

SLA at 100: Chapter 6 1940-1949

World War II and Its Aftermath

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As the fifth decade of the twentieth century and the fourth decade of the association's history began, it was obvious that the devastation of war was going to be the defining characteristic of the 1940s. War had already come to Europe with the German attack on Poland at the beginning of September in 1939 and the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France two days later. The rest of the world was neutral, but no one had any illusions that neutrality would last. Ruth Savord, Librarian at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York and a prominent leader of the association, seemed to speak for all the members when she wrote, "European war, 1939! We didn't believe it could happen but it did. To the residents of almost every country in Europe, that ominous phrase has meant black-outs, air raids, destruction, and death. To us, who have been spared those horrors, it has meant, at most, some personal anxiety, an almost morbid interest in each day's events, confused thinking and a public opinion sharply divided between isolationism, appeasement, and support for the democracies."

Within the Special Libraries Association, efforts began almost immediately to ensure that members would have the support of the association in carrying out their professional duties in the new and much-dreaded wartime environment. As early as February, 1940, Dr. Richard H. Heindel, Director, War Documentation Service, Philadelphia, had written about "War, Scholarship, and Documentation" for SLA's members. He advised his colleagues to avoid simplistic measures (e.g., "Rule of thumb approaches to the problem, such as the mystical librarian who disposed of propaganda material by defining it as anything from Germany or in German or in paper covers, cannot guide us forever."). Dr. Heindel suggested that some help might be found "by observing the World War" (as World War I was still being called in 1940) "and the changes both in war and scholarship since 1918 which affect libraries." Particularly notable, Dr. Heindel reported, was the fact that "war material is conditioned by actual and potential censorship," and all necessary documentation was simply not available through usual channels and sometimes not at all. Similarly, he advised specialist librarians to be aware that the issues confronting them were not going to be issues relating only to documentation from European countries, "since Asia is now more involved and distracting...."

To meet these challenges, association leaders took a number of important steps. One of the first was the establishment of a National Defense Committee for the association, under the chairmanship of Mary Louise Alexander, Director, Bibliographical Planning Committee, Philadelphia. It was not a unique activity, for throughout America similar groups were being formed by other associations, trade

groups, and any number of professional organizations, some so remotely connected with defense problems, Miss Alexander noted, “that one suspected them of using this emergency only as a chance for publicity.” It was Miss Alexander’s belief “that the present world emergency which is leading to planning, evaluation, and analysis in every field of endeavor can contribute greatly to the progress of SLA if we are smart enough to grasp the opportunity.” Certainly the association’s National Defense Committee expected to move in that direction.

To coordinate the services of the library community, the National Defense Advisory Commission and other official agencies were looking to the Library of Congress as a central point of contact. That organization, working with a group of library leaders from across the profession, organized the joint Committee on Library Research Facilities for National Emergency (with Miss Alexander representing specialized librarianship). Recognizing that their first step was to gather data about what resources were available in the nation’s libraries, surveys were organized and distributed. Some 400 specialized libraries (“largely technical and business libraries”) were contacted by Miss Alexander, and 150 reports were quickly sent back, “nearly all of them good, full reports which give an impressive picture of special library service and which, taken together, offer a unique tool for research.” These replies led to the development of a master file, sent to the Library of Congress, demonstrating which libraries specialize in which subject fields and what their specific strengths were. So as it turned out, the war emergency did provide the opportunity for the first major analysis of research resources in specialized libraries in the United States, a goal that had often been discussed but which had never been attempted before.

Such were the efforts of the members of the association, and their efforts continued and grew in number. One rewarding activity was a symposium, sponsored by the association and published in *Special Libraries*, in which a number of specialist librarians from throughout the United States were invited to describe how specialized libraries could respond to such emergencies as those engendered by the war. “War and preparedness and special libraries” was the theme, and library managers from a widely diverse group of organizations came together to describe their goals and, in many cases, their personal feelings, about what they could do during the emergency, and what they would wish their professional colleagues to do. Sometimes emotional, sometimes strictly business-like, each of these leaders took a strong stand in offering advice. One suggested that the phrase “war and preparedness” did not mean only the usual ideas of guns, and cannon, and bombs, and “the spectacular, terrifying, and destructive side of warfare.” For this specialist librarian, “the newest non-combat activity is that of propagandea, to undermine enemy morale and to bolster our own.”

Bravery, too, was called for, according to the participants in this war and preparedness symposium and with it, the playing of vital and essential roles in the defense of the country, all combining—not so coincidentally—to defeat an age-old cliché about librarianship. “Let us hope,” one symposium participant said, “that the

effective help we may be called upon to render in this time of stress will once and for all dispel the misconception that we librarians are merely glorified filing clerks, 'bookworms,' or book-keepers."

