

INFORMATION OUTLOOK

CONNECTING INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS | FALL 2025

The Legacy Issue



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- Past and future insights
- Conference presentations

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Message from the Editor

By Dr. Lesley Farmer

It's been a great ride! From its first issue in January, 1910, SLA's journal has served "as a medium of intercommunication and to a certain extent will be a clearinghouse of notes and news of special interest to the members of the association" (p. 1). This legacy issue continues that charge.

- The President's message focuses on change, and many of this issue's articles reflect different aspects in the organization and the profession as a whole.
- The first feature article provides a benchmark analysis of current SLA members' perspectives on SLA and the profession. The following history column provides a solid set of sources that trace SLA from its beginning to the present.
- Three articles demonstrate the quality of this year's (final) SLA conference presentations, which all focus on actionable issues. Two additional conferences speak to SLA members' outreach to other professional organizations to inform SLA peers.
- Both the fellows column and the member highlight recognize and affirm past accomplishments within the profession, both of which have value for the future.
- SLA communities had the opportunity to share their group's activities and legacy. A fine representation of regional and topical reports showcases the variety within SLA.
- This year the scholarship committee granted tuition, conference, and continuing education scholarships to a record number of SLA members. The awardees' essays demonstrate the impact of education upon them, and the awardees reveal their aspirations and recommendations for the profession.
- Before editing this issue, I had reviewed several recent ALA books of interest to SLA members. Reading professional literature is a tried and true way to keep current in the field.

My first year as a SLA member was 50 years ago! My recent participation in reviving *Information Outlook* has been an honor and a pleasure. A special thanks to the SLA *Information Outlook* editorial board for making this possible. I look forward to future efforts via ASIS&T.



Dr. Lesley Farmer
Librarian, Bowers Museum



Message from the President

By Hildy Dworkin

Library and information professionals have always been focused on the evolving nature of the profession. That is what John Cotton Dana and a small group of librarians discussed when they met 116 years ago. The profession was changing, becoming more specialized, and this group needed a place—a home for special librarians. SLA became that home then and now for many of us.

Thank you to all the members who voted for the merger with the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T). I am enthusiastic about this partnership, which allows the SLA legacy to be preserved. We bring to ASIS&T the best of us: our conference, learning hub and other content, but most of all our members.

My career growth is intertwined with my years in SLA, thanks to the support and learning from people with much more knowledge than I. But it wasn't just practical knowledge, SLA was a safe place to learn and practice leadership. As my SLA leadership grew, so did my confidence at work, and I became a leader there as well. As librarians and information professionals, we sometimes amaze people, they see our work products as magic and not as years of refining current skills and learning and creating new ones. It is our job to ensure that they know this.

It's been 116 years and here we are again, not unlike our founder, John Cotton Dana, and the other founding librarians, knowing when something needed to change.

To paraphrase Albus Dumbledore (in the movie *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*), the 2025 Board of Directors did what was right, not what was easy, and made the most difficult decision in SLA's history—that we needed to dissolve. But as always, we also knew there had to be a way to survive somehow—to stay together, to stay relevant, and to preserve our legacy.

I have been struggling to make sense of what I am feeling. It is both the end of something dear and the beginning of something exciting!

I recently came across a quote that resonates with this moment for me that I am in a “thin place.” Essayist Oliver Berkeman describes “thin places” as “We're in a territory here, in the ineffable. The stuff we can't express because it's beyond the power of language to do so. Explanations aren't merely useless; they threaten to get in the way. The experience of a thin place feels special because words fail, leaving stunned silence.”

As SLA's President, I am proud to have helped navigate us to this moment. I am proud of all of us for being brave enough to transform once again. Together it is time to embrace the great realization that this big change is in SLA's best interest.

It has been an honor to serve as president of SLA. As we move on to our next chapter, I am confident that the SLAer will always be within each of us.



Hildy Dworkin

Library Director, New York City Department of Social Services



Past, Present, and Possibilities:

Special Librarians Provide New Insights on Familiar Themes

By Michele Costello

Since their inception, special libraries have grappled with unique research needs and how to deliver services with the best available tools and technology. As Guy St. Clair observed, “It all began with an idea, the idea that specialist librarians were different” (St. Clair, 2009, p. 3). Hailing from a variety of industries ranging from corporations to military to museums (ALA, 2025), special libraries vary significantly in format, scale and scope depending on the type of knowledge work required (academic, biomedical, engineering, legal, financial, etc.). Further, special librarians often work outside the typical library setting and have a non-library job title (ALA, 2025). The diversity of special library formats and subject focus areas make the study of the profession more challenging. Special librarians “put knowledge to work” (St. Clair, 2024, p.10) for strategic purposes in different ways for different audiences. However, despite the diversity of special libraries, industry research has surfaced common themes on impacts of budgeting, training and technology over the decades. As SLA moves toward dissolution, the author endeavored to survey the existing membership in order to preserve knowledge about what matters most to this targeted audience.

Preliminary data from the anonymous online survey of the SLA membership, conducted over approximately two weeks in August and September of 2025, revealed some familiar themes as well as novel insights about special librarianship

today. The 62 usable responses reflect the views of special librarians hailing from corporate (50%), academic (19%), government (11%), non-profit (5%), and other fields (15%) including biomedical, legal and transportation. Limitations of the study include the small sample size and non-response bias.

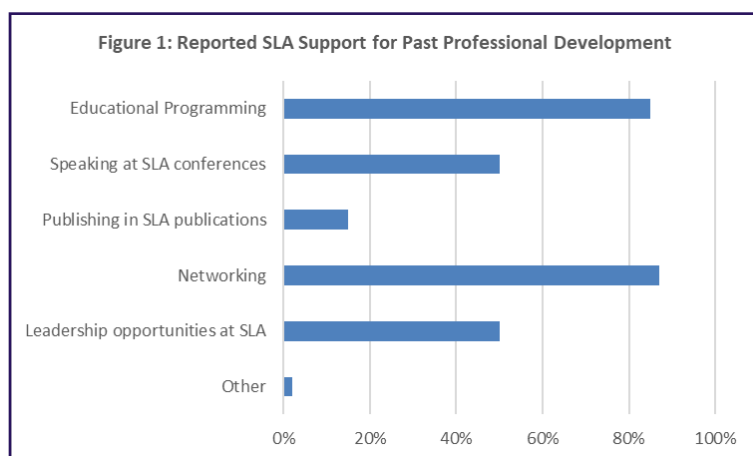
Considering SLA’s legacy of innovative education and programming for over a century, it is not entirely surprising that respondents (85%) reported SLA educational programming has supported their professional development. Survey respondents (86%) also overwhelmingly reported that networking opportunities from the organization have supported their professional development. Members’ focus on education and networking was directly in line with SLA’s mission to promote and strengthen its members “through learning, advocacy and networking initiatives” (SLA, 2023).

Regarding education, SLA has aided the development of library degree programs such as the Queens College special librarianship program, provided innovative chapter and interest group programming for decades (Mitchill, 1959; Special Libraries Association, 1910; Special Libraries Association, New York Chapter, 2020) and supported knowledge sharing in the publication *Information Outlook*. As reported on the SLA website, chapters have provided multiple networking events for special librarians to connect.

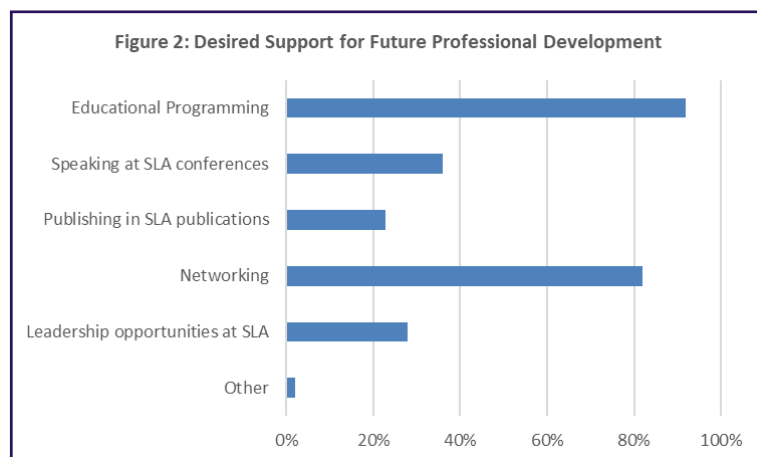
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Academic literature supported the importance of both networking and education for special librarians (Murray, 2013; Murray, 2014). Specifically, Murray (2013) emphasized the importance of networking for special librarians given their small size, or solo librarian structure, which limits networking with other colleagues, and mentioned that networking was contemplated as critical for “isolated” special librarians at SLA’s inception in 1910.

About half of respondents believe leadership opportunities and speaking at SLA conferences have been important for professional development (49% and 48%, respectively). The survey responses are summarized in *Figure 1*, and the percentages do not total 100% because respondents were able to select more than one type of support.



