

SLA at 100: Chapter 9 1970-1979

Change on the Horizon

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As the 1960s moved into the 1970s, SLA and its members—and particularly its leaders—made serious attempts to focus their organizational efforts on the role of specialized librarianship in the larger societal and information management spectrum. It was not an easy task. Just as had been the case in the previous decade, their efforts were frequently overshadowed by monumental societal changes and threats. The decade began with Americans protesting U.S. actions in Asia, particularly the American invasion of Cambodia, and the American economy was so shaken by inflation that President Richard M. Nixon was forced to order a wage and price freeze. Oil became a scarce commodity (and day-long lines of irritated drivers waiting to obtain fuel became a common sight), scandal forced the resignation of the U.S. president, and Americans were required to evacuate Saigon as the Vietnam War ended. It was a sorry, sad time, and specialist librarians—like many others—were unsure about what the future would bring.

Not surprisingly, within the scientific research and development communities, in business, in government, and in just about every information- and knowledge-centric organization, technology drove much of the discussion and decision-making. At this point in time, as people have become somewhat inured to dealing with the vagaries of continual technological enhancement and change, it is nearly impossible to understand the excitement and potential of the 1970s. Technology was everywhere and it was constantly improving. In 1971, for example, OCLC (originally the Ohio College Library Center, created to develop a computerized system in which the libraries of academic institutions could share resources and reduce costs) went online, an event whose magnitude is hard to image 38 years later. Later named OCLC, Inc. and then in 1981, OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc., OCLC grew to serve more than 60,000 libraries of all types in the United States and in 112 countries and territories around the world. By 1975, Arpanet—the precursor of the Internet—was up and running, and electronic communication (“e-mail”) and file transfer protocols had become operational. Medline and Lexis, going online in 1971 and 1973 respectively, ushered in an era of early training for specialist librarians in health science and law and represented the first of the online databases. Both became essential services for searching, information finding, and information dissemination, at levels that had been inconceivable just a few years earlier. Additionally, because clients could not—in those early days—do their own searching, specialist librarians gained an increased level of respect and responsibility in their parent institutions. These early adapters were recognized by their clients (but sadly not always by organizational management and even more sadly, not always by many of their professional colleagues) as critical assets for the

organization. This was a new role for many in specialized librarianship and one that they embraced enthusiastically.

With this new focus on technology, the connections between technology and organizational management and between information service delivery and management (and, for that matter, between technology and information service delivery) assumed a large role in the professional lives of many of the association's members. As the decade began, in February, 1970, J.P.I. Tyas of the Canadian Department of Trade and Commerce presented a paper anticipating much of the upheaval that would be experienced, urging specialist librarians to take their rightful professional place in the "affluent society." Not only did Tyas not anticipate the financial crises that would affect the decade of the 1970s, he connected the relationship of research and development to the economic prosperity of recent years. Noting that the "major problems" in planning and policy-making were "keeping managers up-to-date and providing greater coordination on a national scale"—the very goals that had been identified at the end of the decade of the 1950s—he invited specialist librarians to participate more actively in their rapidly expanding profession.

Tyas described three major areas where specialized librarianship could take a leadership position: education and research, planning priorities and policy making, and international and national development programs. Tyas noted especially that with respect to the first, education and research, the worldwide annual expenditure on research and development was somewhere between \$30-\$35 billion. With "the economic transfer and exploitation of knowledge" recognized as "one of the foremost problems for the industrialized nations," Tyas was asserting that specialized librarianship—supported by sufficient research to assist in developing postgraduate education in order to provide high caliber staff for government, industry, and educational institutes—could take a lead in solving the problem.

Tyas then spoke about the future of research and development, and it was in this part of his address that the specific strengths of specialized librarianship were brought to the fore. "Knowledge is basic to all of this," Tyas proclaimed, "and the results of basic research must be available to aid in teaching, to further mission-oriented research, to be interpreted into new technology, and to aid our society economically, culturally, and socially. ... Our present problems are historical but new technology can help us sort order out of the chaos, [and] whichever way one moves, statistics, data, and information are required—new ideas, concepts, and technologies must be mined from the knowledge at our disposal. This knowledge is the universal master resource."

Having made his stand, Tyas then challenged specialized librarianship directly:

You are the purveyors of *Knowledge*. It is *your* job to ensure that the requirements of the policy makers, the managers, the financiers, and the technologies are met. The scientist is relatively well off. It is your job that the recommendations of these studies and reports become fact. It is your responsibility; it is your future. You have to *act*. The whole world needs your help. You have to decide what you are going

to do and where you are going to do it. Your horizons are unlimited.
Grasp the opportunities and aid the researchers, managers, planners,
and developers *now*.

Such encouragement was not lost on the members of SLA, for they had been working hard to promote the special library idea since the days of John Cotton Dana. The prospect of some sort of cooperative arrangement between specialized librarianship and documentation was now a thing of the past, despite the earlier recognition of their similarities. Nevertheless, one more attempt to bring the two disciplines together was tried: a proposed merger of SLA and ASIS, the American Society for Information Science. A Joint Merger Committee made up of three members of SLA and three members of ASIS had been appointed to study a possible merger. SLA President Efrén González, who had taken office in June, 1971, and who had been an SLA member of the Joint Merger Committee, described the effort. It had been brought forward, he wrote, to “seek areas of mutual interest and cooperation ... based on the belief that our professional interests overlap or at least converge at some points with ASIS and can be furthered through such activities as joint meetings and projects at the Association level.”