Another participant saw the war as yet one more opportunity for specialist librarians to call into play their organizational skills, particularly with "many new laws and detailed regulations coming into force and the rapidly changing situations and objectives that are inevitable in a war economy." Similarly, while many other professional workers would be required to re-think how they would practice their professions in a wartime emergency, another participant made the point that specialist librarians were particularly well positioned to help the war effort succeed: "Special libraries are strategically placed to be of the greatest assistance in the realization of defense plans. By their very nature they are functionally organized for 'emergency,' to handle new problems and supply factual information of every sort. Speed, so necessary at present, has also characterized the service of these libraries. With the mobilization of every force toward a given end special libraries have long been familiar, for they have met the varied demands of science and business successfully for many years. They are efficient because they have had to learn how to be efficient. Other libraries, having cultural and social aims, on the other hand, may help to soften the stark regimentation during military preparation and to supply vocational material." Once again, the distinctions between specialized librarianship and the other forms of librarianship became clear, just as SLA's founders had intended, not to demonstrate that one form of librarianship is superior to another but that each form has clearly defined and specific roles to play in society, and never more clearly than in wartime.

The symposium was not limited solely to professional matters. One participant, simply listed as "Anonymous" and as being employed in an "Industrial Library," took upon himself or herself an exhortative role:

Just after receiving your request for my opinion on "War and Preparedness" I saw quoted a review from *Time, Inc.* of the book *While England Slept*, by J.F. Kennedy. ... Why kid ourselves that what happened to [the English] cannot happen to us? Bombs and airplanes are the only arguments which have any weight with the power-mad dictators of Europe. Therefore, in order to avoid finding ourselves in the position in which England now stands, let us have quantities of bombs and the most modern airplanes on our flying field—in fact and in metal—not in government estimates of production six years hence.

And it is an unfortunate fact that we have to have personnel to operate our modern engines of war, so let us train them before we need them, so that if the necessity arises we are prepared to meet it with the minimum expenditure of men's lives.

Such sentiments were not limited to the symposium. In a formal paper on books about "American Preparedness and National Defense," noting the difficulty of

choosing books on the topic that are “practical and allied to present conditions,” Frances E. Curtiss, Reference Librarian for *The Detroit News*, wrote about some twenty-five or so titles that specialist librarians should have available for their own edification and that of their clients. Curtiss, too, is drawn to the future president’s book:

John F. Kennedy, son of the American Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, has brought out a pertinent book, *While England Slept*, born of his experiences in England. Here he gives a sobering diagnosis of pre-war England, and reveals that the lagging of England was due to pacifism, luxury loving, and ignoring the truth that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. The warning may be too late for England, but for America there is still a period of grace.

Such were the issues that dominated the lives of specialist librarians as America prepared for war. Always adept at sharing non-proprietary information with their colleagues, SLA members never hesitated to share ideas. They were always (and continue to be) quick to be aware that the best way they could help themselves would be to help each other, and the wartime emergency situation proved to be no exception. Many practical articles about how specialized libraries could provide wartime services to their organizations appeared in the literature, and such offerings as bibliographies and literature searches were listed. Along with these, other recommended activities such as study groups, publications, the identification of expert groups, and the like were also written about. Under the circumstances, periodicals continued to be an important service to clients, but “due either to discontinuance because of the war or to the breakdown in international transportation,” international journals were often not received, seriously hampering research efforts in many organizations. Informal files and directories were often created *ad hoc*, simply because previously published materials were no longer available and such activities as providing clippings from the published media assumed a large and prominent role in many specialized libraries.

Advice regarding the specific circumstances of the wartime emergency were also shared among SLA’s members. Papers published in *Special Libraries* described, for example, “What Special Libraries Can Do for Civilian Defense,” or, taking a larger view, “Special Libraries and the War.” Specific wartime activities were also described both for the benefit of the membership and to ensure that they were informed as to how they themselves could contribute to the war effort. Thus the association’s involvement with the Victory Book Campaign, Defense Bond Campaigns, and the like. When the country held a national day of recognition about the Bill of Rights, on December 15, 1942, just a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Dr. Alice V. Keliher, Consultant to the Office of Civil Defense in New York City, recognizing the role libraries might play in the current crisis, spoke to several library associations (including SLA’s New York and New Jersey chapters). In her talk, published by the association, Dr. Keliher spoke about that great and unique American framework of personal liberty. “Today our task is to fight off the despotic

attack of fascism upon our concept of the dignity and of the rights of man. We have also the deeply fundamental task of interpreting the Bill of Rights in our national life so that it may come through this awful crisis with the strength with which it has survived the other catastrophes of our nation.”

President Roosevelt, too, recognized the role that specialized librarianship was playing and would continue to play in the war effort. He wrote to the membership, praising them for their “special knowledge” and their work for the war effort.

