

## *SLA at 100: Chapter 10 1980-1989*

### *SLA in the Information Age*

[Originally published, in a slightly different format, in *SLA at 100: From Putting Knowledge to Work to Building the Knowledge Culture* (Alexandria VA: SLA, 2009) by Guy St. Clair.]

As a professional discipline with practitioners almost idealistic in their commitment to excellence in service delivery, specialized librarianship was provided with a remarkable opportunity in the 1980s. As populations grew, as science advanced, as seemingly well-established political structures changed and in some cases came to an end, specialized libraries continued to evolve as functional units of critical importance to their parent organizations. Such events as the launch of the first Space Shuttle in 1981 (followed by the Soviet Union's space station Mir five years later), the introduction of IBM's personal computer in 1981 and the Apple Macintosh three years later, the shattering and horrendous human toll of the AIDS crisis, the introduction of glasnost and perestroika in the U.S.S.R., the tensions of the Falklands War, the grief of Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and, finally, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Communism all reinforced the growing awareness of the need for excellence in the management of information, knowledge, and strategic learning. Those who were best prepared to meet this need, specialist librarians and the other information professionals who worked with them had no choice but to take a leading role in what was rapidly becoming known as the "information age."

It was time now to move even more purposefully in dealing with the much-talked-about information "glut" that had been given so much attention in previous decades; and in many cases it was to the members of SLA that the management community turned. These were the people who were (and who remain) best qualified to deal with and respond to the challenges of the information age.

While today's ideas and concepts of the information age seem to have gained wide-ranging acceptance in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, the quest for increased efficiency and effectiveness in the management of information certainly began much earlier. The overall impression one has of the idea of an information age—still being experienced in this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, still being studied, and continuing to be realized throughout all of society—is that it seems destined to go on being part of our lives, as more and better technologies for supporting knowledge services continue to be developed. Now that we know the benefits of successfully managing information, knowledge, and strategic learning, and are able to recognize the critical contributions of the penultimate decade of the last century to the management of information, using "the information age" as a descriptor for the period seems only appropriate. As new developments take us into realms that for most people simply cannot even be imagined, into an age in which the concepts of knowledge services

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· Indeed, it is no coincidence that at this time the fundamentals of knowledge management were beginning to take shape.

describe the time in which we now live and work, the foundations of the information age of the 1980s becomes apparent.

SLA's leaders and members early on demonstrated that the association, as a professional, scientific, and educational organization, had an interest in playing a leading role as society transitioned into this new era of information, knowledge, and strategic learning. And for the most part, the members of the association—and certainly the leadership—understood that for themselves, as information professionals, leadership in information management was a natural role. Indeed, by 1983 SLA had published that “The mission of the Special Libraries Association is to advance the leadership role of its members in putting knowledge to work in the Information Society.” Specialist librarians wanted and expected to participate in this era in which, as described often, the advantages of computerized information transfer would be available to and accessible by the greater lay public. Knowledge workers, including specialist librarians, would be called upon to perform their professional roles in an environment in which important societal benefits, often forecast by idealists and futurists, would lead to the breaking down of societal boundaries, to an increased recognition of the value of diversity among the peoples of the world, and to the realization of social, economic, and cultural advantages through the transparent and non-hierarchical transfer of information. These noble aspirations have yet to be perfectly realized, but even so, there is no doubt that society is better off, as a society, and mankind continues to benefit from the many rewards of the information age.

That age would require a new approach to information management. For some, the new approach would turn out to be off-putting, and many of the association's leaders and members became increasingly concerned with what appeared to be a general ignorance in the larger society about the role of libraries (including specialized libraries) in the new information environment. The most obvious example was the great concern about information technology and its impact on society. Was the coming emphasis on technology something to be addressed by information professionals? Or were the “engineers” going to “win,” as some concerned practitioners feared? Adding to the discussion, questions were also raised about the willingness of practitioners themselves. Was there a lack of initiative on the part of the library and information science profession, in putting itself forward to take on a leadership role in the new information society? After all, as had been thoroughly demonstrated during the famous information wars of the 1960s when specialist librarians and documentalists could not be brought in tune with one another, the specialized library branch of the profession was quite able to resist attempts to move specialized librarianship away from traditional or classical librarianship.

As the decade began, SLA member Alphonse F. Trezza was perhaps the single person who best understood the societal implications of what was happening. As the Executive Director of the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and acknowledged as a respected leader in the profession both because of his position and because of the truly significant role he had played in organizing and leading the 1979 White House Conference on Libraries and Information Services,

Trezza caught the essence of this kind of concern in his report to SLA about the conference. "Everyone 'agrees,'" Trezza wrote, "that we have moved from the industrial society to the information age, but most leaders and decision-makers are not quite sure what that means. If they did [understand], we [in the library and information services field] would not be an underfed, declining species but recognized as an extremely important and basic element in society's program for the future, especially for the next twenty years of the Twentieth Century."

A year later George H. Ginader, just being inaugurated as the association's 62<sup>nd</sup> President, challenged the SLA membership: "You, the membership of the Special Libraries Association, must decide whether we shall continue to remain conservative, traditionally book and print oriented, or whether we shall plunge ahead and get on with the transition to the fully automated, essentially paperless special information center of the future. It is a choice facing all of us, regardless of the size, type, or complexity of our operations. It is my deep-seated feeling that if we do not take full advantage of information technology, do not encompass it and take complete and everlasting control of it fairly soon, we will be the information disadvantaged."

Another three years on, and four years after Trezza had stated his concerns about the role of librarianship in the information age, SLA President Pat Molholt also commented on the unclear relationship between the information age and libraries. Speaking to the association's Washington, D.C. Chapter as SLA approached its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Molholt lamented the fact that specialized librarianship was caught in a "curious" age, "curious because its label, 'The Information Age,' involves our domain so intimately, yet our profession so little." For Molholt, despite "a pervasive and increasing reliance on information, there is no corollary increase in the use of libraries." She admitted that "some special libraries provide exceptions to these generalizations," but even so, "there is real cause for concern."

Despite these reservations, the association did not permit the lack of recognition for the larger library and information science field to hinder its own move forward. As a membership organization, SLA's leaders were determined to identify how the new ways of managing information could be learned by its members and incorporated into the information role they played in the operational functions of their parent organizations. The advent of personal computers was recognized publicly for their impending impact on society when *Time* named the "PC" as the magazine's "Man of the Year" in 1981. The same year, staff and volunteer members were putting together a special issue of the association's journal, to respond to what Guest Editor Irving M. Klemptner was describing as nothing less than a revolution in information processing and organization. "To what extent can information professionals constructively channel the emerging developments in information technology?" Klemptner asked. "To what extent can the SLA membership become adequately informed about current advances and the opportunities and pitfalls involved in adopting this new technology? Which of the newly emerging innovations can be efficiently and economically integrated for the improvement of existing systems and services?"

Guy St Clair 9/2/05 8:21 AM  
Comment [1]: Check date. Think it was 1981 but this needs to be confirmed.

Klempner then noted that although the special issue of the magazine was not planned to celebrate a particular occasion or event, it was significant that 1981 marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Association's Information Technology (née Documentation) Division. "In approving the change of name to Information Technology (ITE)," Klempner wrote, "the SLA Board of Directors in June 1979 reaffirmed the Division's objectives to encompass 'the planning, development, and practical application of existing new technologies and systems for the processing and control of information in any subject discipline and in any form....'"