Looking forward, respondents overwhelmingly desired continued access to the type of educational programming (92%) and networking opportunities (82%) SLA has provided in the past. Somewhat surprisingly, conference speaking (36%), leadership opportunities (28%), and publishing opportunities (23%) were less emphasized prospectively compared to the same question on historical benefits. More research is needed to determine if this reflects the corporate demographics (50% of respondents), late career bias of the respondents (only 12 of the respondents were under the age of 44), the planned wind down of SLA, or something broader. Responses are summarized in *Figure 2*, and the percentages do not total 100% because respondents were able to select more than one type of support.



In the qualitative data, respondents also emphasized some familiar themes in the literature about special librarianship. Respondents focused on concerns about communicating value as professionals (34%) and funding (29%), while most often citing technology as an opportunity (24%). Concern about communicating special library value was reported across many industries. Respondents voiced concern about characterization as “overhead” instead of a strategic center or partner. Others reported concerns over communicating return on investment of special librarians to constituents.

Interestingly, at the time of SLA’s inception, the in-house library was perceived as a novel competitive advantage. Early SLA literature describes captive libraries, such as legal or chemical laboratory libraries, which were seen to increase efficiency (Special Libraries Association, 1910). An executive described the strategic position of the special library as follows: “laboratories should each be developed around a Special Library, the business of which should be to collect, compile and classify in a way to make all instantly available, every scrap of information bearing upon the materials, methods, products and requirements of the industry concerned” (Little, 2013, p.189). Further, when speaking about the value of special librarianship, former SLA President Margaret Fuller stated that “...good library service contributes concrete results to research and industry” (Mitchell, 1959, p. 1). The challenge in more recent times has been to communicate the strategic benefit in practical or financial terms to executives, who may perceive the library as simply a cost center (Semertzaki, 2011, p.16). For example, the Ithaka S+R Library Survey in 2022 concluded that approximately half of academic library leaders found it challenging to communicate the library’s value to administrators (Hulbert, 2023). Additional research echoed the challenge special librarians face to communicate value in

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academic (Hulbert, 2023) and corporate settings (Murray & Vilches, 2017). Outsourcing (Gaston, 2005; White, 1996) and disaggregation of the role (Murray, 2016) have further compounded the challenge as the value creation of special librarianship is split among many business units. SLA has aimed to support members in this regard with the Advocacy Toolkit (SLA, 2025) and programming at conferences which address this topic.

A new angle on this issue of communicating value surfaced in the qualitative comments in the survey. Specifically, respondents intimated worries about AI's negative effect on librarians' perceived value. For example, one respondent mentioned that the biggest challenge is "C-Suite making the assumption that GenAI will be able to replace the expertise held by librarians." Another respondent mentioned that librarians should show that they are "better than AI." A third respondent made a related comment on the "irreplaceable human aspects of librarianship." Notably, the vast majority of respondents (80%) indicated that AI has not yet replaced any of their job functions. Outsourcing and offshoring were more significant in terms of displacement than AI in this particular survey. However, the AI-age certainly adds a new dimension to the conversation about communicating a special librarian's value.

Next, funding concerns were raised within the sub-set of librarians who identified as government, non-profit, or corporate within the engineering, biomedical and business sub-designations. Some respondents emphasized the inability to replace departing staff, partial disaggregation of the role to other functional areas such as analytics or IT groups, or complete outsourcing of the librarian function, while others emphasized budgeting constraints in the face of rising subscription costs. Industry observers also reported merging of some librarian and IT functions (Murray, 2016, p.196). The downsizing issue for librarians, which is closely related to the previous discussion about special librarian's value, has been around for decades. White (1996) discussed the impact of outsourcing on law libraries as an example of a special library. A study of biomedical librarians (Crum & Cooper, 2013) confirmed shrinking budgets and staffing coupled with addition of emerging roles or activities to their work such as research collaboration and data curation. These studies are just a few examples of the broader downsizing issue for industry over the decades.

According to the survey, certain segments of special librarianship face more budgetary headwinds than others. Specifically, one respondent commented on the approximately 80% reduction in Defense Technology Information Center staff as part of the current administration's budget cut program. Another respondent commented on how "economic uncertainty" is impacting corporate profit and therefore budgeting for their related special library function. A third focused on showing the "hidden work" librarians do which is "strategically valuable" to justify budget lines in the face of cuts. Moderate or significant budget reductions only affected about a quarter of respondents over the past year across various industries (academic, military, biomedical, business, engineering and physics and math sectors). Staffing reductions also affected about a quarter of respondents over the past year, again across many industries (academic, military, biomedical, business, engineering, pharmaceutical and physics and math sectors). Qualitative comments further revealed an ongoing trend of staff reductions. Outsourcing impacted approximately 14% of respondents, which operated within the biomedical, pharmaceutical, business (advertising, finance), construction and design, and physics and math areas.

The theme of technology and adaptation was also prominent in the survey. Technical skills have been studied as a critical aspect of professional development for special librarians (Murray, 2014). Researchers have also emphasized the need for librarians to apply traditional reference to new technologies for decades, as noted by Wittwer (2001) who called upon librarians to lead the technology revolution in the early days of the internet age. The literature further emphasized the impact of technological change on special librarians' roles over the decades. Historically, Ladendorf (1973) focused on the librarian as interpreter between researcher and machine (p.11, 22) and commented that librarians are still extremely relevant to help users "cope with an increasingly complex environment of information resources" (p.12). King (2004), when discussing the future of the special library 20 years ago from the perspective of a military library, commented on the technological disruption of the world wide web in terms of vendor data supply chain, user-centered design, and a shift toward a "service mindset" while maintaining that the future will be "more digital" and "more collaborative" (p.10). He further proposed that special libraries "can change to meet the new needs of

continued

information seekers” (p.16). Lachance (2011) discussed a “reboot” of skills, leadership style, and openness to emerging job opportunities which are not in traditional library fields in response to technological change. These thoughts remain relevant in a new context for the AI age. Much more recently, Matthews (2025) emphasized the adaptability of libraries to technological change, and believed academic and research libraries will actually become more specialized in nature. Further, Matthews challenged the notion that AI can replace librarians, and he recommended that libraries can be AI literacy resources and even become digital innovation hubs.

It is not surprising that the timeless theme of adaptation to technological changes was echoed in various ways in the current survey. New insights from the survey are mainly around the AI-driven impacts to our work. While concerns about AI impact on job security and perceived value of librarians were raised, as mentioned above, many respondents also highlighted new opportunities to streamline tasks and help organizations navigate the AI landscape. The majority of survey respondents (77%) mentioned they were AI upskilling in some capacity. For example, some highlighted the ability of AI to take on clerical tasks so that librarians can focus on higher order thinking activities, while others commented on the benefits or drawbacks of “AI features” appearing in vendor databases. A few respondents commented on the fact that special librarians are often “solo” and have

a wide range of tasks. One of the solo librarians specifically highlighted the opportunity for AI to handle routine duties so that the respondent can focus on more complicated duties. Respondents also highlighted the role of special librarians in information literacy when raising the opportunity for librarians to coach or educate patrons/executives on what AI can and cannot do for them. Another respondent even raised the idea of smart assistants such as “research agents” to support our work. Finally, a few respondents highlighted the need for librarians to be leaders in emerging technologies, including AI, within their respective organizations.

The information garnered in this survey helps us better understand the challenges and opportunities we face today as special librarians, and the ways in which SLA has supported members. The key issues for today’s members demonstrate new twists on familiar themes in the literature studying special librarianship over the last 100 years, such as communicating our worth, leveraging a network of our unique peers, and adaptability to technological change. Member reflections herein highlight what members desire from our professional network and can inform future programming as SLA merges into a new organization.

Add your voice to these findings by visiting https://baruch.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_54scE21ttEsqQoS to participate in the special librarian survey.



Michele Costello

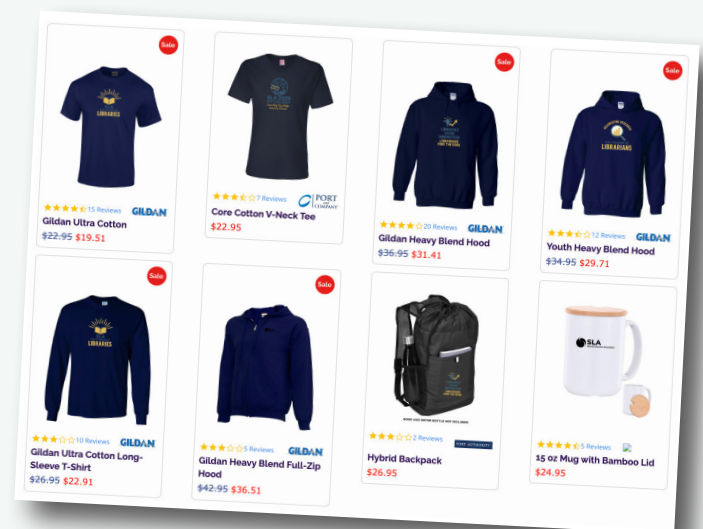
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History Column:

The Special Libraries Association, 1909–2025: Historical Sources

By Tara Murray Grove

As the Special Libraries Association (SLA) prepares to embark on its next chapter by merging with the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T), it is natural to reflect on the association's history. Founded in 1909, SLA has been a home for information professionals from the early days of the special library movement through the dawn of the internet to the present day as we grapple with big data and artificial intelligence. This article describes sources of information on the association's rich history, from an overview of its first century to scholarly publications and primary sources for further research.