SIDEBAR (include in text if not separated out as a sidebar)

In this day of war, your task as special librarians is one relating immediately and exactly to fighting that war to its inevitable successful conclusion. You are the guardians of our technical knowledge. Through you must work the chemists and the engineers, upon whom depends in large measure the ultimate success of our fighting forces.

You know what it means to work. You know what it means to keep long hours in the research libraries of the plants which are turning out the planes and guns and tanks upon which victory depends. It is your privilege instantly to give to the men who design these materials of war the information which they must have. A moment’s delay on your part in supplying that vital material means a delay in winning the war.

So, too, by your special knowledge and through the quickness with which you work, you give to our business men and to our economists the data which they, too, need. You ask for no recognition. You work anonymously and unsung. But you are doing your job along with the army, the navy, and the air forces on America’s front line.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Victory did come, but not without sacrifice, a level of sacrifice unknown to future generations. We have no record of how many of the association’s members served in the war, and we do not know how many of them lost their lives in this great effort, but there is no question but that the sacrifices of these professional workers, like those of all Americans, were greater than any we as a people have been called upon to make. Yet, as the nation returned to “normalcy” (a long and also painful process for so many of its citizens), the association continued its work, enabling its members to share information and providing the focus for specialized librarianship as a profession. There were some nods to the past, and acknowledgement of the agonies that had been suffered by all Americans. Writing from Washington, DC, Irma A. Zink, the librarian for The Potomac Electric Power Company, noted that the “psychological readjustment” inherent in the return to a non-military environment would drive much of what specialist librarians had to do for their organizations. Bringing the information required by their parent organizations up to date and re-building collections and information files left incomplete during the war would require a major effort, and specialist librarians would be kept busy with this work. Equally if not more important

would be their role in “getting the individual back into the organization and functioning at top efficiency in the shortest possible time.” It was, for all SLA members, a daunting responsibility, one coupled with another responsibility, which SLA’s members took very seriously, that of responding to “numerous appeals from devastated libraries.”

The effects of the war were staggering in their impact, for SLA and its members as well as for all other organized elements of society, and by the end of the war the situation had provided what can only be considered a turning point in the association’s history. Specialized library services and the management of information, knowledge, and strategic learning would no longer be the exclusive domain of well-meaning and well-intentioned employees who had the skills, talents, and competencies to provide services when called upon by others. With the war, the essential role of specialized libraries had been clearly established. Providing practical and utilitarian service delivery in these disciplines was no longer an option, a situation clearly recognized by the association’s leaders. As had been the case since the association’s very inception, the special libraries “idea” or “movement” and its promulgation throughout society (especially throughout those elements of society that stood to benefit from its utilization) had been a driving force. The war did not change that and simply provided an opportunity for bringing together the very elements that had led to the success of specialized librarianship in the first place. These elements were enumerated some thirty-four years later, in 1983, by Eugene B. Jackson. Making a very good case as to why SLA—and the special library movement—had succeeded, Jackson wrote: “The prime factors in the formulations of special libraries during the first forty years were: (a) the emergence of qualitative changes in records and publications that required bibliographic control, (b) quantitative changes in informational materials and formats, and (c) the increasing importance of research in business and industry.”

As the war was coming to an end, the association’s leaders were well aware of what they and their colleagues would have facing them. By February, 1945, as the war was winding down, President Walter Hausdorfer had decided it was an opportune time to ask questions about the “idea” of specialized librarianship. After some thirty-seven years “of extending special library service into a wider group of organizations, and of persisting in presenting the idea in different ways, we have evolved a fair concept of what it is.” In the new social environment in which “increasing degrees of specialization” were being defined, the association might profitably take a new look at its purpose and role, President Hausdorfer felt. Sadly, there was to be no 1945 annual convention (as conferences were still referred to in those days), due to the uncertainties of the wartime environment. So as he visited chapters and met with representatives of other organizations, President Hausdorfer raised the question of how specialized librarianship could be expanded and, specifically, how SLA, as an organization, could lead that effort.

Hausdorfer’s suggestions for reaching a wider public began with the association itself, seeking a new commitment to professional growth and relating the