In January, 1971, the association’s Board of Directors had directed the Joint Merger Committee to finalize a questionnaire to be sent to the membership. When the straw ballots were tallied, the Board decided to accept the recommendation of the SLA members of the Joint Committee that “the discussion of merger of SLA and ASIS should be discontinued and the Joint Merger Committee should be dissolved,” as there had not been a clear mandate to continue the discussions.

Even without the SLA/ASIS merger, the seeds had been sown for more attention within SLA to the role of technology and what was now being referred to as information science. With the creation of information centers in the scientific community in the previous decade, and the concomitant renaming of many specialized libraries as “information centers,” and with the trend continuing in full force in the new decade, specialized librarianship—as a discipline—was going to be required to include both information science and the generalized, more traditional librarianship of the larger library profession within the association’s mandate. There were areas of mutual interest for both branches of librarianship, and it was in these that the association made its great contributions in the 1970s. These contributions addressed important subjects, and the positions taken by SLA—not always easy positions—were indicative of the changes with which the association’s members would be faced as the decade went forward. Copyright was one of the most important policy issues addressed by the association in the decade of the 1970s. As early as the 1950s, the association’s leaders had indicated an interest in providing assistance to SLA members as they wrestled with copyright. In 1959 a Copyright Law Revision Committee had been appointed to cooperate with the U.S. Copyright Office. Copyright was a particularly difficult issue, and one that when resolved would not only alleviate the concerns of SLA members and their fellow library and information science professionals, but those of the larger information management community and of public citizens as well.

Until the advent of affordable technology for photocopying information contained in books and journals, copyright had not been a major concern for libraries. In most cases, one simply “took notes” by hand. In more formal situations, the copying might be done at a typewriter. In either case, the person doing the copying would ideally have been careful to include a proper citation listing the original source of the information.

Photocopying technology changed the process, and by the mid-1960s, the duplication of a page (or many pages) from material retained in a library had become a very simple process. Simple to undertake, that is, but certainly not simple for copyrighted materials. How to compensate the owner of the intellectual property needed to be addressed, for librarians could not be expected to monitor all photocopying. In fact, librarians themselves, like all other people, would expect to utilize photocopying technology for their own work, as well as for their library’s customers. Yet those who owned the copyright to materials retained in the library expected fair compensation for the use of their intellectual property, and those who represented the copyright holders (usually the publishers) could not simply allow unlimited copying of protected material. By the time the American copyright laws came up for renewal in 1976, the subject had become the focus of national attention.

In one of those fortuitous “right-place-at-the-right-time” situations, member Frank E. McKenna had become the association’s Executive Director in 1970. For SLA, it would be Dr. McKenna’s ability to combine his management expertise, his leadership role, his intellectual background (particularly his understanding of issues surrounding the collection and dissemination of scientific information), and his personal interest in the needs of the association’s membership that would position SLA for a leadership role in the copyright arena. A physical chemist with a doctorate from the University of Washington—obtained when he was 22 years old, making him at that time the youngest person to earn a doctorate from a university in the Western states—McKenna was an example of that “information scientist” so lauded in the debates of the 1960s. Working as a research chemist led him to a management position in the company’s library at the Air Reduction Company in Murray Hill, New Jersey, where he was employed for 13 years. In that position, as SLA President Vivien D. Hewitt later noted, McKenna came to the conviction that “a special library attains its ultimate value because its information services are broader than the traditional concepts of library services.”

The philosophical stamp that McKenna would bring to his tenure as Executive Director had been in evidence during his years of active volunteer service to the association. Elected to the presidency of the association for the 1966-1967 term of office, McKenna had outlined in his inaugural address many points that would be guiding principles in his years as Executive Director. He encouraged SLA’s members to “look *forward* and to anticipate changes,” and to implement their objectives “with a sense of *urgency*.” He then put forward three expectations to all members of the association: that flexibility in the face of change be recognized and adopted, that neither individuality nor creativity be stifled but instead be used to establish an environment for performance, and that the association adopt the

“rapidly increasing sophistication” of planning, with better long-range forecasting, better identification of goals, better organization and procedures, and “better tools for the *analysis* of our planning.”

By 1968, McKenna’s interest in and affection for the association had led him to come on staff, first as the editor of *Special Libraries*. In less than two years, when the position of Executive Director became open in the summer of 1970, McKenna was hired, beginning his employment in that role in October.

Copyright and the restructuring of copyright legislation became the defining focus of McKenna’s tenure as Executive Director. In the mid-years of the century, it had become clear to many in government that the American copyright laws would require revision, and the U.S. Congress authorized the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress and an advisory group of specialists to conduct studies of the copyright law. By 1960, the first four studies, printed for the use of the Committee on the Judiciary, were made available through the Government Printing Office and announced in the library press, including *Special Libraries*. The price was forty cents.