Some of the resources mentioned are currently available on the SLA website. Because these will change as association information is transferred to the ASIS&T website, the links included here are for archived versions of the pages from the Internet Archive Wayback Machine. I hope that the historical information will continue to be available, but the Wayback Machine is a useful tool for finding historical information about organizations in the internet age.

General Histories of SLA

For a comprehensive history of the association, the place to start is Guy St. Clair's book released at SLA's centenary: *SLA at 100: From "Putting Knowledge to Work" to Building the Knowledge Culture* (Special Libraries Association, 2009). St. Clair, who served as SLA President in 1991–1992, takes the reader through each decade of SLA's history in a readable and engaging style, with a bibliography for those who wish to dig deeper. Excerpts from the book are available online at <https://www.smr-knowledge.com/smrshare/sla-at-100-from-putting-knowledge-to-work-to-building-the-knowledge-culture-by-guy-st-clair-excerpts/>.

More details on SLA's early history can be found in *Special Libraries Association—Its First Fifty Years: 1909–1959*, edited by Alma Clarvoe Mitchell (Special Libraries Association, 1959). More of a handbook than a readable history like St. Clair's, this volume includes a chronology and lists of presidents, award winners, publications, and conventions. The full text is available online from HathiTrust: [https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.\\$b670266](https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.$b670266).

The Wikipedia article for SLA (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special_Libraries_Association) provides a decent overview of the association but parts of it need to be updated. The opening section includes current information about the merger with ASIS&T, but subsequent sections reflect a previous governance structure and outdated figures.

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The history section of the SLA website includes updated lists of past presidents and conference locations. I created a Google Map of conference locations from 1909 through 2025, including Annual Conferences, Winter Meetings, and Leadership Summits: <https://bit.ly/SLAConferences>. (My map is based on a Google Map originally created by Dan Trefethen and last updated in 2016.)

The Scholarly Literature

For scholarly literature, the newly-updated *Bibliography of Library History, 1990–Present* (<https://openpublishing.psu.edu/blh/>) is an excellent starting point. The database contains more than 7000 records; search results can be limited by library type, time period, or demographic group. As library history bibliographers have previously noted, there is little in the literature on the history of special libraries, let alone SLA, but the database includes, for example, articles on SLA founder and first president John Cotton Dana. For scholarly works published prior to 1990, the bibliography website contains a link to *American Library History: A Comprehensive Guide to the Literature*.

Because so little information about SLA history appears in the scholarly literature, it is worth noting a few examples. Donna Cromer's "Special Libraries Association: The Importance of Leadership" (*Journal of Library Administration* 49(8): 887–893, 2009, DOI: 10.1080/01930820903397226) provides a brief history of the association, focusing on leadership. Ada Winifred Johns' *Special Libraries: Development of the Concept, their Organizations, and their Services* (Scarecrow Press, 1968) provides some early association history in the context of the development of special libraries and offers comparisons with special library associations in the UK and Australia. An especially interesting article in light of the merger currently in progress is Robert V. Williams' "The Documentation and Special Libraries Movements in the United States, 1910–1960" (*Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 48(9): 775–781, 1997, DOI: 10.1002/(SICI)1097-4571(199709)48:9<775::AID-ASIS>3.0.CO;2-O, available to ASIS&T members through the ASIS&T Digital Library), which explores the historical relationship of SLA and the American Documentation Institute (now ASIS&T) and a previous merger attempt.

Primary Sources

Primary source materials on the history of SLA have been limited for some time because of the inaccessibility of SLA's archives, but part of SLA's dissolution and merger plan includes an archives working group, so hopefully more material will be available to researchers in the near future.

In the meantime, SLA's publications provide contemporary accounts of many association activities. The digitized versions of *Information Outlook* and its predecessor, *Special Libraries*, are available from San José State University's ScholarWorks repository at <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/sla/>. The repository currently includes the entire run of *Special Libraries* (1910–1996) and *Information Outlook* from 1997 until it ceased print publication in 2020. Metadata is only available at the issue level and individual articles are not indexed, but the collection is full-text searchable, and many themes can be explored by browsing. *Information Outlook* was relaunched in 2024 as a digital-only magazine. The issues are currently available to members on the SLA website. *SpecialList*, SLA's newsletter from 1980 to 1996, has not been digitized, but holdings can be located using OCLC's WorldCat. Additional materials can also be found using WorldCat, including chapter and division newsletters, membership directories, conference programs, and association publications.

Special Libraries is a particularly rich resource because it was used to share association business with members before electronic communication was widely adopted. The letters contain lively debates among members about the issues of the day. The final issue, published in Fall 1996, contains reprints of selected articles from the journal's history.

Annual updates on SLA activities have also been published in various industry annuals such as *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information* (R.R. Bowker, 1962–1988) and *The ALA Yearbook* (American Library Association, 1976–1983).

For some time, SLA's physical archives have been in remote storage and unavailable for research, but a current Board of Directors initiative aims to change that. This year, an archives working group led by Emma Moore and including Chloe Campbell and Rachel Cole conducted a review of materials stored at multiple Iron Mountain facilities. They identified many boxes of material to be destroyed according to SLA's

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records retention policy, leaving 90 boxes that will be moved to a single Iron Mountain location and reviewed by local volunteers. SLA plans to send material identified as archival to the University of Michigan, where ASIS&T records are located. The archives team is coordinating with ASIS&T to develop a plan for digital materials and guidance for SLA Communities on their digital records.

The physical archives of SLA Communities (and former Chapter and Division archives) are located at various institutions and will remain at their current locations, mostly public and academic libraries, where they are already accessible for research. The archives team is making a list of known locations. Many can be discovered by searching ArchiveGrid and WorldCat, both available from OCLC.

There are two collections of personal recollections from SLA leaders in the history section of the SLA website. *Voices of SLA: An International Oral History* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250404081620/https://sla.org/page/Voices>) includes full transcripts of interviews with notable SLA members (including past presidents) conducted by SLA Fellows between 2009 and 2012. *Voices from Our Past—SLA Presidents' Reminiscences* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20250911190420/https://sla.org/page/voices-of-sla-presidents>) was compiled by Susan DiMattia (herself a past president) from oral interviews and written submissions. It includes past presidents from Guy Elwood Marion (1918–1919) to Pam Rollo (2005–2006). The compilation

is arranged chronologically by presidential year and the entries for each individual range from a few sentences to several paragraphs with quotations. As with the lists of past presidents and conference locations, I hope that these historical materials will continue to be accessible online after the merger with ASIS&T is completed.

Looking to the Future

I am pleased to note that ASIS&T has a Special Interest Group on the History and Foundations of Information Science, which I hope will be a resource for anyone interested in further researching SLA's history. Other library associations whose history is intertwined with SLA's are also engaged in this work. The American Library Association (ALA) is preparing to celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2026, and its Library History Round Table (LHRT) has been actively collecting and sharing association history. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) will celebrate 100 years in 2027, and its Library History Interest Group is developing a research program and book publication.

Preparing for the next chapter of SLA provides us with a reason to reflect on our past, and there are resources available for those with a casual interest as well as those pursuing a research agenda. Understanding our collective history will help us to navigate the future.



Tara Murray Grove

Librarian for Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures, Penn State University

Conference Highlights Sessions:

It's More than Just Numbers: Using Data To Tell a Story

By Laura Stein

If you were to ask my least favorite subject in school, I would undoubtedly say math. Between anxiety-inducing timed tests and frustrating word problems, I developed an aversion to anything related to numbers. However, like many future librarians, I devoured many books and loved storytelling. When I was in third grade, I wanted to be an astronomer after getting my mind blown about black holes, billions of galaxies, and possibilities of exploring other worlds. My mother, a lifelong Trekkie, burst that bubble after telling me she took an astronomy class in college and was disappointed to find out it was more about prime numbers than the Prime Directive.

The truth is, vast amounts of data gathered from early star charts to deep-space telemetry inspires the science fiction we know and love. It's common knowledge how massive quantities of data collected from ever-increasing computing power has upended the world, and special libraries are profoundly affected. Library management systems and research databases contain untapped potential to illuminate the struggles we face. What do our end users need? What are they using? And how can we satiate key stakeholders' ravenous desire for metrics and "bottom lines?"