association's activities to a "larger picture of present trends, and to recognize our fuller responsibilities." These included such things as, first of all, suggesting to members that they begin to think in terms of what is best for the association, to think of themselves "not as individualists with our own advantages or advancement in mind, but as members of a community within larger communities." In thinking about where the association would go, Hausdorfer called to the members' attention such trends as the increasing role of government, particularly in terms of business and research, and especially giving recognition to "the trend toward nationalization of many of our institutions." The second trend Hausdorfer recognized, and which he implored SLA's members to recognize as well, was the rise of the "common man," requiring an "economic reorganization" (as he called it) to ensure that smaller organizations had access to the same resources as larger ones. "Some way must be found," Hausdorfer said, "to give these [smaller] firms the benefit of special library service." The third trend was one which President Hausdorfer identified as a direct result of the American participation in the war: "we have become Citizens of the World," he said, and specialized librarians could no longer think "in terms of geographic distances, but in terms of neighbors." For Hausdorfer, what his fellow professionals needed to do was clear: "The vast flow of informational material that issues from our government, private institutions, and presses must reach libraries overseas as it now reaches us.... We must in turn have an organization for collecting and disseminating those [resources] which are produced outside our country. We need to maintain contact with research organizations, learned societies, and educational institutions abroad, so as to benefit by their activities." These were without doubt "big picture" issues that Hausdorfer was asking his colleagues to contemplate and, more important, to put themselves forward for devising solutions and providing new and additional services and responsibilities in their own professional lives. And it was, certainly, in this time and through this thinking that the Special Libraries Association found itself moving beyond its pre-war picture of itself. From now on, the association's role would be on a much larger scale, as it redesigned itself to play a more structured and influential role in putting knowledge to work in the organizations that employed its members.

As for the future of specialized librarianship in a post-war society, and the concomitant future of SLA itself, Hausdorfer had come up with carefully considered recommendations which he wanted to make known. In a later presentation, this one to the Minnesota Chapter of the association, the president began by asserting that the first role of the association was to think about long-term trends. In the larger society, he identified changing trends in employment, noting that while some occupational groups (such as workers in agriculture) were shrinking, others such as manufacturing, transportation, trade, personal and professional services, and government were growing in great numbers. Attention to the value of research, too, would be a trend worth watching, since "prospects for research also have considerable bearing on conditions favorable to the establishment of new libraries." Those prospects would succeed only to the extent that the resources of libraries could be made available. "The organizations [specialized libraries] serve,"

Hausdorfer said, “have vitality and show growth, the prospects for continued and increased research are good, special problems, and the way in which they are being approached point to the need for special library service, and the several factors affecting the growth of libraries, such as decreased support, competition from governmental and private agencies, are not serious but rather in some ways offer greater opportunity.”

These factors were having an influence. Hausdorfer’s successor, Herman H. Hinkle, in his report on “The State of the Association” (apparently the first time that designation was used for the annual report of the president—and later that of the executive director—to the membership), was eager to point out how the association had begun to identify some of the trends in society that supported the growth of specialized librarianship. Reflecting on the early history of the association and the commitment of its founders and early members to concerning themselves with “mobilizing facts and the sources of facts in the service of men who must be informed in order to conduct their daily affairs,” Henkle noted that those practical services were “as much the heart of the SLA program of service now as in those first years.” That commitment was being recognized, and the association was growing, both in the services it offered and in its membership numbers.

With respect to the latter, as early as 1940, before America had entered the war, President Alma C. Mitchill had urged the membership to move into an “expansion” mode. She had appointed Laura Woodward as Membership Chairman, to lead that effort and bring the membership up from the 1,715 number that had been recorded when she became president. Woodward (who would succeed Mitchill as president), set a goal of 500 new members for the year, a goal almost reached during the campaign. Henkle, just five years later, would report that more than 4,300 specialist librarians were now members of the association, a remarkable rate of growth (150% in six years). For it to have occurred despite—indeed, perhaps because of—the war is equally remarkable.

But membership growth was not the only strength that Henkle would report in those early post-war years. “Of prime importance,” he stated, “has been the cooperative efforts of Chapters and special Groups in the development of bibliographies, indexes, directories, and other special tools designed to facilitate the services of special libraries.” The association’s publications program was a great success, and each of its publications “returned to the Association treasury more money than was invested in its publication.” Cooperation with other library groups continued to be one of the association’s strengths, along with its services to members. Of particular importance was the way the association’s structure allowed for “a large proportion of its members [to] enjoy the privilege of frequent contact with members of similar interest through the Chapter and Group divisions of the Association.” It was an SLA asset of which President Henkle was particularly proud.

But Herman Henkle was not a man to be satisfied with what had already been achieved. He acknowledged the trends that President Hausdorfer had identified, and he wanted the association to continue promoting its practical type of library service

to the organizations that employed the association's members. And President Henkle himself had a radical and forward-looking proposal to put forward.

