

SLA EUROPE NEWS



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President's Letter By Rachel Kolsky

Hello Everyone,
It is hard to believe that this time last year I was just about to embark on my term as President of SLA Europe and so now, nearly twelve months later, I should be ready to hand over to my successor.



But wait! With the changes to our governance year, I still have another six months to go.

And this is proving to be rather more positive for me than at first envisaged. For instance, I think I am finally getting to grips with the role, even if it has taken me the year to do so. The hope is that I will use the next six months to build on this new-found confidence and work with my President Elect, Penny Leach, to ensure I leave her SLA Europe in good shape.

It has indeed been a healthy few months for your SLA Chapter. We have two new Board Members to welcome. First is Marie-Madeleine Salmon, our SLA Europe IP of 2006. She is going to bring a wealth of experience to the Board, having been very involved with the information professional world in France, working both in education and with ADBS, the national French professional organisation for information professionals. And that is on top of her day job as Head of Information

Centre at Publicis. Our second new member is Géraldine Clément-Stoneham. Géraldine, being Swiss-born, is keen to work with us to increase the exposure of SLA Europe to info-pros outside of the UK to help us become SLA Europe in name and in geographic spread too. With Marie-Madeleine residing in Paris and Geraldine speaking French, we feel ready to make great strides into increasing our presence in continental Europe. Let me say, 'Welcome' to both of them. In fact, Marie-Madeleine introduced SLA to the ADBS Journee d'Etude in Paris last month, when, for the first time, SLA Europe had a slot in an ADBS event, and I am personally thrilled that it was our French Country Representative, Dominique Robine, who will be making a presentation with Sylvie Dalbin on e-learning and in particular, SLA's own Click University.

With this European slant developing I must not forget events closer to home. We have had a couple of really excellent seminars this spring, again supported by our ever loyal sponsors. March saw Business Monitor provide an entertaining overview of investing in emerging markets, ending with the Russian beer industry which proved a perfect lead into our reception! In May, Anthony Mayfield from Spannerworks gave us an overview of how to network using social media. With no mention in the presentation of email or phone, my two main forms of communication, I realised that I need to get modern and have since, with the encouragement of fellow Board member, Neil Infield, used at least three new forms of Web 2.0 social media. To my amazement they worked! Thank you Anthony and Neil.

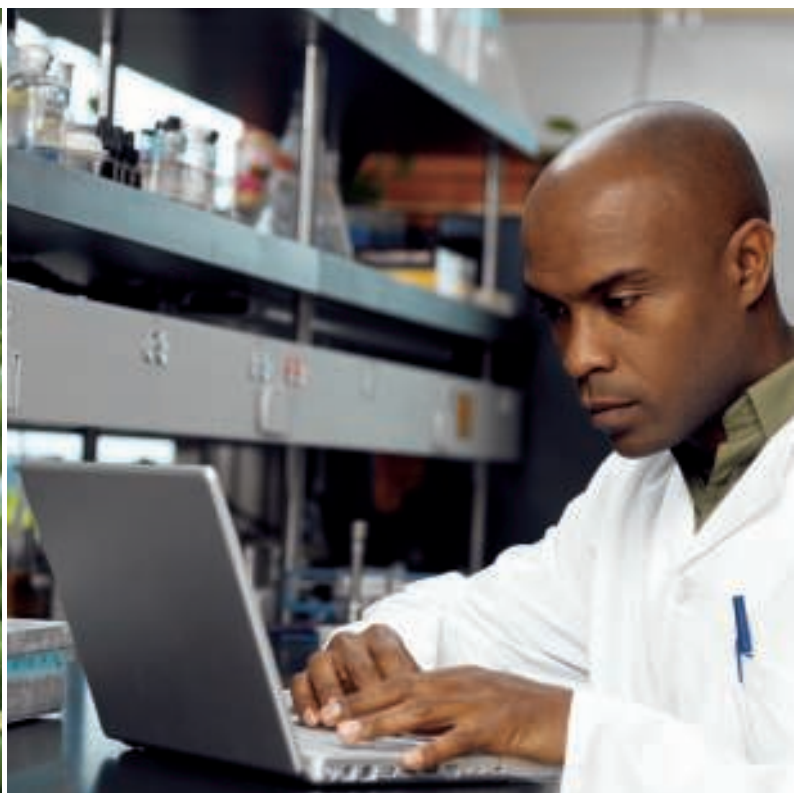
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With me celebrating my new found technical skills; I really must mention far more important achievements to celebrate. Sylvia James, who has been treasurer for both SLA Europe and now SLA Board, was awarded the ALA Brass Thomson Award for Achievement in Business Librarianship. Well done Sylvia!