This is a story about how someone who grew up allergic to numbers found herself somewhat of a subject-matter expert for data-gathering within her team. It started with sheer curiosity, plus happening on a couple of learning opportunities that on the surface seemed dry, but the applied knowledge I learned changed my life.

The first course was a database design class I took in library school. I strongly advise anyone going into this field to take such a course. A solid understanding of how databases work and how they are queried helps you not only research better, but evaluate new products and communicate with vendor partners on how they can improve their products.

The second opportunity was a staff meeting while I worked in the Knowledge Management team at Hogan Lovells, where a colleague demoed pivot tables. I went into it thinking it would be just another pointless meeting, then left euphoric when I saw how tedious spreadsheet tasks could be accomplished with a few clicks!

When I joined the research team at WilmerHale, the library had just upgraded their request management system to TRG Quest. Year after year, the workload seemed busier. I felt it, my colleagues felt it, and our managers felt it. I knew our systems were capturing data behind the scenes, but could it support our experience?

When I was not grinding away at requests from lawyers with deadlines that defied the laws of physics. I looked into the reporting features, starting with the simple out-of-the-box, "push button" reports. Most library management systems have this functionality (or at the very least, a way to export data to Excel). Working closely with my managers and colleagues, I collected data on total request numbers over the years... and was disappointed to see total request numbers were flat. Surely we couldn't show this to upper management.

Anyone who staffs a reference desk knows requests are not created equal. In the legal field, a single request surveying multi-state laws or extensive due diligence on multiple expert witnesses can tie up half the team and take hours; these requests carry the weight of 30+ requests for Wall Street Journal article pulls. Or, there's the request that appears to be a simple document pull, but it's a conference proceeding from 1992 in some esoteric print journal that's not in the public domain, and the only lending library that has it is a niche university in Germany. And let's not forget the request

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

with endless follow-up that—just when you think it's gone for good—appears a month later like that awkward social interaction from 5 years ago that suddenly popped into your head at 3:00 AM.

This is where simple numbers fall flat. My managers and I realized—we need to more than just report numbers—we need to leverage these metrics so they tell a story.

Stories are more than just words on a page. They are illustrative and impact our emotion along with our reason. They inspire us to learn more—to see the world in new ways. Just like analyzing spectrometry and angular motion of distant planetary bodies captivated the world with Star Trek, we can use our metrics to demonstrate our value. So how can we do that?

Pictures are Worth a Thousand Words

It may be cliché, but I can't stress infographics enough. Think about what metrics you want to capture. To start, explore what data your library management systems pull, and how to convey it pictorially. Microsoft Office tools have had charting wizards for decades. Today, many tools offer built-in AI assistants that will do this for you just by prompting.

For example, I noticed TRG Quest captured the number of interactions within a request ticket. It's assumed a ticket with more interactions is more complex, so I examined this further. I exported request data to Excel to see how many interactions requests tended to have by creating a distribution chart.

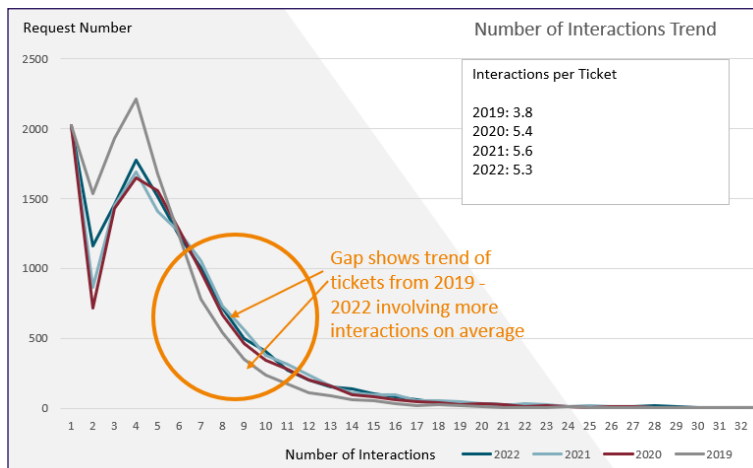


Figure 1: Ticket interaction chart

I found that there was a sustained increase of 40% of average interactions per ticket after 2020 (since COVID). While overall request numbers remained flat, this was one indicator that tickets were increasing in complexity.

Pivot Tables

I mentioned pivot tables previously, but what are they? Pivot tables enable you to take records from a very large dataset and summarize it in a neat table, so you don't have to manually crunch the numbers on specific categories of data. They allow you to focus on particular aspects of the raw data you capture. It is why I often prefer to export data to Excel so I can slice and dice a variety of different rows and columns. A Pivot Table can be created from a dataset by highlighting the rows and columns and selecting the relevant cells.

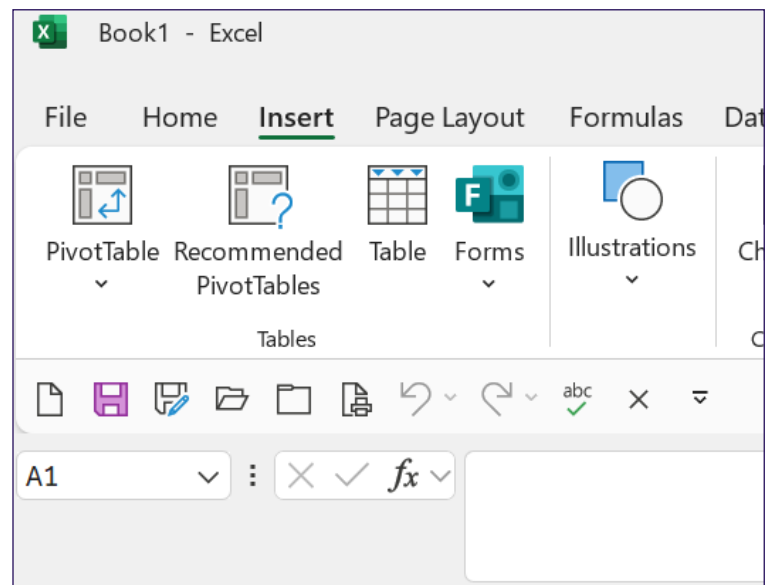


Figure 2: Pivot Table Menu

Below is an example of a Pivot Table showing both individual research and collective departmental expertise (names have been changed to protect the innocent). Thanks to the efforts of a large data-tagging project led by several of my WilmerHale colleagues, we could create a pivot table showing what kinds of requests the team handled in 2024. It's not just hard data, but a great opportunity to showcase expertise!

Assignee	Pitches	Case Law	Companies	Resources	Experts	Laws/Rules	Patent	People	Pro Bono	Securities	Grand Total
Scott, Michael		19	54	4	10	1	5	75		1	109
Halpert, Jim	2	14	63		1		13	33			132
Beadley, Pam		8	44	15	2		2	134		2	207
Malone, Kevin		14	61	2	19	4	2	105		4	211
Kapoor, Kelly		32	61	2	41	19	23	67		4	249
Schindler, Dwight		14	105	2	16	4	4	48		3	196
Bernard, Andy		16	19		44	2	15	74			170
Martin, Angela	1	28	84	5	20	15	4	95		6	258
Hudson, Stanley	1	21	72	2	21	6	7	144		13	267
Howard, Ryan	2	9	43		1	7	6	91		1	171
Vance, Philys		6	18		1	6	5	32		10	76
Martinez, Oscar		20	55	4	17	10	5	73		15	200
Grand Total	6	201	685	37	204	72	87	971	2	61	2196

Figure 3: Pivot Table of research expertise for prior year

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

We also used a pivot table from the previous year's 12,000+ requests to determine our busiest days. The data showed around 25% of requests come in outside of core business hours—BigLaw never sleeps!

I highly recommend taking advantage of any sessions on pivot tables and slicers if your organization offers them. If not, there are countless tutorials online. When you're willing to spend a few minutes Googling whether something can be done better, you may be surprised at how ingenious people think you are when you discover some good Samaritan on StackExchange or YouTube already figured it out.

Let Excel Do the Work

In addition to pivot tables, you can create visualizations from large datasets using an Excel feature called "Conditional Formatting". Conditional formatting automatically adds colors or icons based on a condition you specify, such as whether a number is over a certain amount or within a certain range, enabling you to quickly spot any trends and outliers.

As an example, I used the above 'Color Scales' to get a "heat map" on the number of requests that came in each day during 2024. This feature highlights larger request numbers in deeper red (and lower numbers in deeper blue) to show which periods are particularly busy.