By 1973, Congress was holding hearings regarding the proposed Copyright Law Revision Bill S. 1361 (93rd Congress) and in July of that year the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Patents, Trademarks and Copyrights, chaired by Senator John L. McClellan, opened further hearings. Because the news of this additional hearing was unexpected, “hasty telephone communications between SLA’s New York Office and Board members” were called for and there was some urgency in preparing a written statement from the association, as well as in the preparation of oral testimony (to be delivered by McKenna and the chairman of SLA’s Copyright Committee, Jack S. Ellenberger).

In the testimony, prepared by McKenna and presented over his signature, an opening comment recognized that some education about specialized librarianship was required for the subcommittee. Consequently, the statement made clear that specialized librarianship is not the same as general or traditional librarianship: “The concept of special libraries or—in better words—the concept of *specialized* libraries is not well known among the general public or even in some segments of the library community itself.”

As for what the specialized library community needed from the copyright legislation, McKenna and Ellenberger pointed out that in the business, research and development, and scientific and technical communities, the typical turnaround time for the library’s users would not permit the luxury of permissions that was being suggested. The association’s position was put forward in the written statement, including SLA’s stated preference for the continuation of the “long recognized concept that the preparation of a single copy constitutes ‘fair use.’” After referring to the difficulties—in a specialized library—of adhering to turnaround time requirements for seeking permission to make photocopies, the statement described four specific concerns, of which the most dangerous would be those that penalized for-profit organizations: “The legislation to be enacted must not prevent or penalize the

preparation of a photocopy for or by specialized libraries—particularly those in for-profit organizations. There will be immeasurable damage to the economy and the welfare of the nation if such intent is contained in the enacted version... or if such interpretation is possible after enactments of the law.” Finally, the association’s testimony on this critically important issue made clear SLA’s societal role: “The rapid transmission of man’s knowledge—either to not-for-profit or to for-profit organizations—must not be impeded by law.”

By 1976, the library photocopying sections of the new U.S. Copyright Law and pertinent portions of congressional reports had been mailed to all SLA members, and the next year the association published *Library Photocopying & the U.S. Copyright Law of 1976*, prepared under the supervision of the association’s legal counsel by the SLA Special Committee on Copyright Law Practice and Implementation. The document, designed to assist members in understanding and complying with the new copyright law, and its distribution to the membership testified to the high level of interest SLA and its leadership had in the subject and their sense of obligation in providing direction for the association’s members. Of those who served on the committee (Mark H. Baer, Efren W. Gonzalez, Frank E. McKenna, Ronald P. Naylor, and Shirley Echelman, Chair), two were past presidents of the association, one was the president-elect, and one was the current president. It was an important activity, this effort to study copyright legislation and provide the association’s recommendations to the Congress and, even more close to home, to provide such valuable information for the members of the association. Although McKenna was to die suddenly in November 1978 while still employed by the association, his contributions to the copyright effort became his legacy, and one that has brought much approbation to SLA in subsequent years.

Among the association’s other efforts with respect to policy and the common good was one in which SLA made a major early contribution and in which the association and its members took great pride. The creation of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) had been debated in Congress. As described in the previous chapter, President Herbert S. White had appeared before the U.S. House of Representatives Select Subcommittee on Education, Committee on Education and Labor in April, 1969, to deliver the association’s endorsement of the bill to establish the Commission. SLA member Catherine D. Scott, head librarian, Bellcomm Inc. Library, Washington DC was appointed to serve as one of the original Commissioners, with her appointment confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July, 1971. Scott, later to be a president of the association, was then re-appointed to a full five-year term, to serve until 1976. In announcing Scott’s appointment and confirmation, SLA noted that the Commission had been established to develop and recommend overall plans for the most effective use of the nation’s educational resources, planning to work with government agencies and the private sector to assure optimum provision of information services throughout the country. Thus it was the Commission’s responsibility to develop and recommend plans that would enable the American people to have adequate library and information services, and in carrying out this responsibility, the Commission was directed to advise the President and the

Congress on the implementation of national policy with respect to libraries and information science.

It was an enormous undertaking, this setting of policy with respect to libraries and information science for the American people, and SLA, as one of those “public and private agencies,” was invited to the table, to work with NCLIS in moving the Commission forward so that it would be enabled to provide the information to the President and Congress that it was empowered to provide. Just five months after Scott’s confirmation, SLA President Efren Gonzalez was called to testify before the Commission. Accompanied by Past President Florine Oltman and Treasurer Janet Rigney, President Gonzalez put before the Commission several issues connected with specialized librarianship: library school curricula, continuing education, research (especially “in areas of particular need for special librarianship”), information networks, and recruitment for specialized librarianship.