Those of us who were in Denver for Conference were also able to congratulate in person, our incoming SLA Europe Information Professional 2007, Janet Hopkins, as well as Verena Till, from Germany, who was awarded our first Student Award, in conjunction with the Business & Finance Division, to attend Conference. Ann Cullen, our Country Rep for the US was presented with a B&F award for her activity in business information. Although unable to attend Conference in person, Jane Macoustra, another Board member was applauded in her absence as she was awarded a Presidential Citation from the SLA President Rebecca Vargha. Congratulations to all of you!

With all this activity it leaves me to say ... enjoy the summer when the sun finally comes out to stay. We set the ball rolling with our Summer Soiree where it was not sunny, but the rain did hold off for the evening. It was a great success with our room filled to capacity. Thanks go to Alacra for continuing to support our summer party.

I think it is now time for me to sign off. Fuller accounts of all these events can be found in the newsletter so please read on.

SLA Europe Information Professional 2007 - Janet Hopkins

Neil Infield interviewed Janet in Denver as part of her award prize generously sponsored by Factiva.

What does it feel like to be our winner for 2007?

It is a wonderful and unexpected honour to have received the award. It provides me with a fantastic opportunity to meet and exchange with information professionals internationally.

Please tell me a bit about your background, especially why and how you became an information professional?

I took a year out from my studies in modern languages to work in Germany and Switzerland and improve my language skills, then switched courses to complete a diploma in European languages and secretarial studies at Ealing College of Higher Education. Having worked for a subsidiary of the German Mannesmann group in London for about a year, I moved to Frankfurt in 1981, where I have lived and worked ever since. After working for Citibank and then CRM Capital Research and Management (an institutional adviser) in administrative positions I got a job in the Corporate Finance department at Morgan Stanley in 1989, a small department at the time.



*Janet receiving her award from Clare Hart
Executive Vice President Dow Jones*

This was my first introduction to the information profession, of which I was not really aware before then. Here I was introduced to database searching using Retuers Textline and Genios. In the early days it was hit and miss as to whether the dial-up connection via acoustic coupler would hold until the search was complete, and it was occasionally frustrating when forgetting to "cap on" to capture search results. Technology advanced rapidly, and I became more experienced at researching companies and industries and M&A related issues, learning on the job.

I found the work very diverse and interesting, and enjoyed the challenge of discovering sources and means to answer the many and varied queries and expanding the department. After switching briefly to a more administrative and managerial role some years later, I decided that Research was the area that suited me best, and I started work with Druker & Co., an independent investment banking company, in 1994. Here I have been able to increase my research experience and enjoy being part of a growing company.

How did you enjoy the conference?

It was a great experience. I was very impressed at the dimension, and how well-organized it was. I had not realized just how wide-reaching the Association is. There were many interesting sessions to attend and much to see at the exhibition with 275 exhibitors. The opening and closing sessions were excellent. Everyone was welcoming and friendly, and it was inspiring to meet so many information professionals from around the world from such varied fields at the sessions and social gatherings, and learn what they do and have achieved. There was a very positive atmosphere and some thought-provoking ideas to take away.

Tell me a bit about SLA in continental Europe and how you think we could expand membership and

{ the universal truth }

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activities?

A lot of SLA Europe members and events are based in the UK. On the Continent, the organisation is not as well known. Organising events in other countries and increased publicity could help.

How do you keep up to date?

Through training sessions with databases providers, and reading industry publications, such as VIP. More recently by reading information-related blogs. By using resources offered by SLA and German associations. I attend Online Information in London when possible, as well as industry events in Germany. Training courses, such as those offered by TFPL are very useful, and networking with other information professionals is an important means of keeping up to date.

Do you have any time for hobbies?

I enjoy walking in the countryside and playing tennis when I get chance. I'd like to spend more time travelling.



Mile High in Denver: Report on the 2007 SLA Conference in Denver 2-7 June 2007 By Sylvia James

It certainly felt like the mile high city for the duration of the SLA conference this year. Denver's setting was spectacular. I flew into the airport across a vast high level plateau, ringed with mountains, with a distant view of some downtown tower blocks and to the sight of an amazing terminal building, whose roof looked like the top of a lemon meringue pie or some tented city in the desert. The architects of the Jeppesen terminal say that the structure was actually inspired by the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains all around and it is easy to see their vision. The white roof is apparently constructed of teflon-coated fibre glass and is in itself a very inspiring and memorable work of art.

All the conference delegates who had been reading the various reports from the local Rocky Mountain Chapter members on the conference wiki had been warned many times about the possible adverse effects on lowlanders health and how to deal with any problems connected with living at such a high level. I remembered how odd I had felt in other elevated destinations I have visited over the years like Denver; Albuquerque a few years ago, and on visits to Mexico City. I knew about drinking lots of water and taking it easy. But, of course it is an insidious problem and it is only when you are back at sea level that you realise how strange you have been feeling for your stay and quite how much you might have been affected.