Throughout its history, public relations had been a part of SLA's service structure, and over the years many of its leaders and members had worked long and hard to ensure that the special libraries movement was duly put forward to those for whom it would provide benefit. But the universe of prospective users of practical information, knowledge, and learning was (and continues to be) a very large one, and no leader of the association has ever been satisfied that all that could be done in bringing the value of specialized librarianship to the attention of the decision makers in society has in fact been done. President Henkle, in his address to the membership, stated that he wanted to take the effort to a new level. He had earlier appointed a committee to study "the development of advisory service to business and industry, as a part of a formal program of the Special Libraries Association," and in his address Henkle outlined what he saw the work of the "new service" to be:

The service which I have in mind would involve the appointment of one or more specialists on our Headquarters staff whose responsibilities would include:

1. Consultation with visitors at the Headquarters Office and replies to correspondents seeking information relative to the establishment of special libraries;
2. Preliminary service of the informational needs of specific groups;
3. Development of detailed plans for the organization, equipment, and staffing of new libraries, or advice on the selection of experts qualified to make such recommendations;
4. The review of the informational needs of all types of businesses and industries and the review of available reference tools, to ascertain needed bibliographical aids and other reference publications which might be sponsored by SLA in cooperation with other professional organizations;
5. The planning and perhaps the preparation of special bibliographies of current materials and regularly scheduled columns in *Special Libraries* and perhaps in the *Technical Book Review Index*;
6. The maintenance of a roster of specialists in informational service for all types of business and industrial organizations who might be available for making surveys and advising on the organization of any special libraries; and
7. The coordination of all these activities through SLA Headquarters.

The demand was there. Only forging the link between the potential users of specialized library services and the specialist librarians themselves remained to be accomplished. In her historical essay on corporate and technology libraries, Edythe Moore painted a very clear picture of what the opportunities were:

Just as had happened after WWI, there was tremendous growth in the numbers of corporate libraries, especially in scientific and technical areas, immediately following WWII. Established companies endeavored to catch up after giving their time and attention to the war effort, and new companies sprang into existence to take advantage of a whole array of sophisticated technologies developed for the military and which they now planned to use to provide products and services for civilian use.

Not only did corporate libraries proliferate following the war, but they also rapidly expanded in size of collections, staff, and services offered.

Burgeoning research and development, much of it sponsored by the U.S. Government, flooded the technical community with a growing body of literature more interdisciplinary in nature than ever before and in new formats. The technical report became popular as a means of rapid and informal communication and took its place alongside the journal literature as the most current and therefore the most important forms of material in the corporate library collection. In many libraries in the industrial sector, technical reports far outnumber all other forms of publications combined.

With its growing numbers and its ambitious offerings for members and members' clients alike, SLA was on its way to realizing that post-war picture of itself that its leaders had painted. Such efforts as Herman Henkle's advisory service for business and industry would do much to re-establish and strengthen SLA's reputation as an association of knowledge workers whose first and primary purpose was—and would continue to be—the provision of practical and utilitarian knowledge services for the benefit of the organizations at which they were employed. Alma C. Mitchill had earlier offered a somewhat loftier view of the profession and the association. "We must think professionally; by so doing, we will build our Association into one of the foremost professional organizations in the country. We, as members of such an association, will have high professional standing individually. A special librarian should be considered a junior executive; he should be asked to sit on committees, be consulted on educational plans, take part in the employee-relations programs. This is already being done, I know, in some organizations. The practice can become more prevalent. Is that not worth striving for?"

So there was much to be done, and with the high level of volunteer support provided by the association's members, much was accomplished. With respect to managing the organization itself, as with any functioning office operation there were obviously management issues from time to time. In 1943-44, a manpower survey was conducted, and in 1947-48, H.A. Fountain, management controls consultant, was appointed to make a survey of office procedures at the association office, job analyses for staff, and a review of the association's organization and policies. This effort was perhaps the first time the association had gone to an external consultant for advice. The effort was described by one of SLA's leaders as a study "to analyze the service to members, to try to streamline some of the routines in the office, and to avoid duplication of effort."

It would appear that the commissioning of the Fountain Study, together with the manpower study four years earlier, had been the result of some unrest within the association's membership. As is often the case in membership organizations, and quite frequently within professional organizations, some members do participate at the levels at which they would like, and it is not unusual for charges of "leadership by clique" or other such unattractive accusations to be made against elected officers and directors. This seems to have been the case with the office management situation at the association during and immediately following the war. In an issue of

Special Libraries, an article entitled “Whither SLA?” and signed by A.A. Paradis (identified as a director of SLA’s New York Chapter) opens with a dramatic and damning statement: “Society invariably suffers a moral decline following a major war. It appears that SLA, too, is in the throes of such a situation.” The main focus of the complaint does not seem to be so much moral laxity as concern about the association’s finances and a lack of transparency in the leadership’s handling of the association’s affairs. Dishonesty was not charged, and the writer seems quite sympathetic to the needs of the association for increased revenues, but with a Reserve Fund of \$40,000 and a recent (and undisputed) dues increase, the other leaders of the association (presumably chapter directors like the author of the article) and some of the members wanted more information.