SLA’s delegation then reversed the usual procedures for testimony at such hearings and asked several questions of the Commission which Dr. Frederick Burkhardt, Chairman of the Commission, answered:

1. *Will there be a statement of specific objectives for Commission activities?* For the present, none other than those stated at the time the Commission was signed into law.
2. *Will these Commission activities be operational or advisory?* Very definitely the Commission intends to be an advisory body.
3. *What is the best means of communication between the Commission and SLA?* No formal mechanism seems desirable because one of the Commissioners and the Commission’s Executive Director are members of SLA and would provide informal lines of communication.
4. *Should there be a regular report of SLA activities to the Commission?* [The Commission] would be happy to be put on [SLA’s] mailing list; the activities of any [SLA] committees which handle [SLA’s] areas of concern could be brought to the Commission’s attention as appropriate.
5. *Should SLA develop specific recommendations for consideration by the Commission?* By all means. The Commission would be anxious to hear such recommendations.
6. *Will the Commission consider a project assignment to SLA?* It is too early to tell but if SLA was the best organization to do certain work, the Commission would attempt to arrange such an assignment.

Within two years, the Commission had prepared for release the draft of its plan for America’s libraries. Members of SLA were invited to submit comments on the proposed program, which the document described as “an overview of a new program of federal and state support for libraries and information services now in process of development by the National Commission,” and with libraries and

· Burkhardt was referring to Members Catherine D. Scott and Alphonse F. Trezza.

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Comment [1]: First Name?

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Comment [2]: This isn’t clear – doesn’t really make sense – a number is needed between “because” and “of” – was Kitty the only member?

information centers being defined as “a national knowledge resource to be sustained and integrated for all citizens to use in the course of their personal and economic pursuits.” The document further advised the SLA membership that “the Commission also believes the time has come to develop a national network of libraries and information centers as a total system rather than as a collection of separate parts.”

As expected, SLA’s membership and the association’s leaders were quick to respond. While the proposal was recognized as “focusing attention on the question of how to improve library service across the nation,” the reactions of those working in specialized librarianship were not totally supportive. Some questioned the basic assumptions (for example, that citizens “expect realistic and convenient access to library resources”—in many situations in which special libraries have been created particularly to provide job-related information, employees fail to use the library). Others wondered how funding “could be provided from tax monies for corporate/business libraries unable to afford the needed connective links (hardware, training, line costs, etc.).” Of greatest concern and not unexpected was the role of specialized libraries, “especially those unconnected with government at any level.” President Gonzalez lamented that “not stated or even implied in the proposal is the role of special libraries in such a national plan.”

The role of the private sector was not addressed in the document, causing much concern among SLA’s members (since so many of them worked in specialized libraries in exactly those circumstances). As one respondent put it, “Emphasis is on cooperation and a partnership between the federal government and state and local governments in both program planning and program execution, not on the private sector.” Past-President Elizabeth Reuters Usher, employed in the humanities (she was the Chief Librarian at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), also asked about the private sector: “Is it realistic to assume that profit-making companies will be willing to share their research with competitors? Is it realistic to believe that an invaluable research collection could remain intact if forced to resource sharing ... by having access through loans?”

Noting that one sentence of the proposal stated that “Federal legislation would adopt ... equal accessibility of the nation’s libraries and information centers,” Usher asked, “What does this statement propose? That the government take over all libraries and *force* all libraries including those attached to private research institutions, profit-making companies, etc. to open their doors to anyone and everyone?”

That the association was heard became clear during the next several months, as SLA’s leaders and representatives from the Commission worked together to incorporate—or at least acknowledge—the concerns of specialized librarianship. In January 1974, the association published its statement on the draft proposal, agreeing that “there is an urgent need in the United States for a national program for library and information service which will include a national network of libraries and information-producing units.” In its statement, SLA urged the Commission to “press forward for the immediate establishment of an independent agency in the federal government, a federal library agency, which can concentrate its total efforts toward this goal,” and recommended that the agency be charged with the responsibility to

undertake a variety of actions, all chosen to enable society to reap the benefits of “a total systems approach of a national program (not only a national network) of library and information service, with the long-range goal of the establishment of a national information utility.”

SLA’s statement made it clear that if the association were to support the Commission’s national plan, it would be required to include specialized librarianship: “Developing a national network plan is of utmost urgency. The Association is emphatic in its assertion, however, that such a network must be flexible enough to accommodate a *wide range of system configurations* so that it can facilitate participation by *all* kinds of libraries and information units, provide for varying kinds and levels of library and information service, and meet the needs of many differing individual user communities.”

The association’s leadership was so committed to the concept of the plan that it even articulated its own way around the problems that had been identified, in one case providing a specific example:

The association is well aware of certain frequently mentioned ‘barriers’ to network participation by special libraries. At the same time it does not recognize these as barriers; only deterrents or problems which can be resolved by appropriate administrative procedures.

One example of such a deterrent, often cited, is that proprietary and government classified information make up a portion of the collections of libraries of industry and government. For network purposes, this data would very simply not be entered into the joint system data base, but it is only fair to point out that even this information is available to ‘outsiders’ who possess the required ‘need-to-know.’

As the decade ended, and well into the 1980s, the association’s commitment to the work of the Commission was clearly evident. Among its earliest active participants, the Commission had in addition to Commissioner Scott such SLA leaders as Edward Strable and William D. Budington, who were responsible for two of the Commission’s earliest publications. Later, at the first White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services—organized by NCLIS—the role of specialized libraries in nationwide networks and cooperative programs was one of three focus issues examined and recommended for further study.