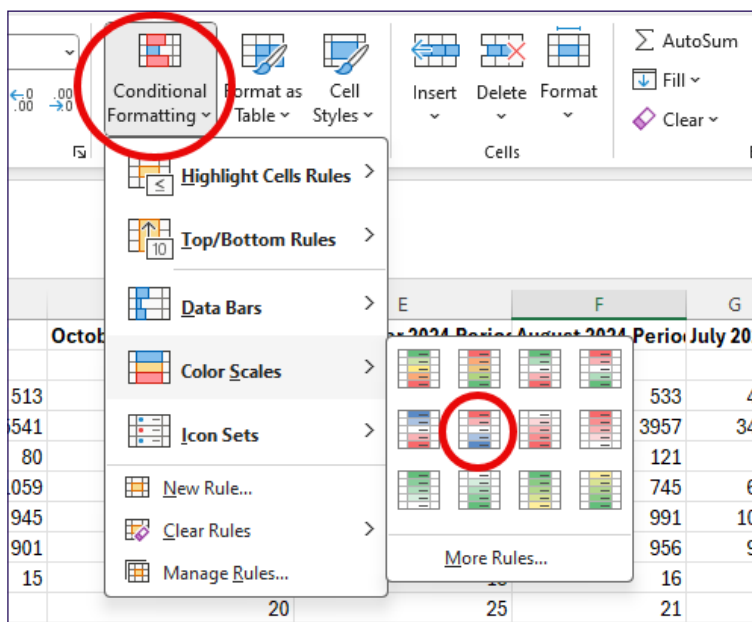


Figure 4: *Conditional Formatting Options in Excel*

Just as every request is not created equal, not every day is created equal. Using "Color Scales," I was able to see trends of busy times. For example I also noticed some interesting trends where there was a major crunch before the Thanksgiving holidays.

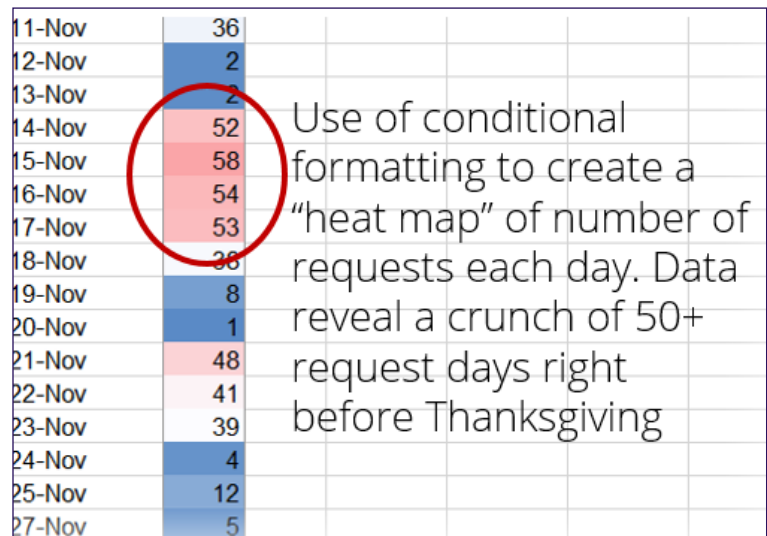


Figure 5: *Request rush right before Thanksgiving*

As many products continue to integrate AI assistants into their platforms, such as Microsoft co-Pilot, you can use the AI feature to simply enter a prompt with how you want the data displayed based on certain criteria, and the formatting will automatically be applied.

Make Your Case

While charts and conditional formatting can certainly help find the patterns in the data, they don't fully explain the "whats" and "whys." That is where case studies come in. Case studies are narratives that describe a particular subject or data-point. For example, drug researchers often write up case studies to provide accounts of individuals who respond favorably (or unfavorably) to a treatment. Case studies add context and (in many cases) personalization to the quantitative data in your study. Metrics may be the meat and potatoes, but case studies are the spices that add additional flavor.

Libraries and information centers often face the predicament of justifying staffing or resource increases to the powers-that-be who hold tight purse strings. When budgets are slim, it takes more creative convincing to get the funds flowing in your direction, and case studies can prove useful to enhance your position.

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Which statement has more impact?

- 1) We are receiving an increasing amount of requests for investment research reports, and we need to add aftermarket research to our subscription.
- 2) On August 23, Partner X received an inquiry from a potential client regarding a recently published analyst report that reported negatively on their stock. Partner X reached out to us to get the report, but were unable to source it quickly because it was out of plan and required cost approval. The following day, Partner X informed us that another firm with access to analyst reports was able to advise the client.

While the first statement may be concise and truthful, it lacks the punch to the “bottom line” that the second account does. Qualitative measures such as case studies not only appeal to a desire for information, but can strike an emotional chord when illustrating how people and businesses are directly affected. As job applicants must be prepared for the inevitable “give me an example of” question in an interview, it’s important to be prepared to answer similar types of questions regarding your numbers. To start, consider recent successes and pain-points, and think about how they can relate to the needs of your audience.

As mentioned previously at WilmerHale, my team faced increasing workload issues and not enough staff to meet the deadlines. Many information professionals face this dilemma, only to be told “But you have enough people!” I thought about how a managing partner would think when numbers showed we had 20 researchers, and they would assume all 20 of us are available all hours of the day, to handle whatever the lawyers can throw at us.

Then I remembered a particularly hectic reference shift I handled around lunchtime on a Thursday in July of 2023. There were many competing urgent requests, and not enough available researchers to take them. Within 30 minutes, requests came in for same-day expert due diligence, urgent docket research, and a request for a document from a resource that only a few researchers could access.

After putting out the fires, I looked at request data and the number of colleagues available at that time. To add punch to this narrative, I decided to create an infographic rather than write an account. As mentioned before, pictures are powerful, so I created a simple diagram using Microsoft Office and presented it to my managers, so they could see just how thinly staffed we were on a typical weekday afternoon.

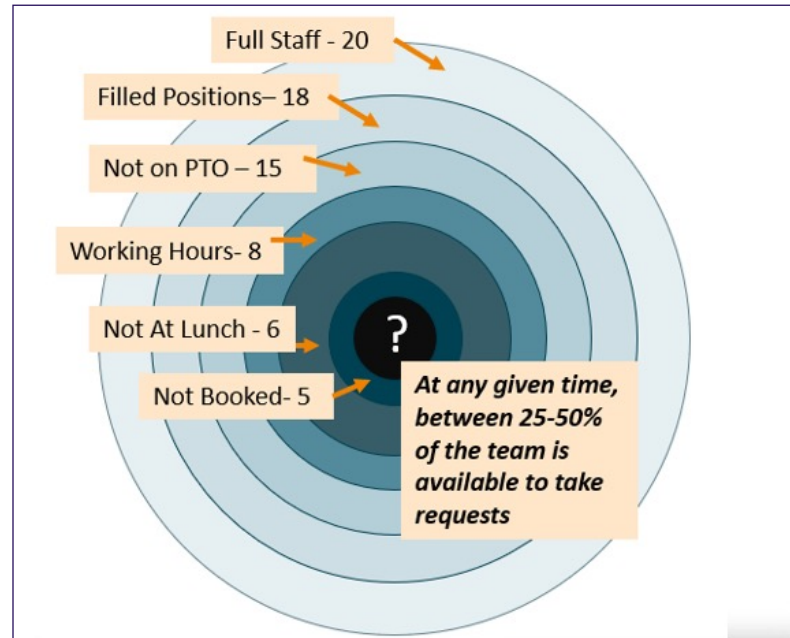


Figure 6: Actual number of available staff during lunchtime on a busy Thursday

Surely we could increase our availability if we did away with pesky things such as lunch and paid leave, but this particular case indicates that if staffing levels are not increased, there are risks to deliverables not being met, staff burnout, and client dissatisfaction; these all affect the bottom line, and can differentiate a high performing team from one that is constantly in fight-or-flight mode.

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Summing It Up

The best time to start collecting data is yesterday. If you find yourself needing hard numbers for a management report, or want to upskill on data analytics, here are a few tips to get started:

- Meet regularly with stakeholders (managers, internal clients, patrons) to understand their needs and ask what kinds of data points would be helpful.
- Engage colleagues for help. You may be surprised what skills your team can bring to the table.
- Ask product vendors what reporting options are available in your library's systems.
- Speak with your internal technology training teams, or look into free data management / statistics courses on sites like Coursera.
- If a task or data clean-up project seems tedious, search the web for accounts on how other people handle it.
- Keep a running file on your successes and pain-points and consider how to incorporate them into your overall numbers.

You don't have to be a math whiz to become a subject matter expert on data gathering within your team, although strong quantitative skills will help. Data projects are never meant to be done alone. The most important components to creating a compelling story using numbers involve: a desire to ask "why," the time to learn new skills, and a supportive team.