This special issue was not a timid response to the challenges of the new information age. The topics of the issue's several articles took on "big-picture" subjects, including a look at the "socio-political" and psychological impacts of information technology, at how specialized libraries might use databases and electronic mail, at how users evaluate online search service in a corporate environment, at the role of facsimile and office automation for libraries, at standards for service delivery (as well as technical standards), at issues of personal responsibility with respect to automation, and ending with an article asking quite seriously, "Is There a Future for the End User in Online Bibliographic Searching?"

Within the operational structure of the association, advances in information management were not always enthusiastically embraced (reflecting the case throughout society at large), and there were sometimes setbacks as this important organization for information professionals attempted to move into the information age. One such situation was recorded in the Board Minutes of June, 1982, which described the defeat of an attempt to bring the association's OnTyme II electronic mail system for the transaction of association business to its next level. The program had been initiated the previous year, and had been deemed successful, but expanding the system was problematic. A number of board members were concerned that such expansion could lead to "the uncontrolled addition of SLA units as participants" in this electronic system of communication.

By later the same year, it was clear that the relationship between the evolving information industry and specialized librarianship called for a closer look. Another special issue of *Special Libraries* was prepared for association members, this one edited by Anne P. Mintz and focusing on the future of the information industry and the role of specialist librarians in that future. Again, a broad range of topics brought needed information to the members of the association. Articles in this special issue looked at copyright issues for non-print information, the growing numbers of databases, a discussion of searchers' perceptions about database vendors, and the organizational management structure with respect to specialized libraries and information technology (asking, as one title put it, "who should be in charge?").

Not surprisingly, management became a central topic of discussion within the association. Raising awareness about the place of specialist librarians as managers in the organizational sphere and describing their work in these new terms became important issues for SLA. It became necessary to make sure that not only was John Cotton Dana's concept of the specialized library understood within the library and information science profession itself, but among the general management

community and the public as well. With regard to bringing an understanding of the benefits of specialized librarianship to the larger management community, Janet L. Ahrensfield and Elin Christianson argued that one of the goals of the association should be the creation of new specialized libraries, with SLA actively promoting to “management decision-makers” the message that specialized libraries can play an important role in the achievement of organizational success. “The need for information, for better information resources, and for organization and coordination of materials—all traditional selling points—are generally accepted within the organization,” Ahrensfield and Christianson wrote, noting that, “the message that needs to be conveyed [from the association] centers on improving management’s perceptions of the role and status of the library in the organization and on the librarian as a professional information specialist. . . .” It was a challenge that SLA’s members seemed to welcome, as the demands of the information age asked more of them than simply providing information. As they moved into the management arena in their organizations, specialist librarians were eager to be managers and to take their place with those who had responsibility for managing the organization’s other assets. If financial resources, human resources, sales and marketing, public relations, executive services, operational planning, and research were the responsibility of employees with management expertise, should not the organization’s information and intellectual resources be so managed as well?

It was not an easy question to answer. If there was a need in the developing information age for specialist librarians with management skills, the other side of the coin was that many people working in the field had not been particularly encouraged to undertake and master such skills. For the most part, librarianship as an academic discipline did not emphasize the role of management and when it was considered, the emphasis was usually on administrative principles formulated for public and academic librarians, an emphasis that was not always relevant in the management of the specialized library. Yet the challenges of the information age and the unique responsibilities of this separate branch of the library and information science profession called for managers, and the association underwent a subtle but dramatic change as it sought to identify how best to meet this need. Since many of the associations’ members had not received management education as they prepared for their careers, those who were required to manage had to learn management skills. While the large majority of specialist librarians were qualified through the achievement of a graduate degree in library and information science, the route to that qualification lay in participation in graduate programs designed for all librarians. Generally speaking, librarianship was a profession that eschewed Dana’s practical and utilitarian knowledge services delivery, but specialized librarianship was built on exactly that foundation. Each member of the association was employed to provide information that supported the specific mission of the employing organization. As the careers of SLA’s information professionals advanced, the more general management courses offered in graduate library and information science programs

(when they were offered) were less and less useful to this particular group of graduates.

A result of this situation was that the practice of management in and of itself, and with specific applications to the management of a specialized library, became an underlying theme of the association in the 1980s. This was a different approach from the association's direction and services for its membership in the past. Members—especially those who were employed as department heads and others in similar positions—had the new sense that they might and probably could have stronger leadership roles to play in their parent organizations. This new thinking became an accepted and established element of the association's structure, and the association's activities reflected it. For example, in the very first issue of SLA's journal in the new decade, published in January, 1980, James H. Schwartz considered the subject of what today is referred to as “benchmarking”—now considered a perfectly reasonable management methodology but in 1980 something of a new approach—and described “managerial, staff, user, and organizational” factors to be considered in comparing specialized libraries. Schwartz was recommending a new approach, one that made much sense to specialist librarians seeking to define and perform their intellectual support role in the parent organization: “When comparing special libraries in order to measure performance,” Schwartz wrote, “management may be more comfortable comparing the library with other units in the same organization, such as accounting or personnel departments that provide information services and support the making of decisions.” Anticipating the later enthusiasm for benchmarking, which was to become extremely popular in the specialized library management community later in the decade, and particularly in the 1990s, Schwartz's approach was obviously one that resonated with the managers of specialized libraries in the early 1980s.

In a paper on a related topic, in the same issue of *Special Libraries*, John Kok and Edward G. Strable reported on their study of 23 specialist librarians in the business and advertising sectors who had moved into senior management positions in their organizations. Kok and Strable described “the external and personal factors that influenced the appointment, and the effects of the appointment both on their professional and personal lives and on their libraries and information centers,” clearly seeking to encourage their colleagues in the association's membership to benefit from the experiences of others' success. The paper advocated a strong relationship between the library manager and organizational management, a theme that would be heard often throughout the 1980s as specialist librarians came to recognize that their functional role in the organization was built around that relationship.

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· As a result, while the specialist librarians of the 1980s were not about to stop calling themselves “librarians,” many SLA members began to see themselves as managers of a special library (or, in many cases, of an information center, as that designation took hold in many of the members' parent organizations). Ultimately, more specific steps were taken in this direction, culminating a generation later with the adoption of the term “information professional” to designate these knowledge workers. By then—as noted in the association's strategic plan of 2001—the market for whom the services of the association were designed and offered included but was not limited to specialist librarians.

The same year, Strable, writing in a journal for the larger library profession, bravely stepped forward to articulate the distinctions between specialized librarianship and other forms of professional practice within the discipline:

- Special libraries can be difficult to find—most are not visible to the general public.
- Most special libraries deal with a single subject or related group of subjects. The special library is the library of the organization, most often the only library, and serves all information needs.
- The scope of the special library's collection and service is determined by the objectives of the parent organization.
- Special libraries are usually found in organizations whose objectives are not primarily a library objective.
- Special libraries serve different kinds of clientele—almost never used by “everybody”—populated by user groups who have a work relationship with the organization which maintains the library.
- Special librarians—like their users—are frequently specialists.
- Special libraries tend to be comparatively small, often one-person. They also frequently have small user groups.
- A good number of special libraries are supported by private and not public funds. They spring from and are much a part of a competitive capitalistic system.
- Special libraries are characterized by risk—risk of failure is always present in business and industry, in associations and societies, and in the professions. Special libraries can be dissolved because they cost too much and don't bring in enough of a benefit to the sponsoring organization.