In the lengthy build-up to that conference, held in Washington, DC November 15-17, 1979, the association, working with the library and information science profession at large, was able to bring to the attention of the larger public the role of specialized librarianship in the coming new “information society.” That term was beginning to find adherents, as reported by Nancy M. Viggiano, the editor of the association’s journal, in her introduction to a special issue that described the conference. The

· Viggiano, in introducing the report on the conference for SLA’s membership, commented that “A national discussion of library and information services seems only fitting in this post-industrial period that some have termed the “Information Age.”

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White House Conference was an important event in the seemingly unending quest for establishing library and information science as an acknowledged player in the nation's intellectual life. That librarianship was part of the educational establishment had long been accepted but for many laypersons, whose familiarity with librarianship was built around community or educational experiences, understanding library and information science as a *science* was difficult. The role of the profession in wider intellectual pursuits such as research, scientific discovery, and the like was confusing, at best. It was apparently the goal of those who organized the White House Conference to bring the many and disparate elements associated with librarianship together, to explore mutual concerns and to present a picture of a unified profession to the general public, particularly to those in positions of authority with respect to funding library services. It is difficult to say whether that goal was achieved, but for the many participants, observers, and commentators, the conference provided an opportunity to come together and explore the great diversity that makes up the larger library and information science profession.

One result of the conference, which probably should have been anticipated, was the almost overwhelming "lack of awareness of specialized libraries among the many delegates." As the conference proceeded, Viggiano wrote that specialist librarians found it difficult to make their positions known and that "it would have been helpful if someone had been involved in a lobbying effort ten years or more ago." The different role of specialized librarianship, a role that separated them quite literally from much of the work of traditional librarianship, was clearly evident at this first White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services.

This is not to say that these differences precluded the two types of librarianship from working together to advance the elements of their profession that they shared. With specialist librarians well represented as delegates, the voice of this branch of librarianship was heard in many of the proposed resolutions. And if any of the conference attendees were uncertain of just what constituted a specialized library, they did not have to look far to find out. The Conference Information Center was designed, as described by Marilyn K. Gell, Executive Director, White House Conference Staff, "to show Conference participants what an up-to-date information center can do." The staff of the center was kept busy during the conference, and several members of SLA were among those who staffed the center, including James Arsheim and Kay Collins from Denver, CO, Ron Coplen, New York, NY, and Ruth S. Smith, Dorothy Pollet, and Ruth Perks, Washington, DC. On the last day of the conference, a Joint Congressional Hearing of the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education and the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and the Humanities convened to hear speakers testify about each of the conference themes, with SLA member David E. King, Illinois Chapter President, speaking on "Library and Information Services for Business and the Professions." According to Viggiano's report of the conference, King presented a plea to the assembled Congressional leaders "for including special libraries and information centers serving business and the professions as equal partners with other types of libraries in the development of a national information policy which will lead to a national information program of

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Comment [4]: Confirm spelling of last name and his location at the time (I thought he was in Northern Virginia).

services.... We have so much of value to contribute.... We are eager to participate with you in improving library and information services.”

When the conference ended and delegates returned to the workplace, what was the result? What were librarians and information professionals—particularly specialist librarians—expected to do as a result of the White House Conference in the waning days of the decade? What had been accomplished? And what was expected?

The answers to those questions depended on the expectations delegates took into the conference. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that, in retrospect, Virginia Matthews (in a description of the conference and its results, published in 2004 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the conference) noted that “the resolutions called for changes of many kinds and clearly set some goals: to reshape library and information services to serve all the people in more useful ways, to maintain local control of these services, and to require more accountability from the institutions that provide the services.” And while most of the resolutions (*i.e.*, literacy development, improved access for minorities and other underserved populations, libraries as both community centers and information agencies) were notably not specifically related to the work of specialized librarianship, some resolutions were of interest to SLA’s members, even if remotely, and, as citizens, no member could object to resolutions supporting libraries as essential to civilized society and emphasizing the importance of linking libraries to new technologies.

Among SLA leaders who served as delegates to the conference, several prepared “commentaries” for publication and distribution to the membership, describing the wide variety of topics discussed at the meeting. So many ideas were taken up at the conference that it is perhaps a little confusing and perhaps not even particularly useful to attempt to identify all the concerns put forward. In terms of the practical realities of day-to-day work in the nation’s specialized libraries, though, many delegates were left with the feeling of wanting more, of needing more guidance before additional activities could be undertaken. This was particularly true for SLA members employed in the private sector. Whether there was value for specialized librarianship in having its practitioners participate in the conference is at this point in time only a matter of speculation, but from an official perspective, specialized librarianship was at least acknowledged and represented. The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, in a later summary of its activities describing its early years, reported that among the “highlights” of its history was its organization and management of the conference, “resulting in the development of task forces to examine such issues as community information and referral services, library and information services for cultural minorities, and the role of the special library in nationwide networks and cooperative programs.”