Laura Stein
*Research Services Specialist,
WilmerHale*

Cultivating Ethical Data Stewardship for Undergraduate Research: A Framework and Toolkit Duo

By Wei Zakharov, Senay Purzer, and Carla B. Zoltowski

Data drives nearly every aspect of research today, from the earliest stages of problem definition to the final dissemination of results. Undergraduate students—often at the beginning of their research journeys—are increasingly working with complex, data-intensive projects. Yet many enter these environments without sufficient training in how to manage, share, and use data responsibly. They may know how to run code or analyze a dataset, but questions of ethics, reproducibility, preservation, and stewardship are rarely an explicit part of this preparation.

To address this gap, our interdisciplinary research team at Purdue University launched a multi-year, NSF-funded project entitled *Prioritizing Data Life Cycle Ethical Management for Shaping Next Generation Researchers* (NSF IUSE Award #2236241). The project's focus is on educating undergraduate

researchers and supporting their research mentors in engineering and broadly in STEM. As a result, undergraduate researchers will be equipped to become competent and ethical consumers and producers of data.

Our approach builds on and integrates three distinct traditions: (1) engineering design reasoning, (2) the data life cycle management, and (3) ethical decision-making. Together these inform what we have named the Data Stewardship Framework. Through this framework, and a growing toolkit of resources, we aim to provide undergraduates and their mentors with structured opportunities to practice conscientious data stewardship.

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

From Framework to Practice

We define Data Stewardship as the responsible and long-term care and management of data. While traditionally a researcher is defined as someone who conducts systematic investigations, we emphasize that a researcher is a steward of information. They gather data without exploiting, make claims with integrity, and look after data before passing them on to future stewards.

The **Data Stewardship Framework** was first introduced at the 2024 ASEE Annual Conference (Purzer, Zoltowski, Zakharov, & Arigye, 2024). The project team collected feedback and refined our initial framework and further developed it to reflect a well-integrated perspective of data, design, and ethical reasoning. The data stewardship framework brings together three existing models into a new integrative approach:

1. **Design Reasoning Quadrants:** a model of how engineers reason through design, from experiential observations to trade-offs, first principles, and future reasoning (Quintana-Cifuentes & Purzer, 2022).
2. **Big Data Life Cycle Model:** a guide for managing data across planning, acquisition, description, preparation, analysis, preservation, discovery, and quality assurance (Pouchard, 2015).
3. **Reflexive Principlism for ethical reasoning:** grounded in beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice (Beever & Brightman, 2016).

At the heart of the integration is the practice of negotiating risks and benefits. Every design or data decision carries potential advantages and harms. By centering students' learning on this negotiation, the framework aligns technical design, data, and ethical reasoning in an integrated manner.

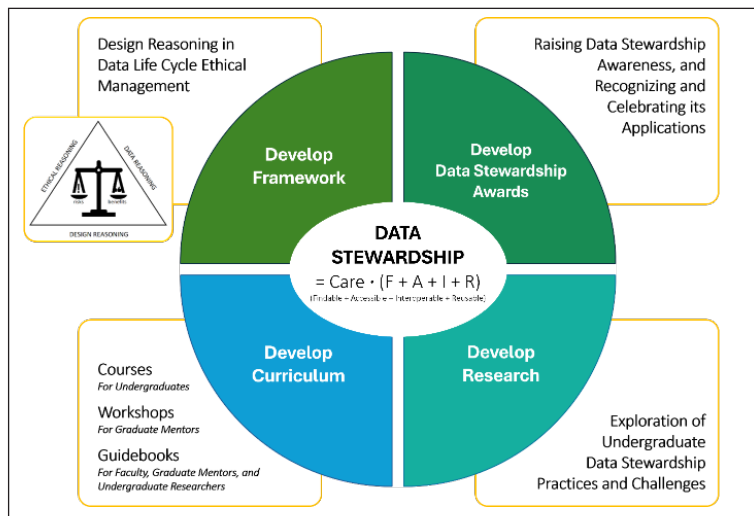


Figure 1: Data Stewardship Framework to Practice

Toolkit Development

One of the early lessons from our pilot courses was that students wanted concrete examples they could model and apply directly. While they valued discussions of ethics and stewardship, they asked for “guidebooks, worksheets, and concrete examples” to help them practice. In response, our team began to build a Data Stewardship Toolkit, which now includes:

- **A Guidebook/Handbook:** currently in open-access development, later to be published as *Stewards of Data: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate Researchers in Engineering and Applied Sciences* (Purzer, Zakharov, & Zoltowski, forthcoming 2026).
- **Rubrics for Evaluation:** applied at undergraduate research poster sessions to assess how well students articulate and practice data stewardship.
- **Design Review Conversation Tool:** adapted from our ASEE framework, this tool provides mentors with structured prompts for eliciting data, design, and ethical reasoning in coaching sessions.
- **Workshops and Worksheets:** including exercises on data management planning, documenting datasets, file naming and organization, data quality evaluation, and practicing FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles (Wilkinson et al., 2016).

Together, these resources allow us to move from abstract ideas to applied practices in undergraduate research settings.

Embedding the Framework in Courses

Our project is anchored in real instructional contexts. Over two years, we piloted and refined the framework in multiple undergraduate courses and undergraduate research programs:

- **ILS 395: Understanding Your Research Data:** launched in Spring 2024 and taught again in Spring 2025 via the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR) program. This hybrid-format course enrolled 15 undergraduate research scholars. Students applied stewardship principles to their own research projects and presented their studies at the Purdue Undergraduate Research Expo. Reflections showed increased confidence in managing data and recognition of how good stewardship supports research success.
- **ILS 103: Foundations of Data Management:** offered every semester, this course provides a foundation in the concepts of data organization, management, ethical considerations, preservation, and publication. Enrollment has grown steadily, with around 80 students each semester.

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

- **VIP (Vertically Integrated Projects) Teams:** faculty-led, multi-semester research projects where undergraduates collaborate with graduate students and faculty. We worked with UAV, computer vision, and AI tutor teams to integrate data stewardship practices directly into ongoing research.

By embedding stewardship training into both credit-bearing courses and undergraduate research programs, we ensure that students practice these skills in both structured learning environments and authentic research contexts.

Recognizing Stewardship through Awards

In 2025, we launched the Data Stewardship Awards at the Purdue Undergraduate Research Conference. This was the first initiative of its kind across the Big Ten universities. Thirty-five teams applied, and three awards were granted based on a rubric that evaluated data practices alongside research quality. The awards serve two purposes:

1. **Recognition:** signaling to students that data stewardship is valued and celebrated, not just an invisible back-end task.
2. **Culture Change:** encouraging faculty and graduate mentors to support and reinforce data stewardship, since award criteria emphasize data documentation, preservation, and ethical awareness.

These awards complement our courses and toolkit by raising the profile of data stewardship institutionally.

Graduate Mentor Perspectives

Undergraduate research often relies heavily on graduate students for day-to-day mentorship. To better understand how stewardship practices were modeled and reinforced, we conducted a study of graduate mentors in Purdue's Virtually Integrated Projects (VIP) program.

Graduate mentors were interviewed using the Data Information Literacy (DIL) Toolkit (Carlson, Sapp Nelson, et al., 2015). Findings showed that while mentors emphasized technical skills like coding, simulation, and analysis, they observed persistent weaknesses in documentation, metadata creation, and long-term data preservation. Both noted that ethical practices were often informal or inconsistently applied.

These insights highlight the critical role graduate mentors play as "frontline guides" for undergraduates (Dolan & Johnson, 2009). They also reinforce the importance of providing mentors themselves with stewardship resources—templates, checklists, and training—that they can use to guide undergraduates.

Impacts and Outcomes

Across two years, the project has had several measurable impacts:

- **Curricular Reach:** More than 200 undergraduates have engaged with data stewardship through our courses, workshops, and research teams.
- **Mentorship:** Graduate students and faculty mentors are adopting stewardship practices, supported by tools and rubrics.
- **Recognition:** Institutional awards and the forthcoming undergraduate research program level data stewardship certificates are embedding stewardship into the culture of undergraduate research.
- **Scholarship:** Our team has disseminated findings through SLA, ASEE, ACRL, MLA, and RDAP presentations, as well as forthcoming publications and an open-access handbook.

Beyond numbers, students report greater confidence in handling data, a better understanding of ethical responsibilities, and a recognition that stewardship is not separate from research—it is integral to it.



Figure 2: Project Team Left to Right: Juan Jose Ruiz Maza Nava, Prof. Senay Purzer, Joreen Arigye, Prof. Wei Zakharov, Sarah Michelle Sewell, Prof. Carla B. Zoltowski

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Reflections and Conclusions

Our work offers three key lessons for the broader SLA and library community:

- 1. Frameworks are Essential but must be Translated into Practical Tools.** Students engage deeply with data stewardship when abstract principles are translated into concrete practices: rubrics, worksheets, and recognition programs.
- 2. Mentorship is Pivotal.** Graduate mentors have a significant influence on undergraduates' data practices. Equipping them with stewardship resources can generate ripple effects across research teams.
- 3. Recognition Shapes Culture.** By awarding stewardship excellence, institutions can signal that ethical data management is not peripheral but central to research excellence.