In an article published just three months later, Charles K. Bauer even went so far as to suggest a dramatic new approach to the information professional's role in the organization, thus making it clear that quality management was to be the focus of specialized librarianship in the new decade. For Bauer, the library manager was not only required to provide information services for clients (usually internal but not always); the work also necessitated success in the particular skill of “managing management,” a skill Bauer called “essential” in managing a company's library or information center. “To foster an effective, dynamic environment for the management of an information center,” Bauer wrote, “the manager must know how to develop and inspire a dedicated, experienced professional staff, and he must know how to gain and secure the wholehearted support of his total clientele. This support must come from all levels of management, starting with the company president and ranging down through subordinate officials.”

Following these leads, other concerned individuals began to attempt to articulate the differences between specialized librarianship and traditional librarianship and, as it

turned out, it was during the decade of the 1980s that specialist librarians began to recognize openly that they (and the professional contributions they made) were different from that of other librarians. As noted earlier, past president Elizabeth Ferguson and soon-to-be president Emily Mobley wrote an important book, published in 1984 that clearly presented this distinction for those who chose to listen: “A special library,” Ferguson and Mobley wrote, “is characteristically a unit or department of an organization primarily devoted to other than library or educational purposes. A special librarian is first an employee, a staff member of the parent organization, and second, a librarian. ‘Special’ really means library service specialized or geared to the interests of the organization and to the information needs of its personnel.”

Such “special-ness” required of its practitioners a special level of service delivery, a level that some in the larger library and information science profession found attractive. In fact, during the 1980s there were leaders in other types of library work who advocated that more attention be paid to the concepts of service delivery as practiced by specialist librarians.

In their compilation of opinions from the profession’s leaders about the future of the library profession, Donald E. Riggs and Gordon A. Sabine found the remarks of Joseph A. Rosenthal particularly appropriate:

- Librarians will become more like special librarians. They will deal more in information and less in simply saying, “Here’s the bibliographic apparatus; it’s up to you to find out which things you want.” In certain situations, they may come to function more as part of a research team....
- There will be different protocols for accessing data.... Librarians will be kept busy trying to translate those protocols into simpler language for the researcher and trying to train people to use, to access, these different spheres of information.
- The better librarians are at doing this, the more their services are going to be in demand. So to the extent that we and our successors are good, we will be building demand for our services.

How that demand would be built depended greatly on the perceived role of the specialized libraries, the products, services, and consultations they delivered, and the role of specialist library professionals in the organizational environment. By the mid-1980s, the pursuit of excellence (in the phrase of the day, thanks to Tom Peters), quality management, and change management had become important topics and were being emphasized in the management community. The perceived role of specialized libraries would be characterized in those terms.

Two of the association’s presidents made that new attention to quality management the focus of their terms of office. Frank Spaulding made it clear, in his inaugural address in June, 1986, that change would be required, if the association and its members were to be recognized for the valuable work that they did for their employing organizations. Noting that “corporate management is viewing information

Guy St Clair 7/30/07 2:55 PM

**Comment [2]:** This needs to be clarified. My presidential chapter speech credits this to Joseph Rosenthal, but I believe it was quoted in Riggs’ book (which we need to locate).

in a different way today,” he said that “management sees the role information plays in a different light: Information is integral. The right amount of the right kind of information, at the right time, can have a direct influence on profit and loss.”

It all added up, for Spaulding, to a remarkable opportunity for SLA’s members. He announced the appointment of a special study group, the President’s Task Force on the Value of the Information Professional, chaired by James Matarazzo, Associate Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons College, Boston. Thanks to Spaulding’s leadership, the idea of studying and promoting the value of the information professional became a major rallying point for specialist librarians for the remainder of the decade, and the task force deserves much credit for its work. Matarazzo was the ideal leader for the task, and it was through his efforts that this important task force, whose members were Miriam A. Drake, Helen Manning, Ann W. Talcott, James B. Tchobanoff, and Allen B. Veaner, was able to provide the stimulating and provocative report that they submitted to the association’s Board of Directors.

What did they find? And what were the recommendations of the President’s Task Force on the Value of the Information Professional? Beginning with the assertion that “the information professional must be prepared to prove the value of his or her services to the corporation,” the task force studied three possible approaches: “measuring time saved, determining actual monetary savings/gains, and providing qualitative, anecdotal evidence of value.” Publishing “clear and compelling evidence” of the value of the information professional to business (including reference to specific organizations such as Georgia Tech and Texas Instruments where quantifiable evidence was available), the task force recommended that further research, building on their work, be undertaken. The recommendation was taken up in a variety of studies, documents, and publications from the association over the next few years, and the value of the information professional as a subject of research continued to be of importance to SLA.

Following Spaulding as President, Emily Mobley, too, was committed to enhancing and strengthening the perception of value of the information professional. This was now an issue of critical and enduring importance to the association and its members. Mobley appointed her own study group, one that would take the results of Spaulding’s task force and work with it in terms of the image of the information professional. “And when I say image,” Mobley said, “I’m not only referring to the perception by the general public, but also by our corporate peers and institutions we serve and who serve us. ... I’m talking about correctly representing the intelligence, dedication, capabilities, qualities of leadership and management skills that we possess, in addition to our basic competencies, and our knowledge about information resources and technology.”

Both Spaulding’s and Mobley’s task forces addressed serious management-related issues, reflecting for the profession a tendency that was taking place in the management of the association itself. Until now, many of the association’s leaders, including some who had held important management positions in their parent organizations, tended to see the association as an association of librarians.

Reflecting the pattern that had grown up in many nonprofit and cultural institutions over the decades, there had been a strong predisposition to manage SLA with a more scholarly, academic approach, and to resist the type of management associated with the for-profit sector. This situation was beginning to change, and by the 1980s, modern management practices were being brought into the management of the association, matching SLA's professional leaders in seeking to bring a more modern management focus into the profession.

That effort was considerably strengthened about the time Muriel Regan began to be active on the association's Board of Directors. Regan had worked both as a specialist librarian and had operated her own business, so she had a good understanding of the role of management practice in the organization. Along the way, she had done additional graduate work in management and had acquired an M.B.A. degree. Beginning in 1982, Regan served two terms (three years each) as SLA Treasurer, and she had previously been President of the association's New York Chapter (its largest and the chapter with the largest concentration of members in the corporate and financial sectors, members whose very institutions would seem to require solid management skills in its management employees). Additionally, as Treasurer Regan had chaired the association's Finance Committee, so she knew and understood association management and association finances. Regan carried this expertise into and through her term as SLA's President in 1989-1990 and helped bring about the association's move toward more businesslike management.

Following these presidential leads, the specialized libraries community soon began to give the practice of management serious attention and discussion, so much so that it was being adapted and applied even in those environments in which one would not expect to find a need (or even an interest) in management as a discipline. Issues usually associated with the practice of management, such as strategic planning (still occasionally referred to as "long-range planning" in the early 1980s), financial management, inter-disciplinary interactions, and the strengthening of relationships with senior management began to appear in the writings, conference programs, and continuing education courses designed for specialist librarians working in the arts, in museums and historical societies, in educational institutions, and in the sciences.

One example that was greeted with considerable enthusiasm (but which also raised some eyebrows among a few of the profession's leaders) was an emphasis on management in the newly identified field of one-person librarianship. By the mid-1980s, considerable attention in SLA was being given to programming related to management skills for these information and knowledge professionals with, oddly, the curiously patronizing reaction from some in the field that these knowledge workers could not be managers because such library workers by definition had no authority over other employees. Challenging such reactions with the observation that facilities, materials, measurement of service value, and organizational affiliations require management skills and attention as well, one-person librarians pointed out that good management provides quality in service provision, regardless of the size of the functional unit providing services.