Seeking to participate at policy levels, and with such policy issues being brought to the attention of SLA’s members, it is not surprising that the association was to take on other activist roles, most notably in the area of women’s rights. America in the 1970s was wrestling with the Equal Rights Amendment, a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution that would guarantee that equal rights would “not be denied or abridged by the United States on account of sex.” The association, the

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Comment [5]: Were these published in that special issue of *Special Libraries* referred to above?

majority of whose members were female, sought the guidance of its members and leaders in responding to the conditions that were being attached to the enactment of the amendment. At the 1978 winter meeting of the association, a resolution to hold future meetings only in states which had ratified the amendment or passed statewide similar legislation was introduced, with the result that the leadership of the association and its chapter leaders agreed to “assess the thinking of their respective Chapter members and to return to the June 1978 Conference in Kansas City to make a final decision.”

In the ensuing discussions, the rationale behind the call for the resolution was described in a number of documents and mailings, including a brief statement in *Special Libraries* from the leaders of four chapters. “The disparity between salaries for female and male special librarians,” they wrote, “has only slightly diminished since the first SLA salary survey took note of such differences. Our low salary scales and low status cannot be separated from the ‘woman’s work’ stigma librarianship carries even when it is called information science. As female librarians achieve legal equality, they will be raising the financial and professional status for all librarians, male and female. The influence of such benefits would extend to our international members as well.”

Whether a professional association should take a stand on political issues was naturally one of the questions being raised, and it was answered in the same statement as chapter leaders indicated that “defining and dealing with issues that impinge on the growth and development of its members is the obligation of Special Libraries Association as it is the obligation of any professional association. . . . Is a professional organization the appropriate arena to discuss any national political issue? Can we separate our professional lives from a debate which has the potential to result in greater remuneration, better career opportunities, and higher recognition for all librarians?”

The statement continued by noting that SLA’s history included involvement in a number of political issues, most specifically in supporting civil rights for minority librarians since the 1940s but also including attention to “assuring special library participation in the forthcoming White House Conference on Library and Information Services,” the association’s 1973 resolution opposing censorship, and SLA’s 1968 communication to President Lyndon B. Johnson protesting the Russian occupation of the National Library of Czechoslovakia. Of particular mention was SLA’s many years of effort with copyright and advocating the right of libraries to photocopy materials under appropriate circumstances. The statement continued, “acknowledgment that SLA does indeed involve itself in issues of public policy is given in its Extra-Association Relations Policy,” and it was noted that the theme of the 1979 Annual Conference had already been chosen and was to be “Politics and Economics—the Impact on Libraries.”

President Shirley Echelman, seeking to ensure that all points of view were fairly represented to the membership, wrote in the same issue of *Special Libraries* about “Some Issues Relating to SLA and ERA.” Noting the decision to refer discussion to the members of the association in their chapters, Echelman made it clear that the

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Comment [6]: Confirm this statistic.

members of the association had an opportunity and, if they chose to exercise it, a responsibility to express their opinions: "The result of this referral decision is that each of you is being asked to advise the Board, through your individual chapter president, on what action you think would be in the best interest of the Association."

Having introduced the subject, Echelman stated the reason behind her message: "I do not need to elaborate here on the intensity with which the Equal Rights Amendment is being debated in the United States at present. However, as you consider the issue in your Chapter meetings, you should keep in mind that the question before you is *not* whether you support or oppose the ratification of ERA, but whether Special Libraries Association, as a professional organization, should support ERA by the *economic action* of meeting only in states which have ratified or passed their own equivalent legislation."

Determined to present a fair case to the membership, Echelman then described four major issues that had been raised in opposition to the association's taking the proposed action. She asked if ERA is "so closely related" to the association's organizational objectives that action is appropriate. She raised the question of SLA's international role, noting that some 700 members at the time were not citizens of the United States and some of them "have objected strongly to our involvement in what they see as a non-library related American political issue." Then there was the issue of the association's contractual obligations with hotels and convention bureaus, as organizations that had already boycotted selected cities were increasingly having breach of contract proceedings brought against them. A final issue had to do with the association's 501 (c) (3) status under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whether that status might be jeopardized: "A boycott of certain sites may place SLA at legal risk. Members must decide whether the nature of the issue overrides the possible hazard and whether they want the Association to accept the risk." Concluding her comments, which were necessarily carefully objective, Echelman noted that "Central to the issues involved in this debate is the growing tendency of citizens to express their individual political and moral concerns through group action rather than individual action. Whether SLA members find this tendency appropriate and necessary in this case is the question before each of us."

The result of the debate was determined by a vote of the membership of the association approving the ERA boycott motion. The announcement of the election results was published for the membership in January 1978, which notified the membership that "the Association will hold no Meetings or Conferences in states that have not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, or in states that have not passed their own statewide equal rights legislation," with the motion affecting the locations of meetings scheduled after 1980 and Conferences scheduled after 1984 "because of legally binding contracts already in place for all earlier meetings." Of particular interest was the response of the membership in the voting: "The SLA Bylaws require that at least 40% of those eligible to vote must return their ballots for the poll

to be valid. Of the 10,600 members voting, 51% returned ballots. Approximately 69% of these ballots were in favor of the motion.”¹

Within the association, there were changes—great and small—that put the membership on notice that the 1970s would not be a decade to be dismissed lightly. An early effort was a look at the structure of the association, taken by a special committee appointed in June 1969. Probably growing out of President Sewell’s Goals for 1970 Committee of the early 1960s, this group was charged to study the current structure of the association “with an eye toward identifying problem areas and recommending possible methods to improve the overall structure.” The committee’s report, published in March 1971, carefully described the association’s structure and identified the lines of communication among SLA’s various units and sub-units. These lines of communication, not so difficult to observe but apparently thought to be difficult by some of the membership, were given much consideration.