Despite these issues, by all the measures and opinions I have heard since I returned, the conference was an outstanding success. Many comments rated it as one of the best of recent years, exceeding all expectations. On these views and assessments this is perhaps a

good place to include some of the links to the conference references and blogs, which are well worth reading through and looking at to get a flavour of the event and reviews some of the sessions:

The official SLA blog (which also includes some papers) http://slablogger.typepad.com/sla_blog/
Freepint: "Beyond Online: In-Depth Report from SLA" by Shirl Kennedy and "SLA Special Report: Your Wish Was Our Command" by Free Pint Limited Staff <http://www.freepint.com/issues/280607.htm>
The "Information Today" blog team www.infodayblog.com
Photographs are at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tags/sla2007/>

Arriving early to attend SLA Board Meetings, I had a chance to look around downtown, which was very compact and lively, compared to many similar US cities whose downtown areas are very lifeless and barren. Denver has an excellent shopping/ pedestrian area with plenty of restaurants and even a free shuttle bus running up and down it to speed you along. I had chosen to stay at the Brown Palace hotel, which is a landmark from the 19th century and was obviously the built using ideas that were the height of fashion and decoration for the time, which have been admirably preserved. It was a great haven of peace and tranquillity to go back to every evening.

On Saturday evening, June 2nd, the SLA Europe Board had the very great pleasure of meeting and entertaining Janet Hopkins and Verena Till, our delightful award winners from Germany. They are both true ambassadors for the profession. You can read all about the awards and see their photographs on the SLA Europe website at <http://www.sla-europe.org/>
They both had a marvellous conference and every time I met or saw them in sessions and in the halls seemed to be having a great time meeting a whole new group of colleagues.

The Student Award for Verena, in collaboration with the Business & Finance Division has proved so successful and popular that we are exploring other collaborations with other SLA Divisions and will be announcing several other student awards for the Seattle Conference in June 2008 soon. We hope to attract many applications by casting our net wide and working with specialist information professionals in a range of sectors. Any students reading this who would like to attend Seattle by winning one of our awards, can contact either myself or Barbara Robinson for advance details.

In the evening launching the official start of the Conference there was the annual awards ceremony for the main Association-wide awards. It was very slick and well arranged, with short videos of each award winner to introduce them. Sunday's other highlight for me was, of course, the session with Al Gore that evening following the awards ceremony. Watching the queue in the



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Conference centre for his book signing that afternoon was an fascinating experience in itself and no-one who wanted a book signed was turned away, despite the small army of minders that accompanied him. There are some very interesting photographs on the blogs and flickr of this (see above). His speech was also all that I had expected. It was a little strange to see the auto prompter dismantled as he arrived on stage to give his speech, apparently done completely off the cuff with no notes. He is certainly committed to his the cause of reversing global warming, but gave a talk that was about this vital topic at the core but related in every way possible to information professionals and the part we have to play.

The really interesting section for me was at the very end of his formal speech when he took a few questions, including the inevitable and so we thought, last one, about whether he was going to run again for the US Presidency next year. He clearly indicated in his answer that he had this cause as his main priority now, to the very partisan and clearly disappointed audience. Then, we all assumed he had finished and would leave, but no, we were treated to what I thought was an amazing climax, a really fiery and emotional re-iteration for ten minutes, of his commitment to the issue of climate change and the inevitable consequences if we didn't all wake up and do something about it. A staged conclusion? Maybe, but it seemed a very genuine footnote and reinforced the message to me, and showed a side of a consummate and professional politician that really surprised me.

Monday morning brought the full conference programme to life and the start for me of three days of breakfast at 7am and an all day schedule finishing at about 10pm each evening. As a Board member it was my pleasure to act as Board liaison at a two Division business meetings including the Insurance and Employee Benefits (IEB) and Physics, Astronomy & Maths (PAM). These were both very interesting, even though they probably couldn't be more far apart in subject matter and in their communities of information professionals.

On Monday evening the two formal award ceremonies for Janet & Verena were held, one after the other. Verena was honoured at the Business & Finance Awards Ceremony and Janet at the very well attended International Reception.

I also had to present my first report as Treasurer to the Annual Business Meeting of the Association on Tuesday afternoon. I was very amused a few weeks before the Conference began to be asked by Cara Battaglini on the SLA staff what music I would like to introduce my report. What a jazzy meeting! I am very fortunate to be reporting on an excellent year for 2006, for SLA, when I could announce that the Association has a surplus of over \$100,000. The money will be put into a separate fund to be used for the Centennial celebrations in 2009. This recommendation was made

by the Finance Committee at the Board meeting on June 1st and was agreed by them unanimously. The day ended with a visit to the reception with a baseball game held in lavish private quarters at Coor's field.