The concept of the one-person library had been acknowledged, so to speak, in the early 1970s, although obviously these librarians had been around ever since there had been libraries. With some pride, the present author will take responsibility for bringing attention to this particular branch of the profession. Asked to lead a round-table discussion on the subject at the 1972 Annual Conference in Boston, this on-again, off-again member (who had finally decided on a steady affiliation with SLA earlier that same year) was surprised to discover the wellspring of interest in the subject. Before the discussion began, as conference organizers prepared to open the meeting room, word came that many SLA members were lined up around the block, all waiting to come inside to talk about one-person libraries. A quick change of venue was arranged, with people still left standing and sitting on the floor, and the discussion took place, leaving the clear impression that information professionals working alone obviously wanted to speak with others who were in the same situation.

Taking off from that unexpectedly dramatic beginning, a number of years of the author's career were devoted to teaching and writing about one-person librarianship, as well as consulting with and mentoring the many one-person librarians with whom he came in contact. Fortuitously, networking with other one-person librarians became an important activity for many SLA members simply because, as the single information professional employed as the only information professional in his or her workplace, the one-person librarian could—through SLA—identify ways for further engagement with peers. By 1989, this interest in one-person librarianship was so strong that the first caucus for the association was created for these information professionals. Calling themselves “solo librarians,” these information professionals had within another year established themselves as an official SLA division.

Still, it was not always easy for the working specialist librarian to prepare for a management position. In their graduate work—for those specialist librarians who prepared for their careers with a graduate degree in library and information science—management topics were addressed minimally. If management as a subject was addressed in the graduate programs, teachings in the subject continued to be geared primarily to public and academic librarianship. While SLA and its leaders realized that an effort had to be made to change this situation (as had been discussed often over the years), they also recognized that success in their efforts was not necessarily preordained, particularly when it came to influencing any change or expansion in the graduate LIS programs to include attention to the education of specialist librarians. So their efforts were combined with the realization—with far-reaching consequences—that SLA would have to take an active role in bringing to its members a program of education that would enable them to manage their specialized libraries and information centers.

SLA's leaders chose three approaches to the problem. Two already in place were given a new focus, the development of an enhanced collection of management materials in the association's own specialized library, and published articles offering management advice in *Special Libraries*. With respect to the former, SLA members were invited not only to access the materials of the library (now called the

Information Resource Center—SLA's IRC) but to contribute copies of their own organizations' management documents. This became a popular benefit of membership for the association's members, as can be seen as early as 1982 in an advertisement in *Special Libraries* in which the list of the types of documents sought for the collection was wide-ranging indeed. Job descriptions, corporate organization charts, user guides & promotional literature, staff manuals, collection development policies, budgets (in percentages), floor plans, and user-survey questionnaires were all welcome, and kept on site to be made available for the association's members as required.

With respect to *Special Libraries*, certainly the proliferation of management articles in the SLA journal reached a new level during the decade, picking up on the need for management information and guidance for the association's members. Articles published included advice about the decision-making process and the development of decision-support systems, marketing and promotion (an ongoing theme), the operational audit (which later evolved into the information/knowledge services audit, now an established management tool for knowledge services managers), performance measures and quality assurance, staffing levels, time management, downsizing and cutback management (and their attendant issue: staff burnout), change management, disaster planning and the library's role in critical infrastructure protection, and vendor relationships. Of particular note, and certainly unique in this particular branch of librarianship, were the many articles on fee-based services, on charging back service delivery to the contracting functional unit or department, and the establishment of the specialized library as a profit center for the larger parent organization or corporation.

A third approach to educating SLA's members about their role as managers emphasized a new focus in SLA's professional development program. Over the course of its history, SLA had made great strides in matching offerings to members' need. Until now, however, there had not been any single driver to focus the development of specific courses and programs. With the development of the information age and its challenges, as well as the lack of management education in academic programs, the association had the opportunity to move forward in meeting its charter of providing educational services to its members and for their benefit. SLA took advantage of that opportunity. By the 1980s, it was becoming evident that the offering of continuing education as one of a variety of services to the membership was not sufficient. It was time for the association to focus on continuing education (soon to be referred to as "professional development," in keeping with trends in the larger business community) as a distinctive and specific benefit in and of itself. As a result, the association's professional staff, working with the members' Education Committee, sought to identify new programs that would meet members' educational needs. Courses continued to be offered at the annual conferences, and in 1982-83 the association inaugurated its Middle Management Institute, designed to bring management education to those specialist librarians who were being promoted beyond the information-delivery role and into management positions in their organizations. In cooperative ventures with divisions, SLA's professional development staff designed courses to enhance subject offerings at the annual

Guy St Clair 12/3/05 10:21 PM

**Comment [3]:** Check previous chapters to review coverage of professional development programming. This is a good place for an overall review, or, if in detail in other chapters (which I don't think it is) for a synopsis of the program to date.

Guy St Clair 8/3/07 5:10 PM

**Comment [4]:** Confirm official name of the committee in the 1980s (look in old *Who's Who*).

conferences. Chapters, too, began to work with the association's professional development staff to bring management training across the association's geographic spectrum. In this last effort, by the end of the decade the association was sending specialized seminar leaders to a large number of chapters, often offering two-day workshops and training programs for such subjects as new technology and its impact in the management of specialized libraries, customer service, financial management, and one-person librarianship.

As an organization chartered to provide educational services, the association soon took pride of place in the number and quality of its offerings and the high level of expertise in its member (and occasional non-member) course instructors. With the advent of Kathy L. Warye to lead SLA's professional development program in 1986, SLA undertook to survey what was needed and provided imaginative and provocative programs for its members. Serious efforts were made to identify and respond to members' needs, and particularly to the expectations of management about the services offered by the organization's specialized library and the information professionals who were responsible for providing the services. Innovation became the order of the day, and while the association's leadership and management staff clearly understood that the membership expected the organization to be "member-driven" (which became the catch-phrase of the decade with respect to the management of SLA), a new level of respect and enhanced authority for the professionalism and talents of association staff began to take shape.

In 1986, SLA initiated a new type of professional development program, the first of what would become an annual State-of-the-Art Institute. Designed to take issues of concern to an audience beyond the library and information science profession, the State-of-the-Art Institutes became an established "day-of-discussion" opportunity. Leaders both inside and outside specialized librarianship met to share their thoughts, hear formal presentations, and consider the societal and business implications of current trends in information management. During the remaining years of the decade, a wide range of important topics were discussed in the State-of-the-Art Institutes. Such subjects as the role of government information, future challenges for the information profession, "Global Ties through Information," and the role of information delivery in economic growth all contributed to the association's growing recognition beyond the immediate library and information science profession.

It was now becoming clear that the association's embrace of the information age was providing benefits for others in the fast-growing information marketplace and workplace as well as for its own members. By 1988, it was time for SLA's professional development staff to bring its own electronic products to the market, and at that year's 79<sup>th</sup> annual conference in Denver, the association introduced its first computer-assisted study program, not unexpectedly a learning tool with a management focus (in this case, though, the focus was on self-management, "Time Management in the Small Library"). New York Chapter member Andrew Berner, an expert on the subject of time management and a frequent workshop leader for the

Guy St Clair 9/9/07 7:57 PM

Comment [5]: Date Kathy Warye came to SLA

association, had been commissioned to prepare the content, which was available both in electronic format and, in a nod to the current need for both electronic and print information, in a printed workbook as well.