As often happens in these situations, the “we-vs.-they” idea kicks in, and in this case, the author felt compelled to attack the leaders: “We have heard much of SLA being a democratic organization. Actually, it is run by a nominating committee. The President is not even elected. The Executive Board holds closed sessions, yet full reports on its meetings, discussions, and the manner in which its members voted are never made. How can a truly national organization function smoothly if the Chapter presidents, Group and Committee chairmen are not kept fully informed of what top management is doing?” Oddly, though, the final thrust of the article seems remarkably supportive of what was being done by the leadership, and after admonishing the members of the association to correspond with the Executive Board with their suggestions for keeping the association from “becoming financially insolvent,” advising all members to read The Fountain Report, and asking the Executive Board to “lead the return to unselfish, intelligent, and honest devotion to the job at hand,” Paradis ends with a flourish, noting that if the Executive Board “cannot prove capable of assuming such leadership, it is not worthy of its high trust and responsibility.”

Attention to internal management such as the one described here tends to obscure the very real contributions the association made in the professional lives of its members. Many of these contributions concerned practical, day-to-day matters and nowhere was SLA stronger than in the support it provided for its members when they were grappling with issues that could not—or even sometimes would not—be resolved individually in their own libraries and with management in their own organizations. Alma C. Mitchill had presented her vision of specialist librarians as “junior executives,” participating fully in the organizational management of the parent enterprises where they were employed. It was quite naturally an aspiration to be considered and desired, but in many cases, these librarians—as *librarians*—worked alone or with few others who shared their professional understandings and goals. They seriously needed their association, and SLA did not fail them. As noted earlier, the association provided a successful placement service which not only helped specialist librarians find work when they needed to, but enabled employers who required the services of specialist librarians to have a single place to go to identify and have recommended to them the very professional employees they were looking for. Beyond employment services, though, the history of the association is full of

practical directions being offered to members, including some services of the most basic sort, as for example the establishment and maintenance of a reference collection of its own, for the use of its members, established at the association office in 1944.

Another important service for members, expected of any professional organization connected with education and research, would be the publication of papers, research documents, and similar materials which could help specialist librarians work better. Here again, the emphasis was often on the practical, and, indeed, the very word “practical” shows up in many of the offerings provided by SLA. Articles in the association’s journal offered advice under such titles as “Practical Hints for Reference Librarians,” “Special Files in the Technology Department of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh,” “The Relation of the Museum Librarian to His Institution and Staff,” and “Circulating the Table of Contents of Magazines.” Such helpful, “how-we-do-it-well” articles, much maligned by more sophisticated information specialists in later decades, were in fact typical in the association’s middle years and were not unlike the types of “examples” and inspirational literature to be found in other professional journals.

Aside from such purely “how-to” advice, the association’s leaders also saw fit to bring in leaders from outside the library community, their bosses, as it were, to provide their own ideas about the services the specialist librarian should be providing for the enterprise. In one such article published at the end of the decade, Donald B. Woodward, Second Vice President at The Mutual Life Insurance Company in New York, described specialized librarianship from his particular perspective and what he and his fellow executives expected of those who provided library services for his company. Woodward required three things of the company’s librarians:

In order to keep abreast of all this information, an executive must be educated continuously, so that he may retain a sense of objectivity and avoid predilections. ... Librarians are elected to do the job. There is no more important role, and librarians are playing it superbly.

But superb and magnificent as that job is, it can be improved. This is a professional, not an individual, problem and for it I have three suggestions.

Firstly, librarians should show more selectivity. For example, instead of giving an executive all election polls last November, only the right one should have been given him. ... Make the executive read less—but be sure to make him read what is correct.

Secondly, I dream of some system of summary which will enable the executive to discern what he needs to know in one-tenth of the time it takes him to wade through the tremendous piles of literature he receives. Obviously this is not a job one librarian or one library can do,

but can not something be done by many librarians to remedy this situation?

Thirdly, and finally, synthesis is needed. Add economics, chemistry, and journalism together and you get a business decision. Frequently, business decisions are even more complicated. Cannot librarians help more in bringing about that synthesis?

Woodward's comments obviously anticipated performance standards and competencies that would come to be associated with knowledge services professionals by the end of the century. Moreover, his comments establish that from the point of view of enterprise management and those who use specialized libraries, there was clearly the expectation that service delivery in the specialized library would be different from that expected in other types of libraries.