It was in dealing with this perceived lack of communication and the rather loose relationships among the various units and sub-units that we see the first glimpses of what would become SLA’s bicameral representative structure, the Chapter Cabinet and the Division Cabinet. One review body suggested a somewhat tighter but more responsive structure: “One thought is to have a Chapter Council whose function would be similar to that of the present Advisory Council; namely, to keep a finger on the pulse of the entire membership and thereby reflect the consensus of the entire membership on Association and organization plans, policies, programs, and problems. There would also be a Division Council whose function would be to stimulate better Conference programs, assist with Conference programming, and supply program assistance to Divisions, Chapters, or other groups requesting it.” These considerations were successfully received, and in 1974 a major structural initiative was implemented after association members approved a bylaws change creating the Chapter and Division Cabinet Chairs and Chairs-Elect as directors, replacing the Chapter and Division Liaison Officers. The first such directors were elected in 1974.

Obviously growing out of these and similar concerns, long-range planning for the association—eventually to evolve semantically into strategic planning—began to be considered on a more formal basis in the decade of the 1970s. As she moved into her presidency in the autumn of 1975, Miriam H. Tees asked the Board of Directors “to put its collective mind to some long-range planning,” and its long-range interests were “boiled down” to four areas: education, SLA’s role as a leader in the community, librarianship, and the administration of SLA. Commenting that she wanted to establish priorities to guide the board in its planning and budgeting, Tees

¹ As it turned out, the association’s activities with respect to the Equal Rights Amendment was not the only social issue on which SLA took a stand. In 1973, the association suspended its membership in FID, the International Federation for Documentation (later the International Federation for Information and Documentation). SLA’s leaders agreed to boycott FID “until the South African National Representative to FID is either withdrawn or represents a government no longer espousing a policy of apartheid,” an action which would prove to have an effect on the association’s future activities in FID.

sought and obtained guidance from her colleagues, who chose continuing education as their first priority. Tees announced that the association expected to employ an “education coordinator” at the Association Office “who will plan and run continuing education workshops, seminars, and courses, not only once a year in connection with our annual Conferences, but in many centers throughout the year.” A committee was established, and it was the board’s intention that the program “will be self-financing so that we can turn our attention and our funds to further matters.”

Another subject which continued to resonate with the association’s leadership was SLA’s role in the international library and information science community. By the end of the decade SLA’s services to its membership were reflecting that resonance, as the association’s 70th Annual Conference, to be held in Honolulu HI, was designated the First Worldwide Conference on Special Libraries, with the Special Libraries Association of Japan (Sentokyo) and the Special Libraries Division of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) signing on as “co-participating organizations.”

As it turned out, interestingly enough, for the next two decades, SLA’s institutional interest in information science and management at the international level seemed to relate as much to the needs of individual members (and that of their parent institutions) as to any focused attention by the organization’s leaders. SLA members working in the larger research and development organizations, in large pharmaceutical companies, or in the large financial institutions referred to and took advantage of international connections—made through SLA or not. On the other hand, those SLA members working in smaller organizations with information requirements that were successfully met within a smaller service sphere were not particularly interested (again, except from a sort of natural intellectual curiosity) in what was going on in other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, in the 1970s it began to be apparent that the emphasis on worldwide information exchange was being taken up on a larger scale, both throughout society and particularly in the academic, scientific, and technical research communities. Several of SLA’s presidents—people who were also scientists, like Winifred Sewell, Alleen Thompson, and Frank E. McKenna (who, as noted, had also served as SLA’s Executive Director from 1970 until his death in 1978) greatly influenced the association’s thinking about its role as an international organization. They clearly recognized and identified the membership benefits that could be realized through a greater international presence, and specific efforts were made to acquire such a presence. By 1972, the association was ready to establish international chapters, and that year both the European Chapter and the Hawaiian-Pacific Chapter came into existence.

By the time planning was begun for the 1979 Annual Conference, serious attention was being paid to SLA’s international interests, and it was a natural next step to move forward with a “worldwide” conference which, as noted, the 1979 Annual Conference held in Honolulu was to be. Much of the organizational effort for the conference had been undertaken by McKenna and the association staff, and continued—as did all other operational functions for the SLA office—under the

exceptional leadership of Richard Griffiths. At the same time, during the difficult period following McKenna's death, association matters were ably handled by Past-President Shirley Echelman, President Vivian D. Hewitt, and President-Elect Joseph M. Dagnese. As the conference approached, they all worked hard to bring together knowledge workers (the term Peter F. Drucker had coined in 1959), information scientists, and specialist librarians from all over the world. SLA was now staking its claim in the international community of information professionals.