As it turned out, a new understanding of the role of management, as a practice and a discipline to be utilized in achieving the organizational mission, was to affect not only the SLA membership's efforts in their own workplace, but the operation and success of the association as well. Coupled with new SLA management leadership (exemplified by the strong management role taken by Bender and the executive team he put together), the association was of course changed. Its transformation into a new and more responsive organization—particularly in terms of what was happening with respect to librarianship, and especially, information science in society at large—would position SLA for the pre-eminent role it would play among professional associations for the next thirty years and into its future.

In addition to a new focus on management as a tool for achieving the organizational mission—both for the association's members in their own workplace and for the association itself—and in addition to moving into its leadership role in the information management arena as the new information age took root, the association's basic governance structure was now to be reviewed and discussed. Along with bringing an awareness of the need for a new focus on association management for SLA, Bender also found himself in a strongly collaborative position with association leadership, as those people struggled to move their professional association from the scholarly and academic focus of the past—with its emphasis on librarianship—to a new focus that would position SLA's members as information leaders in their parent organizations, as those organizations sought to achieve success. This shift of emphasis did not occur overnight and indeed, the elements had been in place for many years. And the shift would not take place without controversy.

The opening volley in this skirmish had been fired early in the decade by James Beaupre Dodd, as he ended his presidency in 1981. Not limiting himself to urging the association to become more active in the establishment of public policy with respect to library and information science, Dodd challenged the association's membership (and, particularly, its leaders) to think about the context in which specialized librarianship functions. He even went so far as to challenge SLA leaders and the membership to look at what the association called itself.

“Changing the context for special libraries is what this association has been about for some time,” Dodd said. “You will notice that I did not say, ‘The changing context for special libraries.’ We have moved from passive to active. We must continue that way. The only productive mode for us as individuals and as an association is one of initiative and innovation.”

Dodd then described some of the initiatives that were occupying the SLA leadership and its members, such as the SLA/NCLIS Task Force on the Role of Special Libraries in Nationwide Networks and Cooperative Programs, the work of the association's Committee on Positive Action Programs for Minority Groups, the

Special Committee on Long Range Planning, the Special Committee on Division Structure (which evolved into a study of the overall organizational structure of the association), the Government Relations Committee, the Women's Caucus (which name looked forward to the development of official caucuses later in the decade), and similar efforts.

With respect to public policy, Dodd was specific about the role SLA should play, and he had early in his presidency urged the association to take on an advocacy role, noting that "while the current political climate and activities do not directly affect the funding of many of our [specialized] libraries, they certainly affect our operations." He then described how special libraries were pioneers in the utilization of the changing technologies of information handling, the association's involvement in copyright law revision, SLA's work with the proposed National Library Act, the revision of Title 44 affecting the Government Printing Office, the proposed National Periodicals Center, and the newly established U.S. Department of Education.

It was a heady mix, and in Dodd's opinion, SLA could not afford not to take an active role in such activities, even to the extent of having the association maintain "an official and permanent presence in Washington and in Ottawa."

Then, warning his audience that some would be uncomfortable with his next remarks, President Dodd ended his presidential year by challenging the association to change its name and to adopt a designation that would more accurately reflect its purpose and goals. He was firm in his convictions, and he made no apologies when he spoke to the membership on this occasion:

I am about to pronounce what is heresy to some of you. Our name not only implies that we are handicapped; our name is a handicap. We have trouble explaining what a special library is and does. Last year I tried to be subtle by telling you that our name brings forth the image of a building: an inanimate, static, ineffectual object that indicates nothing about the intellectual activity of the profession. Today, I say to you bluntly that this organization needs a new name. The word library is an albatross around our necks from which we should cut ourselves free. Attaching special to it does not help because special has very commonly understood meanings. To try to apply that adjective to library is like trying to use grape jelly as an adhesive. It's colorful and it is sweet, but it won't do the job.

Ask yourself. Inquire around. In businesses, in government agencies and elsewhere, what happens when a job title or job description with the term librarian is changed to information specialist, information manager, online searcher, systems analyst, or the like? The salary range goes up; that's what happens.

We have acknowledged for years that the name of the association is grammatically incorrect. This is not an association of libraries; it is an association of librarians.

Guy St Clair 1/30/06 6:43 PM

**Comment [6]:** Check this. This sentence might have had a following phrase.

In the matter of names, we can take direction from the association office, were we now have a data terminal. But do you know what we do not have? SLA does not have a librarian on its staff. Instead, we have a Manager of Information Services. The Association Office Operations Committee and the Board of Directors were very correct in approving that job title.

We have changed from passive to active. We have made changes toward trying to control our own destiny and having a greater impact upon the developments of our profession. Let us make the changes complete. SLA is a strong, healthy, viable, exciting, effective association. Let us give it a name that reflects those qualities rather than obscures them.

While the name of the association had been an issue (and sometimes a very contentious issue) from SLA's earliest days, it was with James Dodd that members and leaders began to recognize that the association's connection with librarianship caused more confusion than was good for this particular branch of the profession. Dodd was not alone, and throughout the following decades the name of the association would be a talking point on many occasions, and a number of SLA's leaders and several other presidents (including this author) came up with suggestions and recommendations:

The failure to change the name of the association should not be taken, however, as indicative of disinclination on the part of SLA's leaders and membership to embrace—or at least consider—change for the association. The foundation of good management is planning, and as the association's leadership and management staff wrestled with the challenges of the new information age and of the forces of larger society with respect to specialized librarianship, long-range, strategic planning was called for. Indeed, that very process was needed at SLA and came to characterize the focus of much of the association's leadership in the decade of the 1980s. In 1981-1982, a Special Committee on Long-Range Planning was established and by the next year, the SLA Board of Directors was prepared to identify association priorities, assumptions for the future, and a mission statement, all of which it endorsed for the development of a long-range plan. As the management of the association continued to be a subject of much interest, Bender found strong support in his efforts to move SLA from a traditional scholarly organization to a professional association focusing on services for members. With the growth of the information age and the evolving recognition of the role of specialist librarians in delivering mission-specific services to their parent institutions and organizations, and with the now-established interest in management in general, it was time for this change. Bender had begun his tenure with an emphasis on growth for the association, and even though one of his first tasks was to take to the membership the news that a dues increase was required, he was clear in stating why such an increase was

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Neither Dodd's initiative nor any of the later ones succeeded, including the most recent attempt, in 2003, when by a narrow margin those in attendance at the association business meeting elected to retain "Special Libraries Association" as the corporate name.

needed, pointing out that the association had no other source of income to carry SLA's fiscal burden and that deficit funding was not an option.

Leading this kind of change was a role Bender was destined to take. Attracted to SLA by the growth potential of the organization and by the opportunity to use his own management and planning background, Bender had come to SLA in 1979 with a clear understanding that "growing the association in all its manifestations" was to be the first order of business. He embraced that challenge enthusiastically and he needed to, for SLA was at a "crossroads," as he put it. There was a severe budget crisis, the sudden death of the former executive director had taken a heavy emotional and operational toll on the association office, and it was a time of important movement in both membership growth and in new ways of thinking about how the membership was changing (including considerable interest in the role of the non-degreed "librarian" often employed to serve as a specialist librarian). At the same time, it was a time of great success in some areas (Frank McKenna's and Efron Gonzalez's leadership in the copyright effort, for example). Bender was brought in as a manager, and despite the fact that among his strong qualifications was a master's degree in library science and wide experience in the library field, he was not hired to work as a librarian doing "administrative" work. He was hired and charged by the board to look at each program's contribution and to ensure that SLA was positioned to make a "larger" contribution to the profession and to society.

