversation
- The debut of The SLA 23 Things song from Tim de Wolf and Richard Geiger was a huge hit. I was thrilled that it got just the right amount of attention to the 23 Things / Learning 2.0 project at SLA. Have you been to the website and signed up?
- One of the sessions I attended was by one of my heroes, David Snowden. He is right on the edge of cognition research and the role of stories and things we value as librarians. I would never have expected him to show leading edge results from story collection in Iran and the use thereof to understand and predict anti-western sentiment and activity.
- I also had lunch with LMD and Eugenie Prime. She passionately updated her No Puny Visions keynote from the last time SLA was in Seattle in 1997. As always, she was inspiring.
- And we had fun too. Especially at the IT/LMD/PAM Dance. We tripled the size of the dance floor and rocked 'til Midnight!

- By now you will have received your e-invitation to the launch of the SLA Innovation Lab. The soft launch in Seattle was so much fun with demos and with beakers and lab rats. I was very happy to see a number of sign ups to learn by playing in this major new member initiative.
- All across the conference we were Green – composting, recycling, and reducing the paper load and more. It's a start. SLA planted a few acres of trees as a result of purchasing carbon credits. Who could be against trees? And besides, libraries are the greenest institutions of all – getting multiple uses of books and periodicals and more.
- Lastly I was very excited that there were over 200 attendees signed up for the SLA 2008 Twitter at the conference from the SLA Innovation Lab. They did hundreds of tweets and were tweeting day in and day out. They learned by playing. And that's cool.

Who would have thought that this sort of stuff would have happened at an SLA conference even a few years ago?

I think (actually hope) what I saw was a tipping point. I saw members choosing to innovate in 2008. I saw sessions that broke the mold and served up learning and networking in a variety of ways. I saw a more diverse membership at this meeting – a healthier mosaic. I saw people playing again with new tools and thinking about how they would improve their services and organizations. I definitely saw people having fun again and the professional malaise of the past seems to be lifting.

Anyway, I will continue this column in my regular column further long in Information Outlook. I haven't even addressed the great value of SLA membership that were launched or enhanced at SLA in Seattle.

Stephen

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Max – continue the above column with this in my regular column InfoTech.
Thanks, SA

InfoTech Column
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Technology and Value at SLA: The New Tipping Point by Stephen Abram

SLA has a great traditional value proposition – chapters, divisions, caucuses, leadership training, Information Outlook, discussion lists, a website, and more. But lately we've known that it's not enough. Members are demanding more. And they want that more 24/7/365 (or 366 this year!). It has been my experience that members just don't know everything that SLA offers – for free or for fee. It is the proverbial blind man and the elephant story. So, we spent a lot of time in Seattle as a Board and Staff reinforcing these benefits that your membership fee entitles you to. I covered it in the opening session, several of the task force leaders and cabinet chairs covered it at the Leadership Summit and Janice did a bang up job covering it in the closing session in her CEO report. And the entire Board was prepared to make sure everyone knew the cool new stuff available to every member with just their member ID and password. However, we know not everyone was able to come to the 2008 conference in Seattle (we do hope to see you at the HUGE Centennial conference and Info-Expo in DC in 2009). So, here's a simple list of some of the initiatives we've launched, improved or enhanced for you this year. I think it really adds value to everyone's membership. Where else could your average member get this amount of professional development and membership value for just \$160.00?

Innovate in 2008

- SLA has licensed a huge suite of innovative technologies where SLA leaders and volunteers can play and discover uses for the latest emerging technologies in their own context. SLA also provides tools to units to build and implement useful services and tools for their members. This includes hosting and software for websites, communities of practice, surveys, voting, discussions, wikis, blogs, and more.
- In Seattle we announced the launch of the SLA Innovation Laboratory. This project was built by a group of member volunteers and staff who demonstrated the Lab in their booth in the INFO-EXPO at the SLA Marketplace. Hundreds of free and licensed software for everything from wikis and blogs to social networking and website design are there for the taking. Regular sessions will be held to show members how to take advantage of these tools but any member can start on their own right away. This is a major initiative for SLA members to develop their skills for the future.