Looking forward, we will continue refining the framework, expanding the toolkit, and collaborating with faculty, students, and programs to embed stewardship more deeply in undergraduate research. As undergraduate research becomes increasingly data-intensive, sustained collaboration among graduate mentors, faculty, and librarians will be essential to fostering a culture of responsible data practices.

Acknowledgment: This work is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF IUSE Award #2236241). We thank our advisory board, student researchers, and faculty collaborators for their invaluable contributions.

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Using Generative AI to Answer Legal Research Questions: A Quick and Dirty Comparison

By Abigail Ross

We librarians are inundated with articles on Artificial Intelligence (AI): how it will make legal research easier, how it's hallucinating, how it improves products we already pay for, and how it will make our jobs obsolete. In an effort to parse how useful some of this technology really is, my company, RoFinCo, LLC, was hired to run a variety of legal research questions through various generative AI products. The goal was to provide the client with a practical guide to what these products can REALLY do (not what their creators SAY they can do), to gauge how they can be used in legal research, and to see how they improve or change over the coming months. To that end, here is one example of our results.¹

Question

We were tasked with putting together a survey of states that restrict access to public records via the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (or equivalent) to prisoners. This was proving tricky because not all states refer to this process as FOIA and even the term used for (former or current) residents of prisons varied wildly (inmates, prisoners, incarcerated individuals, etc.). Plus, the types of restrictions imposed can run the gamut from just filling out a different form all the way to forbidding prisoners from ever requesting public records of any kind. There appeared to be no survey available from the usual sources and building our own through brute force is always a tactic of last resort. This seemed like a good test case.

There are many generative AI tools available these days. We chose a handful for our question; for this article I'm going to highlight the results of four: Gemini, ChatGPT, CoPilot, and Perplexity.²

The final prompt we came up with was: *which states impose restrictions on prisoners' access to public records?* Though not as involved as a librarian would want, we were trying to craft a prompt that your average associate might use in looking for

an answer. Here are the results.

Gemini

I desperately want to love Gemini. I remember when Google first burst on the scene and I used it to try to convince my colleagues at the American Embassy in Germany (where I was interning for the summer) that this Internet thing was really going to take off; Google was leading the charge and they should pay attention. I'm not sure how successful I was, but I was sold and I'm a Google fanatic. I own a Pixel and a Google watch, and Google is always my first stop for general-use search engines. For all that, Gemini results have been....mixed. The initial response to our prompt above was uninspiring and focused more on the definition of public records than on the answer the associate needed:

- *It's important to clarify that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) is a federal law that applies to federal agencies, not state or local governments. Therefore, the question of how many states don't allow prisoners to file FOIA requests doesn't hold ground because FOIA doesn't apply to state-level information.*
- *However, each state has its own public records access laws, which often function similarly to FOIA and give individuals, including incarcerated individuals, the right to request access to government records. These state laws vary widely in their specific provisions and procedures, including whether and how prisoners can submit requests.*
- *Here's some additional information to consider:*
- *Several states explicitly allow prisoners to submit public records requests under their laws.*
- *In other states, the law may not explicitly address prisoners' rights, but courts have interpreted it to allow them to submit requests under certain circumstances.*

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

- *Some states impose restrictions on prisoners' access to public records, such as limitations on the types of records they can request or the format in which they can receive them.*
- *If you're interested in knowing whether prisoners in a specific state can file public records requests, you'll need to research the relevant state law or consult with an attorney specializing in access to information laws.*

There were no sources cited, no links to additional information—just a summary of what I needed to think about to answer this question, which to put it mildly, is a “duh” moment for a librarian.³ Clearly, it latched on to the idea of “access to public records=FOIA” and ran with that. Potentially useful, but not an answer to the question as no specific states were mentioned and we were no further along in our research than before. Though the sentence on the courts' interpretation was something worth noting.

ChatGPT

When discussing generative AI, ChatGPT is always the first mentioned. It is free to use (after registration) in its most basic iteration, but all the bells and whistles require payment. Here is the free ChatGPT response:

- *Restrictions on prisoners' access to public records can vary significantly by jurisdiction. While there isn't a comprehensive list detailing which states impose such restrictions, it's common for prisons to regulate the access prisoners have to certain types of information, including public records.*
- *The rationale behind these restrictions often revolves around concerns regarding security, privacy, and potential misuse of information. For example, prisoners may be restricted from accessing certain public records related to ongoing criminal investigations, confidential personal information of individuals not involved in their case, or information that could compromise institutional security.*
- *These restrictions are typically implemented at the institutional level and may vary based on factors such as the severity of the offense, the behavior of the individual prisoner, and the policies of the specific correctional facility or state department of corrections.*
- *If you're specifically interested in the policies of a particular state or jurisdiction, you may need to consult the regulations or guidelines provided by the relevant department of corrections or legal authorities in that area.*

This is a great summary of the issue, and we ended up using the bones of this for our introductory paragraph, though we removed that second sentence because, as we will see down below, there actually ARE lists that detail which states impose restrictions. The information itself, though, is lacking. No states are listed, no sources given even for the summary provided, nothing I could use to take my research to the next step.

CoPilot

Microsoft's CoPilot has been receiving a lot of press recently, though not always for the right reasons. Hallucinations, fake quotes and security vulnerabilities seem to dominate the headlines. But Microsoft is a solid company and they are the industry leader by market share. Plus now that it's wrapped into their suite of products, it is widely recognizable even by people who don't use AI resources on a daily basis. Here was CoPilot's answer to our prompt:

Access to public records varies significantly across states and territories in the United States. Each state has its own laws that define what constitutes a public record, outline exemptions, and establish rules for access. Here are some key points:

1. **State-Specific Laws:** *Every state has its own public records laws. These laws determine what information is considered a public record, which government offices are exempt from these laws, and the deadline for responding to records requests. For instance, in **Virginia**, requests can be denied if they are not submitted by a resident of the state, and records must be produced or a written response provided within 5 business days.*
2. **Restrictions for Incarcerated Individuals:** *Some states place restrictions on public records access for people who have had contact with the criminal legal system. These restrictions can vary widely. If you are incarcerated or under community supervision, your ability to access public records may be limited in certain states.*
3. **Federal Government:** *Similarly, the federal government also has laws granting public access to most government information. Accessing these records can provide valuable information for advocacy and reform efforts.*

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

4. Common Challenges: Obtaining the information you need can be challenging due to the differing rules across jurisdictions. Additionally, you can only request existing documents; agencies cannot create new ones for you. Therefore, understanding how to navigate these challenges is crucial for advocates and researchers.

Remember that public records play a vital role in promoting transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. If you're advocating for criminal justice reform, understanding your state's public records laws can empower your efforts to create positive change.

They cited four websites:

1. A guide to public records requests for advocates seeking reform of the criminal legal system—<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/trainings/records.html>.
2. Restrictions on access to criminal records: A national survey—<https://ccresourcecenter.org/2017/03/09/restrictions-on-access-to-criminal-records-a-national-survey/>.
3. What is Considered a Criminal Record? <https://staterecords.org/criminal.php>.
4. Public Records Law and State Legislatures—<https://www.ncsl.org/cls/public-records-law-and-state-legislatures>.

That first item had a great chart: *Restrictions on public records access for people who are incarcerated or under community supervision*, last updated in June 2023. Though it did not have everything we needed, it ended up being one of two sources that formed the basis of our response to the question. The other three links were not as helpful.

Perplexity

Perplexity differentiates itself by focusing on search capabilities, rather than the conversational or creative AI of other tools. They purport to check more sources and include news in their results (particularly in their fee-based Pro version). It uses a combination of advanced large language models (GPT-4 Omni, Claude 3.5 Sonnet and Claude 3 Opus), along with natural language processing, to produce results. Here is the Perplexity response:

Some states impose restrictions on prisoners' access to public records. For example:

- *Arizona: Incarcerated individuals can only access their own automated summary record before each hearing.*
- *Arkansas: Access to public records for individuals serving a sentence of imprisonment in a state or federal correctional facility is denied, except for constitutionally protected rights.*
- *Texas: The government is not required to respond to records requests from incarcerated individuals.*
- *Kentucky: The Department of Corrections is not required to comply with requests from inmates unless the record contains a specific reference to that individual.*
- *Louisiana: The commissioner may withhold records from incarcerated individuals.*
- *Idaho: People who are incarcerated or on parole may be denied access to certain records regarding their incarceration.*
- *Washington: Inmates can request records and sue for damages if their request is not fulfilled, but damages are only awarded if bad faith is proven.*
- *These restrictions vary by state and are aimed at balancing the rights of incarcerated individuals with security concerns and administrative efficiency within correctional facilities.*

Now we're getting somewhere—actual states are mentioned! Obviously, we'd have to find (statutory) supporting documentation for all of those states, but if we had to build a survey from scratch, at least we would now have somewhere to start. It also cited to an interesting article—*Academics Find Prisoners Denied Access to Public Information*,⁴ which in turn cited a law review article (*Access Denied: Public Records and Incarcerated People*⁵), which ended up forming the basis of our response to this question. (For every academic law librarian who is reading this and teaches legal research to first-year law students, I know you are banging your heads on your keyboards while yelling “always check secondary sources first!!” Now you can feel vindicated. I see you!)