Wednesday morning was just as busy for me with the Finance Committee meeting to Chair in my position as Treasurer at 7am again. This lead into the closing general session with cartoonist Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert character, giving a hilarious, if rather US-centric presentation, with a charmingly low-tech delivery using a series of his cartoons using acetates and an overhead projector. I can't remember when I last saw audio visuals done in this way and it was a surprisingly fresh change from the ubiquitous PowerPoint!

Perhaps his most interesting comments were about judging a company you might be thinking of joining by the proliferation (or otherwise) of cut out Dilbert cartoons around the offices in a company. Too many or too few, seemed to mean working in an ominous regime and it may be wise to reconsider working in such an environment.

As always, I had the mixed emotions of being both glad and sorry to be going home on Thursday June 7th. It had been a great week, with lots of new contacts from the networking opportunities, meeting old friends and colleagues and the adrenaline rush which is always part of SLA's annual conference for me. It is a chance to do something completely different from my normal routine and focus on thinking about professional life and all it's nuances. It would be nice to have the event last a few more days, but having the energy to enjoy it is another matter!



Interview with Verena Till **Neil Infield talked in Denver to the winner of the first LIS Student Stipend Award of SLA Europe / Business & Finance Division**

Many congratulations to you on winning the first LIS Student Stipend Award of SLA Europe / Business & Finance Division. Now that you are coming to the end of your time in Denver can you give your impressions of the SLA annual conference.

Firstly, I would say that it is much bigger than I was expecting. It is a really huge event, both with the number of attendees (over 5,000) and the size of the convention centre (it is so far from the entrance to the meeting rooms that they have a free shuttle bus, like the kind you see in airports).

It is my first time in the United States and my first time at a large conference, so it is really exciting. It was a long way to travel all on my own, but so many people have been kind to me. Quite a few SLA 'VIP's' have taken the time to look after me during the conference.

What did you learn during the conference?

I have learnt that the library and information profession covers a very wide range of jobs. Back in Stuttgart when someone asks what subject I am studying and I say library and information management, they say "you must like books". But here I met many interesting people who show the profession is much more than that. I have realised that librarians do not match a stereotype, but can play important roles within their organisations. They are also very knowledgeable. My experiences here have made me even more proud of being an information professional than I was before, and that is something I will take home with me.

I want to tell my fellow students on my course all about my new understanding of the profession acquired here at the conference. I also have learnt that it is important to talk to people at an event like this, and not to be shy, even if English is not your first language. All the people I have met have been happy to talk about their jobs, this has given me lots of ideas for my career once I finish my studies. I have collected so many business cards during the conference.

Last, but not least I learnt new skills, for example how to make a business case for the information centre, how to use Google more effectively or how to speak in public 'as though my career depended on it'. I also learnt the importance of body language when interacting with others.

Can you tell me a bit about the award you won?

My Professor Wolfgang Ratzek told me about it and suggested I send in an application. It was Elka Sloan (the SLA Europe Country Representative for Germany) who had informed him. I was required to answer two questions: Firstly, why did I choose Library and Information Science (LIS) for my degree course. Secondly, what skills does an information professional need in today's world.

The answer to the first question is a rather long story. I had previously enrolled on a teaching course, but as time went by I began to realise that although there was nothing wrong with becoming a teacher, it wasn't a career that would give real me job satisfaction in the long run. However, I am the kind of person who doesn't give up on something half-way through. I like to see it through to the end. So it was a really difficult decision to give up on this course after two years of study. As I wasn't sure what I wanted to do instead I searched the Internet and found the Stuttgart Media University. I looked at quite a few of their courses and when I found the description of their LIS course I liked what I read. I visited the University and talked to some of the Professors. I immediately realised that it was the right course for me.

My answer to the second question was that information professionals need a combination of professional skills, personality and marketing. We need to recognise the importance of marketing oneself and the library /

information centre as well as the confidence to implement a plan of action. Not everyone within the department agrees with this view. Some have a more traditional view of the profession, concentrating on library skills such as cataloguing and classification.

So what happens next for you?

I have a six month internship lined up at TNS Infratest, a market research company, and I am looking forward to applying my newly acquired skills and competencies. My course is due to end in July 2008, so my career as an information professional will begin then.



Verena Till winner of LIS Student Stipend Award of SLA Europe / Business & Finance Division

Finally, would you say that coming to the conference has had an impact on your career plans?

I have decided to concentrate on the business and finance sector when I graduate. During my studies and also during the conference I have acquired a clear idea of what the work is like and I like what I have heard. So I am more interested in the world of commerce than public or academic.



Interview with Rachel Adams SLA Dissertation Award Winner By Lyndsay Rees-Jones

Lyndsay Rees-Jones met Rachel Adams, winner of the Student Dissertation Award for Sheffield University, in the bar at RADA at the end of a beautiful spring day in early April. Over a glass of wine they discussed Rachel's journey to 'now' and what had driven her to feel so passionately about librarianship. To quote Rachel early on in our chat, "librarianship is good".