- A major feature of the SLA Innovation Laboratory is the Atomic Learning videos. Yes, SLA now provides you 35,000 short videos on how to use hundreds of pieces of software. Give them a try. We're adding 450 new videos every 6-7 weeks.
- We also launched SLA's Learning 2.0/23 Things Project which is part of the Innovation Lab. There is a members-only Wiki set-up for the project which models the way SLA works - collaborative learning. Learning 2.0/23 Things encourages all of our members to explore many of the features SLA offers for free or through Click U. The plan is that every member can learn 23 new 2.0 type tools in just 9 weeks (or at your own pace).
- During the conference members saw the beginnings of SLA's Second Life presence which is being created collaboratively by another team of volunteer members. The site has been started, as well as a blog. The SLA Second Life workgroup will be seeking more volunteers for their project. We can expect a few events over the next year in Second Life. You saw more information in the June issue of *Information Outlook*.
- For the conference, there was an SLA2008 Twitter group set up for attendees, who can join by using their phone, laptop, or PC. Find the group at <http://twitter.com/sla2008>. It was a great opportunity to learn this tool and I am sure a few folks will learn and play with you even after the conference.
- SLA announced a video featuring President-elect Gloria Zamora which is available to any/all SLA groups, especially Chapters and Divisions, to use for their events. It is available via PAL, VHS or DVD as well as on the web. This lets your Board actually be in two places at once!
- SLA has developed three options for unit leaders to make their own business cards and have placed the information in the Leadership Resources section of the SLA Web site. Your SLA identity now has some heft!
- SLA units have started a number of social networking sites (Find a list in the SLA Innovation Lab). There are currently more than 900 members in the SLA Facebook group. SLA members are in LinkedIn and there are more than 500 individuals associated with Special Libraries Association.
- SLA Past President Rebecca Vargha is currently working with a group of member volunteers and staff to build SLA's Wikipedia architecture and presence. Since Wikipedia is a major influencer of search engine rankings like Google's, this is an important part of SLA's virtual presence.

- SLA develops and provides Wikis and blogs for all groups (formal or informal) on a simple request basis. Details are on the Web site. <http://wiki.sla.org/dashboard.action>.
- SLA now has three accounts on TypePad and hosts approximately 40 blogs from chapters, divisions, commissions, and other member-driven entities. By far, the most active unit blog on an SLA account is the IT Division's Blogging Section, which has logged nearly 40,000 page views since it launched in December 2005.
- The IT Blogging Section is often highlighted in the new SLA Connections blog which reminds me that most of our SLA newsletters now start as blogs allowing you to subscribe through your RSS reader and get more timely alerts from SLA.
- During Seattle conference, SLA added an electronic message center to the Cyber Connection area so that attendees could leave electronic messages for each other, rather than paper messages.
- Don't forget the free Factiva and Nexcerpt News alerts as well as the free Newsgator feeds on LIS topics that have been developed by the staff in the SLA Information Center.
- CONSULT Online is a directory exclusive to SLA member consultants. A search on this database is free and is available to members and nonmembers interested in locating a consultant who may assist, on a normal commercial basis, with such areas as library management, technical services, and subject specialty. Use CONSULT Online to promote your services at <http://www.sla.org/consultonline>.

Click U 24/7 Learning

- As a member SLA and Click U, you can earn an advanced degree, enroll in a specific career enhancing program that leads to a certificate, take advantage of courses that help you achieve your professional and personal goals, sign up for seminars, and more.
- Click University has added **free** subscriptions to execuBooks for SLA members only. Professional writers and editors constantly review, select, and summarize the best of current and upcoming business books into 15-minute summaries. Individual SLA members may "opt in" to have new execuBooks delivered via e-mail every week. Over 350 summaries of leading business books cover topics such as adaptability, corporate governance, decision making, innovation, marketing, project management, strategy, team effectiveness, and more.

- Click University invites you to visit the SLA Online Libraries - Leadership & Management, HR and Knowledge Management. These ebrary databases cover a wide range of topics to enable professionals to make important business decisions. Key subject areas include: leadership, entrepreneurship, strategic planning, KM case studies, organizational behavior, personnel management, project management and risk management. The offering is now over 1,000 books after the new libraries announced in Seattle.
- Click U offers Click U Live! sessions on social networking to members. "Social Networking Tools: Hands-on Learning" was held 21 May and "Best Practices for Wikis" is scheduled for 11 September. Watch for other sessions on social networking brought to you by Click U.
- Click University continues to offer the free Course of the Month. Don't forget to put these on your calendar.
- Through Click University and our ebrary provider, Local Knowledge Online, SLA members are eligible for significant discounts for subscription databases of titles covering business, technology, and engineering. These titles are from publishers such as Elsevier, John Wiley & Sons, AMACOM and many more. Go to Click U to find out how your company can receive corporate discounts of up to 30%.
- SLA is approved as an Authorized Provider by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training (IACET). As a result of their Authorized Provider membership status, SLA is authorized to offer IACET CEUs for its programs that qualify under the ANSI/IACET Standards including all certificate program courses. This certification is independent and is likely well known by your HR departments.
- There are now three certificate programs run by Click U. The certificate programs are: Knowledge Management Certificate, Certificate in Copyright Management, and Competitive Intelligence Certificates. New certificates will be added through 2009.
- We even offer education for our exhibitors. Just as our members receive education through Click University our exhibitors receive education as well to assure they are sending the right message to our conference attendees. Competitive Edge provides a custom exhibitor education training program through Webinars that are offered online (available 24/7) and complimentary to participating exhibitors of SLA's Annual Conference and INFO-EXPO.