Bender recognized the situation, noticing that the association and the membership's expectations of the association were maturing. As a manager, he understood that his role was to work with (and to influence) SLA leadership in positioning the association so that the association—as an association—and its membership would benefit from this splendid maturing. In the process, membership continued to grow, and with that growth increased revenue enabled new and more responsive services for members.

Indeed, membership statistics for the decade were impressive, beginning with 11,107 in 1979 and increasing to 13,053 in 1990. The list of new and enhanced services was also impressive, with the association beginning its Special Program Fund grants activities in 1983-1984. With the increasing membership numbers, the Employment Clearinghouse Service was enlarged to include the Career Advisory Service. Public relations and the role of specialized librarianship in the larger society became a subject of great interest, and the board created a Task Force on Public Relations, with a program assistant hired to provide specific focus.

One thrust of the public relations effort was realized in the early years of the decade as SLA's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1984) approached. As noted earlier, Fred Roper had been appointed to chair the 75<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, to be held in New York. Robert G. Krupp had been appointed to chair the Special Committee on the Association's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary but sadly, Krupp was unable to serve because of serious injuries sustained in an accident, and former president Robert W. Gibson Jr. took on the assignment. Eventually Krupp was able to take up his work again, and he was reappointed to chair the committee, to work with Gibson and the other seven members.

Anniversary observances included the publication of a number of articles about the association, and a commemorative publication—Special Libraries Association 75 Years of Service: Reflections—was distributed to all members. In opening the anniversary conference President Pat Molholt remarked: “This conference marks a milestone in the history of the Association. Participants gather to celebrate seven and a half decades of innovation and progress in the handling of specialized information resources, and to look toward a future where even more rapid progress is within reach, thanks to the application of new technologies.” President Molholt not only encouraged members to “yield to our feelings of pride,” but to recognize the significance of the action of the association’s leaders in “using this anniversary year to redefine our goals and lay out challenging objectives... to redefine our role in the Information Society.”

The celebration continued with two special events, a 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program, the first General Session of the Conference, held on Sunday evening, and the celebratory luncheon, held on the Wednesday following the Annual Meeting. Both were lively, full of good charm, witty repartee from the many leaders and members who shared their memories, and greetings—delivered by various past presidents, under the leadership of Master of Ceremonies Past President Joseph M. Dagnese—from governmental units and from the library and information community. Canadian Past-Presidents Miriam H. Tees (1975-1976) and Gilles Frappier (1973-1974) presented “a potpourri of membership recognitions,” and President Molholt presented the association’s Hall of Fame Awards to Mark H. Baer, William S. Budington, Vivian D. Hewitt, and Robert G. Krupp.

Much conversation and programming at the conference focused on information as a vital tool in the work of the world and its economic value, coinciding with SLA’s embrace of a wider role for itself. President Dodd’s other goal from the early years of the decade, his ambition for strengthening SLA and the specialized library and information science profession through advocacy, was moving forward. By 1984 his enthusiasm for an important role for the association “in Washington and in Ottawa” had provided the impetus for a strong interest in national library policy, and particularly with respect to government information. It was not a totally new interest. The commemorative booklet issued for the association’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary included an essay profiling the history and current status of the association. The description of SLA’s attention to government information issues is impressive, recording the association’s work with copyright legislation, the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, occupational standards for Federal librarians, testimony on the contracting out for library services by various Federal departments and agencies, testimony about changes in the Medicare/Medicaid legislation that would remove the words “medical libraries” from current regulations, and the monitoring of postal legislations and directives. But it was with the association’s Government Relations Committee, initiated during Dodd’s presidency, that the focus on advocacy and public policy became more formalized and thus enabled SLA to take on a role as an important player in the larger government information community. A special issue of Special Libraries focused on government information, and frequent articles in other issues described how government information was a subject to which information

professionals should be giving serious attention. Catherine A. Jones, Lynne McCay, and future SLA President Donna Scheeder, three leaders in the Library of Congress Legislative Research Service, and other committee members worked hard throughout the 1980s and 1990s to ensure that government information was given its due in the profession, ensuring that SLA was taking its leadership role in this new and very important domain.

Not surprisingly, with the burgeoning interest of association leaders and staff in information policy at this higher level, SLA's influence in and connection with international issues continued to grow. In the decade of the 1980s, SLA's international work took on a two-part structure that included both SLA participation with other members of the international library and information science community in the exploration and development of policy with respect to information, as well as the management and dissemination of international information resources. As early as October, 1981, Paul Kaegbein and Renate Sindermann published an article in *Special Libraries* advocating a stronger cooperative role among specialized libraries at the international level. Five years later Paulette Foss George and Donna Schenck-Hamlin described how specialized libraries could serve as a mechanism for establishing relations between citizens of developing countries and those of the industrialized nations.

In exploring and developing information policy at an international level, SLA moved beyond theory when in May, 1988 a team of SLA members went to Moscow in a two-way knowledge exchange about library practices, with a particular emphasis on libraries in support of research in museums. Growing out of a general agreement made between the United States and the USSR signed in Geneva in 1985, the program was organized by Executive Director Bender and Dr. Barry Hennessey of the University of New Hampshire (and at the time Chair of SLA's Museums, Arts, and Humanities Division). Bender was the project leader for the USSR/US museum library initiative, and others in the group were Jean Adelman, University Museum of Archaeology/Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, Clayton Kirking, Phoenix Art Museum, Sandra Kitt, of the Richard S. Perkin Library, American Museum of Natural History, and the author. American participation in the project had been organized through the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), an activity of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). ACLS and the Soviet Library Council had been working to establish a Commission on Library Cooperation, and this exchange was the first program in that work. Coordinated at the Lenin State Library, some 45 or so Soviet library and information professionals and workers were involved in the program, including the Deputy Minister of Culture of the USSR, Mrs. Nina Silkova.

Obviously with the advent of the information age this international focus would enable the association to play a role in the development of policy and recommended behavior with respect to the transborder flow of information. In SLA's journal, Dr. Robert Williams wrote about the role of intergovernmental organizations in international information transfer and policy, and also contributed an important paper about how information provided by intergovernmental organizations affects the

success of “the global village,” Marshall McLuhan’s popular phrase for describing the connections that were then being established and recognized throughout Western society. Following along these lines, Executive Director Bender offered his expertise on the subject in 1988 with an historical review (with advice for the future) on transborder data flow, an important subject now that the European Union was becoming a reality. The subject would become of increasing interest to specialist librarians in the next few years, and several of the topics considered at the State-of-the-Art Institutes of the 1990s had to do with international information exchange.

As SLA began to look more seriously at public policy issues, thanks to good leadership from several of its members, another major change—quite coincidentally—was about to position the association for an even stronger role in this area. This was SLA’s move to Washington, DC in 1986. As early as 1981, Bender had been authorized by the SLA Board of Directors to search for property for relocating the association office, which was quickly and awkwardly outgrowing its space in the Gramercy Park neighborhood of New York City. At the same time, the board authorized the establishment of a Building Fund, to ensure that the costs involved would not adversely affect the association’s finances. Bender and the SLA staff took up the challenge. The SLA Building Fund was the most ambitious fundraising project ever undertaken by SLA, according to Jane Brewer Amann, who wrote about the move in a special report prepared for the membership. The general fund surplus of 1981 provided the initial amount of \$10,000.00, with a goal of \$500,000 to be raised in four and a half years. Members were generous in their contributions, and more than 600 members participated, as did many of the association’s chapters and divisions and corporate donors.