As it turned out, it was at that Honolulu meeting that Dr. David R. Bender, McKenna's successor, had his introduction to association leaders and was hired as SLA's tenth executive director, coming to the position on July 30, 1979 and providing management leadership for 22 years. If there was any single characteristic of Bender's tenure—as was clearly established in the many tributes and activities associated with his retirement in 2001—it was that he early on identified SLA's further leadership potential in the international information services community. In this particular area, Bender was able to use his influence and his role in the profession to guide the association, sometimes subtly and sometimes less so. Of course Bender did not take SLA into a stronger international position all by himself, and he would be embarrassed to have such an assertion made about his work. Nevertheless, it is clear that by working with the association's leaders, by understanding its organizational structure, and by identifying those knowledge workers in other parts of the world who would benefit from an affiliation with SLA and who desired such an affiliation, Bender was able to provide strong leadership and propose initiatives that would not have been possible if he had not been in a position to point the association in this direction.

As for the association's services to its members, a number of new approaches to long-standing problems were put forward. For example, performance reviews and the evaluation of specialist librarians as a class of professional workers was—possibly for the first time—established as a management technique for which the leaders of the parent organization would require guidance from the librarian. Recognizing the difficulty of evaluating these employees, since most specialist librarians reported to managers who do not come from a library or information-focused background, Bess P. Walford put forward a program that was intended to ease the process. Noting that “before the performance of a professional special librarian can be rated, one first has to establish what that particular library's responsibilities are in relation to the objectives of the organization to be served.” Walford suggested that the relationship between the company's objectives for its library had to be defined in terms of its own organization and goals. Planning, relations between staff and management, staff relations with users, and the personal characteristics of the specialist librarian and other library staff were all described as essential elements to be identified and built upon before the parent organization is ready to evaluate the staff of its specialized library.

As was the case in every era of SLA's history, the association itself was the focus of much activity, as members and leaders tried, yet again, to codify the role of SLA in their professional lives and in the larger library and information science community.

Continuing education for librarians was a frequent topic of discussion and planning, perhaps reflecting President Tees's recommendation for codifying the subject as one of the critical priorities the association needed to address. In its attempts to keep current with whatever thinking was being done in other branches of librarianship, SLA's leaders reported to its members what was going on, often without recognizing that the specific needs of specialized librarianship were sometimes at odds with those of traditional or "classical" librarianship. For example, in December 1973 SLA published the position paper on continuing library education of AALS (the American Association of Library Schools, later ALISE, or the Association for Library and Information Science Education). Seeking to persuade all librarians to "share and agree on some fundamental ideas as to what constitutes a practical and feasible plan of continuing library education," the paper—excellent in many respects—put forward a framework for continuing education that would meet the needs of all librarians. It did not, however, give attention to the special requirements for employment success in a specialized library, and it sadly was not published with any accompanying qualifying statement from the association to note that specialized librarianship had special requirements. The accompanying article, oddly enough, was the ACRL (Association of College and Research Libraries) Joint Statement on Faculty Status of College and University Librarians, a noble endeavor but one that had little relationship to the members of SLA except those who were employed in academic institutions and who happened to be interested in or were concerned about faculty status.

With respect to the management of the association, several important changes took place during the decade of the 1970s. Provisional chapters and divisions were authorized for the first time, establishing a mechanism for interested parties to have a "trial run" to determine if there was sufficient interest for these groups to be formally assumed into the larger association and sustained. The association employed its first professional librarian for the Association Office. Much planning centered around the upcoming 75th Annual Conference—under the chairmanship of Fred Roper—and the appointment of the association's 75th Anniversary Committee—to be chaired by Robert Krupp—to organize the celebration scheduled for New York for 1984. Conference registration opportunities and professional development programs at the conferences were given a boost at the end of the decade, when reciprocal member registration rates were negotiated with both ARLIS/NA (the Art Libraries Society of North America) and with ASIS (the American Society for Information Science). These negotiated reciprocal arrangements were later expanded to include several other organizations, but the real advantage to members was demonstrated at the 1979 conference, when joint continuing education programs were offered with both ASIS and with the Medical Library Association.

These enhancements in the association's professional development and continuing education programs were to be expected, for (as has been noted) continuing education was now a subject of ongoing interest with both the members and the leadership of the association. By 1975, when President Tees identified education as one of her recommended critical priorities, it had become clear that more focus was

needed in this area, and that the Education Committee could not organize and implement all the activities that were required for the growing organization. A year later, a test program of Regional Continuing Education Seminars was initiated with success, and within another year, discussions were held about the employment of a staff member to be responsible for education activities. Two years later, as President Tees had anticipated, the association's Professional Development Department was established and the staff position of Manager, Professional Development, was hired, with Dr. Mary Frances Hoban assuming the position.

As the decade of the 1970s ended, it was clear that major change was impacting society at large. In the delivery of information, knowledge, and strategic learning to their constituent users, SLA's members were finding—not to their surprise—that their work in their libraries' parent organization and the work of their primary professional association was likewise requiring change. They did not always know exactly what changes were expected of them, but they knew that the new decade would present challenges they were not at liberty to ignore. Their commitment to their profession and to SLA demanded no less, and with seventy years of the special libraries idea backing them up, they embraced the new decade.