Beyond standards and competencies, other advice in the realm of practical information was offered by the association, frequently advice about subjects that would be considered by some to be rather ordinary or mundane. Obviously, for most specialist librarians, especially those with managerial responsibility or with influence over those who have such responsibility, excellence in financial management and related employment practices is always a quest. In this respect, information provided to SLA's members in the 1940s indicates that interest in that subject was typical, and much was published. For example, early in the decade, in February, 1940, Linda H. Morley, Librarian at Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc. in New York City, wrote an article about the recently enacted Fair Labor Standards Act, noting that it had "personal significance" for specialized librarians. Primarily, the article provided advice about the definition of the term "professional capacity," since employees so designated—along with those with executive or administrative "capacity"—were exempt from the wage and hour provisions of the act. Thus Morley was raising the issue for specialist librarians, to enable them and their managers to determine if "the granting of professional status within the organization" might be appropriate. Noting that the association's Professional Standards Committee had gathered "all the official rulings in regard to this question" and was willing to make them available to members, Morley ended her article by suggesting that "librarians would do well to consider which positions are definitely professional and which are clerical, since a proper classification is more likely to result if the librarian works out a logical program and presents it to the proper executive instead of leaving the decision to others who obviously would not have as full a knowledge of the types of work performed."

For many members of the association the interest in professional status for specialist librarians would correspond with interest in wages paid, and the decade of the 1940s offered a number of occasions in which the association carefully put before its members information which could be useful to them as they negotiated wages and benefits in their organizations, either as managers of specialized libraries or as

employees. One of the association's earliest wartime actions—in 1942—was to waive dues for members drafted for government or military service (along with extending SLA's services to all libraries engaged in national defense). Wages continued to be an issue of much concern, and as the war ended, the gathering of information about wages and working conditions became a major focus in the association. In mid-1945, Executive Secretary Kathleen Brown Stebbins reported that "salaries for librarians and assistant librarians ... have risen so rapidly during the past twelve months due to the shortage of qualified personnel ... that the Secretary has been deluged with inquiries...." Noting the great interest in the subject, Mrs. Stebbins conducted her own unofficial survey, establishing that technical firms were offering salaries in the \$4,000 - \$7,000 range, with basic pay for assistant librarians in the \$2,400 - \$3,600 range. Persons entering the profession, just graduating from library schools, were being offered positions with base salaries of \$1,800 - 2,100, an increase of almost a third more than the salary being offered just two years earlier.

In the autumn of the same year that Executive Secretary Stebbins presented her informal findings, the SLA Manpower Committee sent out a postcard questionnaire to all members. Led by Past-President Hausdorfer, the effort was admittedly informal, and as he reported, analysis of the returns "revealed some of its limitations." Only 48 per cent of the responses were usable, but some general information could be gleaned from the survey, perhaps the first "official" (albeit informal) salary survey conducted by SLA. Comparing the results with two previous studies, one of educators in 1943 and one of all librarians in 1940, Hausdorfer reported that the salary levels for specialized librarians were higher than for educators but lower than the 1940 general level of the population as a whole. Salaries reported ranged from lows of \$1,000 - \$1,800, with highs ranging from \$2,700 (in hospitals and nursing libraries) to \$10,000 in government positions and as high as \$12,000 in scientific and technical libraries.

Not surprisingly, Hausdorfer's interest in financial management for specialized libraries was not limited to salary issues. Just a few months after reporting the results of his salary survey, Hausdorfer authored another paper on "Special Library Budgets." This, too, addressed a great number of practical issues that specialist librarians would be struggling with, including the fact that many specialized libraries operated without any budget at all, their financial affairs being managed through another administrative unit in the parent organization. Sixty-four of 144 responding librarians reported having no budget, with 25 reporting having no salary budget. Most budgets in the survey were in the \$4,000 - 9,999 range (37%) and only six percent of the responding specialized libraries had budgets of more than \$100,000.

In addition to practical issues having to do with managing their specialized libraries and providing services to their identified user groups, another issue seemed to be of critical concern during the decade of the 1940s. This had to do with the association's relationship with other professional organizations. As had been the case since the association's earliest beginnings, SLA's interactions with other, similar associations was a topic of much conversation among the membership during the 1940s, and

especially among SLA's leaders. Past experiences had not always been good, and although some interactions had been fruitful, many of SLA's leaders were cautious about too much involvement with other organizations. A natural exception, and particularly notable, had been SLA's interactions with ASLIB in Great Britain. That organization had been inspired by the creation of SLA and had itself come into being in 1924, partially in response to the success of SLA in bringing attention to the professional needs and requirements of those who work in specialist librarianship.

And by the same token, much effort would be made to strengthen the association's interactions with other organization in the future, and a great number of important affiliations would come to characterize SLA's role as a leader in the community of professional associations relating to library and information services. By the end of the decade, for example, SLA would take on an even greater international role, becoming a member of IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations, an activity that would have much influence in SLA's own development in the future.

In the United States, though, the relationship between SLA and the American Library Association continued to be a difficult one. Looking back, it is now clear that the focus of each organization—what it wanted to bring to the profession—was very different. For SLA members, the delivery of information, knowledge, and strategic learning for practical and utilitarian purposes constituted its reason for being. For ALA members, education, scholarship, and the betterment of society remained a primary goal. Neither aspiration was necessarily better than the other, nor was it meant to be, but for many people (and there were many who continued—as is the case today—to be members of both organizations) the fact that SLA and ALA were two *different* organizations made for a difficult and uncomfortable situation.