- In an effort to enable students whose budgets may be limited to take advantage of SLA's valuable professional development offerings, SLA offers substantial student discounts. SLA student members qualify for a 25% discount on the following Click U professional development programs: the Click U Live! online seminars, the Click U Live! recorded seminars and the Professional Improvement Libraries. In addition, student members receive substantial discounts for Click U Live! Continuing Education courses at Annual Conference.
- Free career advice through Click U. SLA member Kim Dority, author of *Rethinking Information Work: A Career Guide for Librarians and Other Information Professionals*, who has written and presented extensively on being an information professional, and is answering career questions on an individual basis for SLA members grappling with these and other career questions.
- We continue to increase the training and leadership opportunities for our units. LDI and our cabinet meetings continue to enhance the development of our association and profession. Special training is offered at Summit and Annual as well as Webex training sessions are conducted throughout the year in nearly all areas – Public Relations, Ethics, Finance, Bulletins, Chapter Presidents, Division Chairs, and more.

Knowledge to Go Green

- Begun from an ERMD and staff initiative, SLA has “The Knowledge to Go Green”. SLA has been moving to greater greenness all year as all aspects of operations are viewed from this angle. SLA has taken up the challenge from Al Gore, 2007's opening keynote speaker, and is working hard on being Green. The Seattle conference has a large number of initiatives you can see all over. Everyone can buy carbon credits and SLA will be responsible for planting many trees to restore fresher air. We are greatly reducing our use of paper while providing free conference wireless as a win/win. It is a start and we are trying to set an example for attendees to take home. Members, units, or exhibitors should apply for an SLA Presidential Citation.
- The SLA Pacific Northwest Chapter gave away 3,000 reusable water bottles to Seattle attendees! Water stations will be located throughout the center and the INFO-EXPO.
- In Seattle badge holders were made from 20% recycled matter and at the end of conference, there will be containers for the badges to be returned, so that they may be recycled. Thanks to CAS, the cool tote bags were made from 65% recycled material. SLA offered handouts online prior to conference at <http://uploads.speakerconciierge.com/sla/handouts/>. SLA

partners and exhibitors have been encouraged to use environmentally friendly products and print on recycled paper. And all conference signage was 88% consumer waste fiber board from Champion Nationwide.

- The Final Conference Program is printed on 100% post consumer waste recycled paper, with soy-based inks instead of chemical based, and on an FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) approved press. The FSC certification means that the print house no longer uses environmental damaging chemicals in its process and has reduced waste emissions.
- SLA has been working with its printing vendors to ensure that SLA brochures, mailers, postcards, etc. are printed on recycled paper. A recycled logo is placed prominently on all material printed with recycled paper.
- SLA introduced a conference e-mail list rental program to supplement direct mail address rental as part of the greening initiative.
- Lastly we worked with the both the Seattle Convention Center and the Sheraton hotel to ensure that we used the full range of their recycling programs and that we could donate food where appropriate. The convention center has provided more than 24,000 meals to charities over the past year. SLA has historically had a clause in its contracts requesting that food be donated where appropriate.
- SLA HQ is doing many more Green initiatives as contracts become available renegotiation. Rest assured that our association is as much as it can to help our planet.

Value of Membership

- We continue to offer new benefits of membership. The multitude of free and low-cost benefits easily justifies our membership fees (which are lower than most professional associations). We must be steadfast in promoting the value of membership and reminding everyone to remember their user ID and password! (They can change it to make it easier to remember too.)
- SLA has just announced free online access to two databases, GreenFILE and LISTA (Library and Information Science and Technology Abstracts), provided by EBSCOhost. These new databases can be accessed through the member benefits page.
- Last but not least there was another major development at Seattle. SLA and Dow Jones & Co. partnered to deliver an ad campaign about special librarians and information professionals in no less an august publication

than ***The Wall Street Journal***. These ads ran throughout the conference including on the opening and closing day and copies of the WSJ were ubiquitous. Dow Jones and SLA have a co-branded advertising agreement where both organizations will appear in print and on-line communications and advertisements advocating for the information profession continuing into 2008. This is an exciting (and appreciated) partnership! Thank you Dow Jones.

Conclusion

It's an exciting time in SLA and the value of your membership just keeps going higher while the fee remains constant. Add to this our association-wide initiatives that we reported on in Seattle – The Alignment initiative, The Ethics Initiative, our Centennial Commission and more – and you can see we're trying. Keep volunteering and engaging with SLA and we'll have no problem tipping into the 21st Century and truly leading and contributing the development of the information and knowledge based global economy. I am pretty excited by the progress we're making together. I hope you are too.

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