To find the right place, though, was not easy, and the search threatened to stretch out much longer than anyone had anticipated. The board and other leaders of the association, and many in the membership, all had ideas and suggestions about where the association should be located, and as suggestions were offered, the staff diligently tried to respond to them. Dr. Bender and the SLA staff struggled with the task, visiting more than 90 buildings (including 57 in New York City alone). As the search continued, it began to look as if it would be unending, but as Amann described the situation, serendipity came to the rescue. On a business trip to Washington, DC Bender found vacant the building recently occupied by the American Psychiatric Association and upon inspection, the building was deemed fit for the association’s purposes. Located just off Du Pont Circle and built in 1909 as the home for Arthur Jeffrey Parsons, chief of the Prints Division at the Library of Congress, there seemed to be something of a special connection in having SLA move into a building that had been built for a special librarian. It was an auspicious and appropriate connection.

It soon became apparent that this would be the best location for the association’s office. Not just for the building itself, which was a find, but because the association would be located in Washington. By being there, as Bender pointed out, SLA would be in a cooperative environment with other important associations. Its larger position would be enhanced, and as an important association, it would be taken more

Guy St Clair 9/12/07 10:23 AM

Comment [7]: Confirm this.

seriously by society at large and, in particular, by the players in the national and international information arenas who made up the power structure for the information community. As part of this effort, with a Washington address the association would be able to strengthen SLA's public policy/government relations activities, and to explore cooperation with other associations (both information organizations and non-information organizations), two activities which would contribute significantly to the association's development as a major player in the information industry.

There would be another advantage. As devoted and skilled as the New York office staff were, and as good as they were in doing their work, they were not part of the association management community. In Washington, the pool of applicants for working with the association would be made up of people who knew about associations, and as SLA's services for its members and its position in society advanced, employees with an understanding of association management would be required. The move from 235 Park Avenue South in New York took place, and by October of 1986, the association was in a position to host an open house and reception commemorating the opening of the new office.

The move to Washington coincided, in a strange sort of way, with the development of a new and unanticipated role for the association, for almost immediately after the move SLA was put in the position of having to take a stand on an extremely serious national issue having to do with information, and one that was fraught with political overtones. About the middle of the decade, the library and information science profession learned that the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation was conducting a secret surveillance program in the country's unclassified scientific libraries (both public and academic). The FBI program, known as its "Library Awareness Program," was discovered to have existed from 1973. It had two goals: to restrict access by foreign nationals—particularly by Soviet and East European nationals—to unclassified scientific information, and to recruit librarians to report on any "foreigner" using America's unclassified scientific libraries. It was, according to some who studied it, not a new or original program, but in its earlier manifestations the FBI's surveillance of libraries, their employees, and their users was not so much part of the agency's counterintelligence programs, but had more to do with domestic security, civil disturbances, and campus unrest.

The program was exposed in an article in *The New York Times* on September 18, 1987, describing an FBI visit to Columbia University in June of that year. The outcry was, predictably, enormous and unprecedented, both within the library and information science profession and with the larger public. The agency responded with a document titled "FBI Contacts of New York Libraries for FCI [Foreign Counter Intelligence] Purposes." The document stated that its investigative efforts "encompass a variety of approaches, all of which are within U.S. Attorney General

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· Since the story of the association's situation with respect to the F.B.I. Library Awareness Act is in and of itself worthy of a separate monograph, this chapter of the book offers a synoptical treatment. For further information, readers are referred to Herbert N. Foerstel's *Surveillance in the Stacks: The FBI's Library Awareness Program* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), Frank J. Donner's *The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System* (New York: Knopf, 1980) and the SLA archives.

guidelines and U.S. laws” and pointed out that the FBI had “documented evidence” of hostile intelligence officers exploiting libraries “by stealing proprietary, sensitive, and other information and attempting to identify and recruit American and foreign students in American libraries.”

For SLA, the publication of the news was the beginning of a two-year upheaval. On October 5, 1987, Sandy I. Morton (SLA's Director, Government Relations and Fund Development), who had been seeking information from the FBI, sent Executive Director Bender a note indicating that all she could get from the agency was a standard response. The next day, Bender recommended that the association's Board of Directors go on record opposing this activity, and a resolution on the FBI visits to libraries was put forward.

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

**FBI VISITS TO LIBRARIES**

**(Forwarded to the SLA Board of Directors October 6, 1987)**

WHEREAS, The proper role of the librarian is to gather and disseminate information; and

WHEREAS, The professional duties of the librarian include maintaining an environment which is conducive to the free flow of ideas and information; and

WHEREAS, Professional librarians, as those in other professions, follow a code of confidentiality, respect the individual's right to privacy, and demonstrate a concern for academic freedom; and

WHEREAS, Recent actions taken by the Federal Bureau of Investigation through its "Library Awareness Program" recruiting librarians to engage in surveillance of library patrons, runs counter to the ethics of the profession; and

WHEREAS, The imposition of such responsibilities on librarians is totally removed from the duties and in conflict with the ethics of the profession; and

WHEREAS, The Special Libraries Association is an international professional association of more than 12,500 special librarian and information specialists, with 10 percent of its membership in Canada; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Special Libraries Association opposes any effort to undermine the rights of library users or any interference in the professional relationship between the library client and the librarian; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the FBI should seek other means to identify those individuals who are a threat to our national security and not attempt to recruit professional librarians in any program to identify agents of hostile powers.

As it turned out, at its October, 1987 meeting the Board of Directors "discussed but took no action on the resolution pertaining to visits to libraries," and in the minutes of the board's next meeting, in January, 1988, there is no reference to the subject.

But the subject was not being ignored by SLA's membership. Indeed, it would be a vast understatement to say that the FBI's Library Awareness Program engendered much comment and debate at all levels of the association. Among those at the highest levels—that is the association's Board of Directors—discussion centered on the question of whether or not it was proper for SLA to offer an official condemnation of the program. Some argued that the diversity of the association's membership (with regard to the types of libraries in which the members were employed) placed the association in an awkward position, and that strong opposition to the program might jeopardize the employment of some of the association's members. At the same time, it was also feared that the association's classification as a 501 (c) (3) organization, that is as an educational, scientific, literary, or charitable organization

(which might not be permitted to engage in political activities or activities that might be interpreted or perceived as political in nature) would be targeted for review.

As the association's leaders and membership discussed the subject, it became clear that there was a groundswell of opinion that a strong statement of opposition to the program was called for. The board was pressured to take further action, but for the members of the board, there did not seem to be any urgency as the association was already on record as supporting access to information and supporting the confidentiality of library records. When SLA's Executive Committee, meeting in April, 1988 again discussed the Library Awareness Program, the committee "after lengthy deliberation and consideration, reaffirmed its previous position of neutrality on the FBI Library Awareness Program" and sent to the board a resolution, to be ratified by the board at its upcoming meeting in June, 1988 in Denver, CO.

In regard to the FBI Library Awareness Program, the Special Libraries Association remains neutral due to the diversity of libraries and information centers in which the Association's membership is employed. The Association reconfirms its endorsement of the rights of user to have access to information and the protection of the confidentiality of library records maintained by public institutions. Furthermore, the Association maintains that no individual (including groups of individuals) has the right to restrict the use of resources in such a way as to deprive one's access to needed and appropriate information.