At SLA's annual conference in 1940, a panel discussion among representatives of the two organizations was presented as the focus of the second general conference session. Chaired by Mary McLean of the American Bankers Association, panelists were Carl H. Milam, Secretary of the American Library Association and Everett W. McDiarmid, Jr., of the "Illinois Library School, Urbana, Illinois," representing the American Library Association. Eleanor S. Cavanaugh of the Standard Statistics Company of New York, and Marion Rawls, of the Burnham Library of Architecture of the Art Institute, Chicago represented the Special Libraries Association. As reported by Cavanaugh, "The meeting was entirely informal and was arranged primarily to discuss ways and means of cooperation between the two associations."

A curious comment in the report notes that "before the meeting it was agreed by the participants that interruptions and mild heckling would be in order and that, if possible, each side would try to embarrass the other," so it would appear that the intent of the meeting was to keep the discussion at a light-hearted level. This was not to be, for Cavanaugh continued in her report: "However, only enough of this to liven up the meeting took place, for the meeting took a more serious slant."

The stimulus for the discussion was apparently ALA's recently published "Third Activities Report," which had proposed (yet again!) that SLA become a "section" of

ALA. On this subject, neither side in the discussion could claim victory as the meeting progressed, and no recommendation with respect to the proposal came from the meeting. Broader questions of “active cooperation” were discussed, and although the report stated that “due to lack of time nothing could be decided regarding these points,” several specific “means of cooperation” were suggested: 1) appointments of ALA members on SLA committees and vice versa; 2) joint regional meetings of the two associations; 3) joint publication projects; 4) joint survey of source material. As to the general feeling among the attendees about the success of the discussion, “the convention delegates departed imbued with the idea that there was a place in the library world for both associations, working individually in their individual spheres, but also that there were certain places where it would be not only to the advantage of the two associations but also to the library profession for ALA and SLA to cooperate on definite projects.”

A year later, at the next SLA convention, a resolution was adopted “that an invitation be extended to all other nationally recognized library associations in the United States and Canada to join in forming a coordinating Council of Library Associations to be composed of the presidents of each of the participating associations, with each association participating as a single and equal unit and represented by its president with power to act.” The meeting took place on December 28-29, 1941, and among the topics discussed was the prior existence of the Joint Committee on Cooperation between National Library Associations. As discussions progressed, it became clear that the two organizations should exist as one, and the name of the Joint Committee was changed to Council of National Library Associations. It was also voted that divisions of the American Library Association would “be invited to appoint representatives to this Council.” A committee of three was appointed to consider “certain projects of national importance.” The committee (Herman H. Henkle, Sidney B. Hill, and Milton E. Lord, Chairman) immediately set to work, and at SLA’s next convention, in June, 1942, Charles H. Brown, the president of the American Library Association, spoke to the assembled delegates, describing the reorganization then being undertaken at ALA and advising the members of SLA that their organization should *not* “apply” for divisional status in ALA but should continue as an affiliated organization. While there was at least some faction in SLA interested in a more formal relationship between the two organizations, SLA did disaffiliate formally from ALA in 1949, and the Council of National Library Associations as a unifying force was unable to bring the two organizations any closer together.

Despite these perhaps somewhat uncomfortable strains in the larger profession, the Special Libraries Association continued to go from strength to strength. As its fortieth anniversary approached, SLA had a membership in May, 1949 of 5,443, up from 1,715 ten years earlier, and it seemed appropriate to use the occasion to publish a chronology of some of the association’s achievements. This was done, in the April, 1949, issue of *Special Libraries*. The issue also included an essay from President Rose L. Vormelker, who noted that, “at this forty year mark we are facing a world which undoubtedly will be so different from the one we’ve known to date that the changes electricity brought in the past will be dwarfed in comparison.” But Vormelker

made it clear that one thing had not changed in those forty years: "...one basic fundamental reason for the existence of SLA remains the same. The world will continue in its need for knowledge which may be 'put to work' and indeed more so than ever. It will be SLA's opportunity as well as its duty to foster the organization of the record of the amazing amount of research in the world in order that its results and tremendous implications may be put to greater use."

Indeed, no one—not even SLA's president in 1949—could begin to imagine the volume, the sheer quantity of that "amazing amount of research in the world." The first forty years of the association's history, it seems, had only been a first step, a "getting ready," if you will, for embracing the opportunities and the duties that would come the association's way. It was a time of preparation, and when specialized librarianship was put to the test—as it would be during the next sixty years—the profession's willingness to grow and change would turn out to be its very foundation.