What was the trigger to working in libraries?

Needing a part time job after GCSEs Rachel applied for a job as a Saturday girl in her local library. Her interview consisted in part of a shelving test, which she remembers as being poor at (I think with the luxury of hindsight), but consistent! Then followed a period of working in and around the Thanet Group of Kent County Council Libraries - fitting in stints whilst on holiday from University.

As Rachel also worked as Student Librarian in Trevelyan College Library, University of Durham, it was perhaps inevitable that a masters in librarianship would



Rachel Adams

be her next step. Rachel studied for her MA after a first degree in Politics and History at Durham, and by the time she graduated knew that her next step had to be towards a lifelong career in libraries. She opted to study at Sheffield, partly because the course was confidently called 'librarianship' and partly because

Sheffield had been her second choice for her undergraduate degree. A nice accident of fortune.

Why a dissertation on information literacy?

The initial idea for the topic came during a period as a Graduate Library Trainee in the headquarters library of a government department. One of the most enjoyable aspects of the job was acting as a facilitator rather than a trainer for the users, and improving end-user understanding was immensely rewarding. Rachel automatically gave users an 'instruction book' as part of her response to enquiries, ensuring that they knew where the information had come from and that if they wanted to delve deeper themselves, they had the information/tools to help them. So in summary she chose information literacy for the following reasons:

- * testing existing training and finding it lacking
- * educating primary user groups
- * most enjoyable aspect of the work (always a good reason!)
- * facilitator/user training in the workplace
- * increasing end-user understanding and skill
- * personalising the response to need
- * producing tailored booklets/guides

Out into the big wide world of work

Rachel is now working as a technical librarian for the British Standards Institute (BSI). Part of a team of three she is relishing the challenges that come from working with a national 'institution' which is undergoing significant change. A bookshop is attached to the library so in addition there is a bookshop manager who works closely with the team. The team are reviewing the role of the library and as a new member of staff Rachel has the fresh perspective that partners no history and no baggage. Not being afraid to change what might have seemed sacrosanct to others, is not an issue so the significant reorganisation of the standards collection that is underway, and introducing a new library management system don't appear to daunt her.

Rachel's forthcoming challenges include:

- * dealing with a steep learning curve to understand the strategic and business role of the library
- * supporting the implementation of the new LMS
- * enhancing communication channels
- * email shots
- * publicity shots
- * establishing long-term engagement with the users
- * developing more of an e-presence
- * enhancing BSI's web presence
- * digitising the entire archive
- * the library selling copies of withdrawn standards
- * constructing a 'sub' website for the library to highlight the strength and value of a unique collection.

I doubt that there are any businesses or institutions that do not need to comply with at least one British Standard, so ensuring access for members first and then the wider community are key.

Rachel's personal measure of success is one that we could all do with remembering when things get us down. It is simply that she is "happy to go to work in the morning". I have no doubt from spending this short time with Rachel that if and when she loses the feeling, it will be time to move on to another challenge and another place where she can use her enthusiasm to improve the librarian's image. Long may she feel this way.

Summary of Rachel's Dissertation

This dissertation aimed to investigate the concept of Information Literacy (IL) in the workplace, specifically the government sector. It examined how individual workers experienced IL, and how this experience impacted upon the work of an organisation within a case study (a government department), explored the current Information Skills training provision by the case study department's library, and debated whether current provision was sufficient for the information literacy needs of both the staff and the organisation. The literature review explored the issues, in particular definitions of IL, the research into individual's experiences and interpretations of IL and how it impacts on organisations, plus current practice by information professionals in workplace sectors, government and non-government. The methodology undertaken was inductive and included qualitative interviews of a range of departmental staff, in conjunction with quantitative questionnaires for library staff. From this research, a number of conclusions were drawn.

Workers at the case study organisation defined and experienced IL in a highly individualised manner, influenced mainly by their previous experiences, whether work or education-based. Consistencies in working patterns between jobs meant that information literacy was seen to build up over time. This in turn suggested that IL work being conducted in schools and universities can have a beneficial impact later on in a learner's life, relating to the lifelong learning agenda.

There appeared to be a cumulative process of skills acquisition, shaped by the context in which information was applied.

Experience was also the most significant influence in how government workers handled information in their current job. Workers remained keen on simply keeping up to date with the resources – to maintain, rather than acquire, skills. This meant that their need for Information Skills training was based on either what their previous experience lacked or their current context demanded. In the workplace it seemed important to ensure the workforce remained able to use information to its full potential. It was apparent that government organisations are already considering this by including IL in competency standards, including the case study organisation.