A background document stated that "[b]y remaining neutral on the Library Awareness Program, the SLA's Board of Directors recognizes the diversity of the Association's membership and concludes that this position is appropriate and in the best interests of the membership at large," noting that "The Board of Directors of the Association remains committed to the preservation and furtherance of the rights of both members and users of information." At the June meeting, the Board of Directors discussed the subject at its Executive Session on Friday, June 10, and "heard and discussed" President Emily Mobley's summary of the situation at the open board meeting the same day. The board then voted "to approve a motion that the Board of Directors of SLA ratify the position statement on the FBI Library Awareness Program that was approved by the Executive Committee on April 19, 1988, as contained in Document A88-82," that is, the statement of neutrality. In the same meeting, the board charged a subcommittee to develop a statement to implement the approved policy and report back to the board on Friday, June 17, 1988. Members of the subcommittee were Muriel B. Regan, James Tchobanoff, and Frank H. Spaulding, Chair. Also working with the committee were Sandy Morton and Donna Scheeder, Chair, SLA Government Relations Committee.

Not surprisingly, as members arrived for the conference, the FBI program was the primary topic of discussion (despite the emergency evacuation of the exhibits hall when a tornado was seen approaching the city). In the meantime, at the Annual Business Meeting on June 15, two motions opposing the program were presented, one put forward by member Patricia W. Berger and the other put forward by member

John W. Weigel II. For each, the line of members going to the microphones to speak for the motion, and in some few cases, against one or the other of the motions, made it clear that the issue was one with which the members of the association were greatly concerned. So strong was the feeling about the FBI's program that one member suggested possible rebellion against the Board of Directors (the word "impeach" was used) if the "neutral" statement were not dissolved and turned into a stronger statement. Both motions were approved by the membership, and by the end of the meeting, it was clear that further action was required (which was already being taken, as the subcommittee appointed at the Friday board meeting was beginning its work).

When the new board convened two days later, the subcommittee was prepared with its report. In its work, the subcommittee took into consideration the association's policy approved at the June 11 Board of Directors meeting and the two motions approved by the members at the Annual Meeting on June 15. The committee's report reiterated that the SLA Government Relations Policy, adopted in 1980, "contains two specific statements that address the Association's concerns respecting the FBI Library Awareness Program." These statements, which had been noted in the background document of the previous April, were spelled out in detail:

1. SLA supports the concept that users should have access to information (according to institutional regulations) appropriate to the pursuit of their educational occupational and recreational needs. This includes the availability of resources made possible through public and private funds. SLA maintains that no individual has the right to restrict the use of resources in such a way as to deprive one's access to needed and appropriate information.
2. In order to accomplish the mission of the Association and serve as an essential force in the library and information field, the Association has developed a close working relationship with other national and international library associations. The Association also works with other educational, research, cultural and public service agencies whose purposes are consistent with those of SLA.

The subcommittee then proposed a specific policy statement on the FBI Library Awareness Program, reconfirming SLA's "endorsement of the rights of users to have access to information and the protection of the confidentiality of library records maintained by public institutions." The statement also stated that "the Association maintains that no individual (including groups of individuals) has the right to restrict the use of public resources in such a way as to deprive one's access to needed and appropriate information. The Association opposes the activities of the FBI Library Awareness Program."

Following the recommended policy statement, the subcommittee also recommended specific actions for the implementation of the policy, including "immediate communication of this policy to the membership, other information associations, government agencies (especially the FBI), press (specifically those that have presented information on this program) and all members of NCLIS [the National

Guy St Clair 8/3/07 5:44 PM

Comment [8]: "opposed" or "opposes"?

Commission on Libraries and Information Science]....” Additionally, the subcommittee recommended that the association publish an “overview” of background information, that it continue to investigate and obtain full information on the FBI program and provide this information to the membership of SLA, that any member contacted by the FBI be encouraged to contact the association’s Director, Government Relations and Fund Development (Morton) for “advice and consultation,” that members express their concerns, that staff prepare an information package on the program, and that the SLA Policy Statement and the SLA position on the Library Awareness program be submitted to the Coalition on Government Information for further dissemination. At its meeting, the board adopted the subcommittee’s recommended policy statement and voted to accept in principle the committee’s guidelines for implementation. Interestingly, and perhaps in light of the occasions when SLA itself had sought cooperation with other library organizations and had been rebuffed, the board “heard but took no action on a resolution for cooperation with other library organizations in opposing the FBI’s Library Awareness Program recommended to the Board by the membership at the Annual Business Meeting.

It was a very difficult time for the association, not made any easier by some published accounts that sought to link the association and several of its leaders with the F.B.I. program and made accusations of a level of complicity that would, if they had been true, have been in direct opposition to SLA’s established policy of supporting access to information and the confidentiality of library records. As it turned out, the issue was not totally resolved with the board’s actions in Denver, for later information revealed that the Bureau had done (as described in an SLA internal staff memorandum) “what it called ‘minimal’ background checks on 266 librarians and individuals from library associations who had questions about the program.” The memorandum went on to note that none of the names had been made public, but the association was filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to determine if names affiliated with the association were listed. No further information was ever revealed about those names. Nevertheless, in recognizing the seriousness of the entire FBI Library Awareness Program and the association’s response to it, Bender, with the Director, Government Relations and in consultation with the SLA Government Relations Committee, submitted to the board in December, 1989 the recommendation that “the Special Libraries Association strongly opposes the actions of the F.B.I. for scrutinizing those individuals who questioned or expressed concern over the Library Awareness Program.” The recommendation was submitted to board as a resolution and at its winter meeting in January, 1990 in St. Louis, MO the board voted to approve the resolution.

Despite the difficulties, it must be recognized that one important outcome of the situation with respect to the SLA and the FBI Library Awareness Program was the strengthening of the role of the association’s Government Relations Committee and the association’s own role in advocacy and public policy. Having been created just a few years earlier, the committee by 1987-1988 had taken on a role of critical importance for the library and information science field, especially that which connected with specialized librarianship. With a different focus than that of public

and academic libraries, and representing many corporate, research, and government agency libraries whose employees were members of SLA, the association's role in dealing with this issue made it clear that the development and establishment of information policy is not exclusively the domain of traditional public-service librarianship. As Donna Scheeder, Chair of the Government Relations Committee said in her 1987-1988 Annual Report of the committee: "During the year, a new issue was brought to the Association's attention following sporadic media coverage. The 'Library Awareness Program' of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has raised the issue of the right to maintain the confidentiality of a patron's dealing with public and academic libraries. Government Relations Committee members Linda Jean Smith and Donna Scheeder attended a meeting of the representatives of several concerned associations...with staff from the Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. Committee members are continuing to monitor the issue."

It was a very difficult ending to a difficult decade. Addressing the challenges of the information age—and specifically challenges being put forward as the larger society attempted to bridge the structures of previous eras with those required for the new age—was not easy for SLA and its members. At the same time, to be caught up in a whirlwind of political activity which seemed designed to take advantage of rather simplistic perceptions of libraries and librarianship (misperceptions, actually) was equally hard. Then to have to fight so to convince powerful people that—as an integral and critical element of the nation's specific strength in the rapidly escalating information age—SLA as an association and in support of its individual members would not surrender its strength and its integrity was painful for everybody concerned. Still, the association had a long history of dealing with adversity and change, even with profound change. This was the organization that had been strong enough to come through the Great Depression, through World War II and the now infamous information wars of previous decades, and it would come through this. It should not be surprising to anyone that SLA and its members succeeded—as they did—in fighting off attempts to damage their profession. SLA was strong, probably stronger than it had ever been, and the association was ready for the 1990s.