My case study organisation's library was very successful in providing this 'learn on demand' style of information skills training – in particular, one to one training based on user need, ad hoc sessions based around enquiries and current awareness facilities to help 'top-up' individual skills. Most of the approaches were opt in – sessions are requested and offered, rather than imposed, and the focus was very much on keeping knowledge of resources and searching methods up to date, and was limited to the identification and locating of materials. Library based training seemed to be perceived far more as the provision of help, or useful information, rather than specific training, which may be a reflection of the informality of the library's approach.

The expectations and needs of the workforce matched what the library was offering, mainly because the library was offering a highly personalised model of information skills training, responding to specific needs. The library was also focusing on the identification and location of resources, which, for the majority, was required. It was generally agreed that whilst the library did have the skills to help with other processes, it was not really being demanded of them. It is possible that the expectations of staff matched to what the library provided because expectation of training provision is low – one problem highlighted was the need to raise awareness to a range of staff not reached by current targeting practices. However, whether the large variety of needs from individuals across the department could be met using the same methods was questionable.

In summary, government workplace IL in this instance was impacted upon mainly by the context of the work undertaken and the experiences of the information user. My case study library had some success in IL training by teaching to the individual and their needs. Whilst the approach may not be elaborate, it is effective in its simplicity. However, its simplicity could have been interpreted as its biggest problem, as the work of the library may not get actively noticed or incorporated into the learning organisation. This was the situation that needed to be rectified. Areas identified for improvement included raising awareness of such training facilities,

recording the success of training schemes to prove the library's value as a training provider within the government organisation, improving use of the intranet for information skills purposes and widening the audience receiving this service for the benefit of the organisation. These suggestions have been taken forward for consideration by the department's library staff.

Many thanks to Books 24x7 who sponsor the award.



A blustery day in May **From Sylvia James and Barbara Robinson**

On a blustery day in May, the first crop of SLA Europe Library and Information Science (LIS) dissertation award-winners, together with their advisors, joined members of the SLA Europe board for a celebratory tea in the Conservatory of the Lanesborough Hotel in London. Attending were: Rachel Adams and her advisor, Sheila Corrall, Sheffield University; Ben Bose and his advisor, Peter Enser, Brighton University; Tanya O'Rourke and her advisor, Catherine Kelly, London Metropolitan; and Victoria Bird, Loughborough University. Derek Stephens, her advisor, was unable to attend because the trains from Loughborough to London had problems that day.

Rachel Kolsky, SLA Europe Board president, welcomed the group and then we got down to the serious business of enjoying one another's company while munching on a surfeit of sandwiches, petit fours and scones --- enough leftovers to fill four elegant cardboard box "doggy bags." The conversation was stimulating, the mood buoyant, and most of the group were still engaged in conversation three hours after arriving

The tea provided a relaxed setting in which to explore some serious points:

1. The lack of awareness on graduate LIS campuses of the reach and breadth of SLA as an organization and of its members; and
2. The importance of deepening SLA Europe's collaboration with LIS faculty and students.

All four award winners have graduated and are now



Vicky Bird, Rachel Adams, Tanya O'Rourke, Ben Bose

working full-time for an interesting mix of organizations – The British Standards Institute (Rachel); Nature (Tanya); The University of Reading Library (Vicky) and Spannerworks, a young search-engine optimization firm (Ben). They were eager to talk with the four SLA Europe board members (Sylvia James, Rachel Kolsky, Penny Leach and Barbara Robinson) about the board members' real-world work experience.

The event succeeded in meeting SLA Europe's overall goal of raising the awareness of a select group of young information professionals about what SLA is and the types of work its members do.

The members of the Board who attended the tea have agreed the next step is to formalize ongoing contact with these four dissertation award-winners. The plan is to assign one Board member to each of the four students then maintain contact over the coming year and, if that relationship proves successful, for many years to come.

Social media: the reality behind the hype Meeting report by Penny Leach

On May 15 to a packed London conference room, Antony Mayfield, Head of Content and Media at Spannerworks gave an entertaining, speedy and literate review of a phenomenon that many of us feel unsure of – social media, also known as social computing or social networking.



Spannerworks (www.spannerworks.com), a Brighton-based search engine marketing company, has recently been acquired by American firm iCrossing. Antony's background is brand communications consultancy, but his focus now is on the impact of the social media revolution on marketing and media. Anthony writes regularly on the subject for industry media, the Spannerworks SearchSense blog, and his personal blog Open (recently named one of the top 100 blogs in the UK).

Antony began with a reassuring statement – there is nothing new in social networking – but then went on to explain that the main difference between the sort of personal networking most of us are used to and that facilitated by newer technology is the difference in scale. Now the geographical distances are much bigger, the number of people much higher and from more diverse backgrounds, and all reachable at much greater speed. We are, he said, seeing a revolution in communication similar in impact to the introduction of printing, which changed what could be communicated and how people shared ideas, since both the means of production and distribution are changed. Now it is even

easier to create, disseminate and retrieve content.

So what is social media? Antony's ebook (www.spannerworks.com/ebooks) gives further detail about those technical developments he chose to touch on: blogs (where hyperlinks can connect many communities), wikis (the most famous example being Wikipedia), social networks (such as Facebook and Bebo which are no longer the preserve of teenagers), content communities (eg. Flickr for photos, You Tube for videos (even posted straight from mobile phones)), forums (for communities of interest), the 3D web (including Second Life where people can experiment with even newer ways of using the web), and, last but not least, Twitter, a kind of instant (and trivial) messaging by web. The complexity and super-abundance of social networks is leading to yet more innovation to aid navigation – such as sites that aggregate and filter and rank information (algorithmically or using real comment) (Digg), and folksonomies (categorisation on the fly).

On the challenge of organisations, particularly commercial companies, harnessing this (cheap) creative and communicating power, Antony used a graph from technology change experts, Forrester Research, to illustrate the competing forces. On the one hand clearly these tools can enhance productivity by making information and knowledge easier to share and retain, but on the other hand there are big risks in information being inappropriately shared outside of a firm's boundaries. The culture of transparency, collaboration and openness doesn't necessarily sit well with commercial needs for control, compliance, security and accuracy, nor their hierarchical structures.

Recent struggles between the music industry and sites such as MySpace show the tension between the more traditional view of intellectual capital (as a protected asset) and the users of the new social networks (who want to share, comment and change those assets). Antony couldn't offer a general solution – but he echoed Forrester's views that this is not a fad, and there will be impact at all company levels. It was fairly clear that few companies are as advanced in addressing the issue as IBM, whose encouragement of blogging under certain guidelines has been well publicised (www.corporateblogging.info/2005/05/ibm-blogging-policy-guidelines.asp). Of course social media itself makes money and is attracting big players, not only ones you might expect (Google) but also older money (Murdoch). Antony's presentation was followed by a very lively Q&A session and further even livelier conversation over wine and snacks in the adjoining wine-bar.

Many thanks to Spannerworks and to Factiva for sponsoring this event.

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**Reaching out to the emerging world:
do the investment opportunities warrant
the business risk?**

Meeting report by Penny Leach

Business Monitor International (BMI) (www.businessmonitor.com), already well-known as a provider of emerging market information, launched their industry analysis services in 2002 to integrate with their sovereign risk analysis and macro-economic forecasting. On March 7th at AIG's London headquarters, three of their senior analysts gave a fascinating presentation on the investment opportunities and business risks for companies considering operating in Asia, the Middle East and the former Soviet Union. BMI showcased three key industries: Telecommunications, Infrastructure, and Food & Drink.

Terry Alexander, BMI's Head of Capital Markets and Country Risk, first gave a run through the overall picture, looking beyond the huge growth in the BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China) to the opportunity in more 'frontier economies' such as Azerbaijan and Cambodia. There are definitely business opportunities out there, Terry said, with emerging markets growing in importance in the global economy. Investment in infrastructure and productive goods is fundamental to driving the economic growth in these fast-industrialising countries helped by globalisation. BMI's position was that any volatility and the slowdown

in the US and China would not significantly derail the trend, especially as the governments of these countries become more sophisticated in their fiscal management. BMI predicted large increases in middle-class income and therefore huge implications for consumer goods, banking and insurance industries, property and commodities.

Next Nick Jotischky, Head of Industry Research, focused on mobile telephony in Asia. More developed markets are comparatively saturated, so that competitors (domestic, regional and inward manufacturers and investors including equity funds) are marketing aggressively in the newer markets helped by government investment programmes. Mobile telephony is also acting as an aid to development via m-commerce and micro finance projects. A big factor causing uncertainty is possible regulatory impact.

Matt Brooks, Head of Energy Research, then looked at infrastructure projects in the Middle East, which have been fuelled (!) by the surge in oil prices which have created a windfall in the Gulf economies. Currently infrastructure is often poor with brownouts and blackouts as demand outstrips supply. The key challenge is diversification – from upstream to downstream and petrochemical industries, and, beyond oil-related activity, to tourism and finance. Matt provided an illustrative list of scheduled projects including railways, water and power plants, universities, cities



"Library Information Service Survival Guide" Seminar

Date: Thursday 27th, September, 2007 **Location:** CILIP, London **Time:** 9:30am – 4pm

Sessions

Evolving your Library Service – Adapting and Surviving in a changing business world

(Chris Watson, Senior Librarian, Abbey Wood Electronic Library, Defence Equipment and Support, MOD)

'Measuring impact and proving your value'

(Peter Coyne (MOD), Margaret Kelly (DSTL), Celia Waters (DSTL))

Essential skills for 21st Century librarians - career and professional development

(Wendy Buckle, Cranfield University; guest lecturer – MSc in Library & Information Management, UWE; member CILIP Chartership Board)

Strategies from American defence libraries

(Kim Sherwin – winner of the 2006 English Speaking Union Travelling Librarian Award)

Redefining the Library for the 21st Century - The British Library Experience

(Neil Infield - Manager, Business & IP, British Library; Team leader of Best Team in an Academic & Public Sectors, International Information Awards 2006)

Strategic Library Service - Global Collaboration and Business Benefit

(Seema Rampersad, librarian, PricewaterhouseCoopers Library)

Cost

ADLG Members: £80 + VAT (£94) ADLG welcomes new members!

Non ADLG Members: £100 + VAT (£117.50)

Limited places - early booking strongly advised.

To book your place please contact events coordinator Ben Chan at ben.chan362@mod.uk

The Aerospace and Defence Librarians Group (ADLG) is a CILIP Special Interest Group which brings together information staff working in a wide range of Aerospace and Defence institutions including government, industry, academic organisations, learned societies and research associations. Whilst technically a subgroup of the CLSIG (Commercial, Legal and Scientific Information Group – formerly ICLG) the ADLG is an active group in its own right, organising visits, seminars and producing a lively newsletter.

and beaches. Clearly there are immediate challenges for this boom, such as shortages in labour and materials supply, and evolving legal and financial structures, and also big risks (political instability being perhaps the most obvious).

Finally – and leading nicely in to the wine and cheese that followed – Lyndsey Anderson, Head of Food & Drink Research, talked about the beer market in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Lyndsey outlined the pros and cons of entering, specifically, the Russian market (already carved up between a few dominant players), the Ukrainian (where local beers currently dominate and there could be a closing window of opportunity still), and other newer markets such as Belarus. In those there is more opportunity, but also more risk such as Muslim resistance and, again, regulatory interference.

The slides from the presentations can be found on SLA Europe's website at www.sla-europe.org.

Special Libraries Association Begins Planning for 2009 Centennial From Cara Battaglini

SLA's 2006/07 President Rebecca B. Vargha Appoints Commission to Oversee 100-year Anniversary, Invites SLA Members to Participate in Creating Framework for Year-long Celebration

2009 marks the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the Special Libraries Association by John Cotton Dana in 1909 as a professional association dedicated to serving the needs and interests of professionals who handle specialized information and research services. T

The recently formed SLA Centennial Commission wants you to send ideas and thoughts on how to best celebrate its 100 year anniversary to the Commission via the email address 100@sla.org.

“The Centennial is a pivotal milestone for our Association and it is vital that we engage SLA members in the planning of the celebration in 2009. We encourage members to send their beneficial suggestions via email to 100@sla.org from across the globe so we may create a year-long event that makes all SLA members proud to be a part of this community,” said SLA President Rebecca B. Vargha. “I am confident that the talented members appointed to the commission will work with the Association staff and SLA Units to formulate a wonderful celebration and annual conference that commemorates this important anniversary while recognizing our innovative past and inspiring a state-of-the-art future for the profession.”

The SLA Centennial Commission consists of:

* Commission Chair: Dav Robertson, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina

- * Tom Calcagni, Chief Communications Strategist, SLA, Alexandria, Virginia
- * David Cappoli, UCLA, Los Angeles, California
- * Patricia Cia, Langara College, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
- * Nick Collison, Prenax, New York City (formerly of the United Kingdom)
- * Kristin Foldvik, Director, Events, SLA, Alexandria, Virginia
- * Stacey Greenwell, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky
- * DeVonne Henry, Director, Exhibits, SLA, Alexandria, Virginia
- * Jill Konieczko, US News & World Report, Washington, D.C.
- * Karen Kreizman Reczek, Bureau Veritas, Buffalo, New York
- * John Larrier, Elsevier, New York City
- * Lynne McCay, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- * Tamika McCollough, North Carolina A&T State University, Greensboro, North Carolina

The commission has started work on the theme and the activities surrounding the Centennial and is asking for ideas and inspiration from all SLA members. Please send any thoughts for consideration by the Centennial Commission to 100@sla.org.

Board Profile **Géraldine Clément-Stoneham**

Géraldine grew up in Switzerland. Her first role was as a Library Assistant for the Musicology Department at the University of Geneva, where she was studying for her first degree. Seduced by an article in the TLS advertising a job as Music Librarian at the British Library, she decided to move to London. She pursued her studies at University College London and obtained an MA in Library and Information Studies. She finally set her mind on a career in the City and joined Bankers Trust as a junior researcher, which then became part of Deutsche Bank.



She moved into the legal sector in 2001 and is currently working as an information manager for law firm Linklaters. Her role covers a wide range of activities including knowledge management, database development, legal and commercial research. She is particularly interested in knowledge sharing and how this can be supported by information professionals. Géraldine is a Chartered member of CILIP and a member of CIG. In her spare time, she likes to go back to her first love, music, and performs with her local brass band.

SLA Europe - Board Members 2006-2007

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