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Takeaways

So where did all this work get us? Did using these AI tools make answering this question any easier? Here are my takeaways:

- In a result that will surprise no librarian anywhere in the world, a product's output is really only as good as the input. What sources are fed into the AI (used for training or available for searching) determine what kind of answer you're going to get. As we know all too well, a lot of the "information" available through traditional search engines is junk or misleading or flat-out untrue. At best, it's uncited or unsourced or unreliable. Feed all of that into AI....and what you get back is going to be the same. We found two sources from our efforts above to kick-start our research, but none of them provided a thorough response and we had to double-check everything in primary sources.
- Don't ever let anyone tell you that librarians aren't prompt engineers. We are the OG prompt engineers [editors note: slang abbreviation for "original gangster," used to describe a respected veteran in a field]. We have been doing this for, literally, thousands of years. Give me a few minutes to learn the peculiarities of any generative AI tool and I guarantee my prompts will be better written than 99.9% of the rest of the (non-librarian) world. All those years of diving into card catalogues and databases with super-literal interpretations come in handy here. So go forth and call yourselves prompt engineers without any hesitation or modesty. (We purposefully kept our prompt simple for this particular project but later attempts and questions with more detailed prompts yielded more actionable results.)
- Complexity is often missing from current AI tools; they are trained to summarize, to simplify, to consolidate information into bite-size, digestible chunks. That's fine for certain questions from average searchers, but librarians asking legal questions aren't really looking for that. I don't need the SHORT answer, I need the CORRECT answer. Funnily enough, this is the same problem I've been having with the large information provider AI products: they work too hard at giving me the quick answer, when what I really need is the right answer.⁶

- AI can't go behind paywalls to find everything we have access to and probably never will due to copyright infringement. The most useful source that came out of all our efforts above was the law review article, which we also found on the major legal information providers in a parallel Boolean search. The citation came up as a Perplexity source, but the full text was behind a paywall and only accessible because we have access to the major third-party information vendors. Given those copyright concerns, I suspect that content providers are going to end up licensing their content to specific AI providers, so we may end up right back where we are now in terms of the legal information provider oligopoly. That's bad news in terms of access to information, but also good news because I believe we librarians and information specialists will still be in high demand.

I have found in the course of this experiment that the generative AI tools produce good "executive summaries" of my questions. They make excellent starting points for introductory paragraphs for white papers and client reports, but they don't produce the "meat" of the response. That content still has to be diligently researched, synthesized and organized into research results by a human being. I have no doubt these services will continue to improve, but for now, I don't feel I'm going to be replaced. In fact, the more of these questions I experiment with, the more I prove my worth to my clients, and I believe all librarians can do the same. Our functionality has always been similar to an AI tool in that we gather and filter all information in response to a query and produce a list of sources and/or summary to answer a patron's question. It may take us more time than a website, but our results will be meticulously cited and we guarantee no hallucinated cases or facts.

I now view these generative AI sites as I do the big four legal information providers: one more useful item in my toolkit, but not a replacement or even a direct threat. I believe these AI tools will enhance our roles as information "cross-pollinators" since connecting diverse information needs across an organization still requires human judgment to ensure relevance, clarity, accountability, reliability and, most importantly, trustworthiness.

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

References:

- ¹ This is part of an ongoing project I spoke on at SLA 2024 and SLA 2025—*Use Cases for Generative AI in Answering Research Questions*.
- ² There are many more options out there; see Artificial Intelligence (Generative) resources <https://guides.library.georgetown.edu/ai/tools> or other such LibGuides for a place to start.
- ³ In an interesting endnote to this test, when I ran this question through Gemini again a few weeks later, it gave me the same Prison Legal News article Perplexity did and a better summary—so it IS learning!
- ⁴ “Academics Find Prisoners Denied Access to Public Information,” October 15, 2023, <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2023/oct/15/academics-find-prisoners-denied-access-public-information/>.
- ⁵ “Access Denied: Public Records and Incarcerated People,” 19 St. Thomas L. J. 220 (2023).
- ⁶ As an aside, we have run this and other questions through Westlaw CoCounsel and Lexis Protégé. These two were not part of the original project, partly because they weren’t available yet and partly because once they were, not everyone out there doing legal research has access to them. We have now incorporated them into our methodology. CoCounsel, for this particular example, could not give us an answer outside of Federal jurisdiction. Protégé put together a nifty little 50-state survey, but it missed at least one state and two others we checked were slightly incorrect in their statutory summaries, though the ability to download those results directly into a spreadsheet meant the results were much easier to work with when we went through to double-check. I have high hopes for both products—if for no other reason than I know the input is pulled from their databases and not just random noise, making them much more reliable from the get-go.
- ⁷ See, for example, “Business Insider parent Axel Springer inks deal with OpenAI,” December 13, 2023, <https://www.theverge.com/2023/12/13/23999861/openai-axel-springer-chatgpt-ai-content-insider-politico>; “News Corp and OpenAI Sign Landmark Multi-Year Global Partnership,” May 22, 2024, <https://investors.newscorp.com/news-releases/news-release-details/news-corp-and-openai-sign-landmark-multi-year-global-partnership>; “Who’s suing AI and who’s signing,” August 12, 2025, <https://pressgazette.co.uk/platforms/news-publisher-ai-deals-lawsuits-openai-google/>.



Abigail Ross

Principal of RoFinCo, LLC, a research and library management company located in northern Virginia, which provides temporary coverage, overflow and specialty project research to law firms and companies around the world.

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Competitive Sales Battlecards: Analysis-Based Approaches to Drive Effective Results

Presented by Ed Allison of CompetelQ for SCIP, the Strategic Consortium of Intelligence Professionals, March 11–13, 2025; Reviewed by Jennifer Evans

Special librarians' jobs are as unique as the companies in which they work. Many of us find our roles have evolved over the years to meet the needs of the businesses we serve, and our small physical information centers are now vast digital collections supporting a global workforce. Our services are broader than before—expanding beyond maintaining a catalog to curating unique collections like a parts petting zoo. We care for corporate history collections and manage equipment lending programs. As information professionals, we are naturally curious and tenacious and stay abreast of changes in our industries so we can be prepared for what's next. When our library team was reorganized into the corporate marketing division under Market and Customer Insights, we soon added survey creation and competitive intelligence (CI) to our core competencies.

To better understand CI best practices, I joined SLA's Competitive Intelligence Community and was introduced to the offerings of the Strategic Consortium of Intelligence Professionals (SCIP). SCIP offers workshops, webinars, and resources to members, including benchmarks, case studies, videos, articles, podcasts, blogs, and newsletters. They offer accredited certification programs in CI fundamentals and advanced topics in AI, human intelligence, behavioral analysis, and applied intelligence practices. As the team lead for the curation and maintenance of our software company's competitor battlecard collection, I was curious how other companies manage their battlecard processes. When I saw the SCIP course on competitive sales battlecards, I applied for the SLA Continuing Education Scholarship to enroll. I am pleased to share what I learned in the multi-day course presented by Ed Allison of CompetelQ.

Day one of *Competitive Sales Battle Cards: Analysis-Based Approaches to Drive Effective Results* began with an introduction from Ed and an overview of the course. He mentioned some of the most common battlecard questions he has received over his twenty-plus year career as a CI practitioner, specifically those regarding design (format, content), impact (timeliness, usability), and content updates (cadence, intelligence gathering). Before diving into the methods, strategies, and techniques of best-in-class battlecards, it is necessary to define them.

Battlecards (also written battle cards) are created to aid sales and marketing teams in competitor-specific situations. Battlecards are not one-size-fits-all. They should be constructed to meet the needs of the various audiences using them, including account managers, product marketers, and sales. Generally, the content includes key insights into a competitor's product, including details on the comparable offering (technical, design, etc.), competitor claims (including how to attack and defend against them), product differentiation, and strengths and weaknesses. Also important are insights from sales, including customer perception, win/loss details, and tactics on how to beat the competition and win the deal. Battlecards are a deliverable and not just static documents. The format of this information can be in a regularly updated printed dossier, a spreadsheet, outlined in a collaborative platform like SharePoint, or arranged online using a competitive intelligence enablement tool. There can be many variations in the format and content of battlecards, but one thing is constant: they must be part of an overall CI program, or they will fail.

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Ed spent time in this first session explaining the importance of a holistic CI program that includes a vision and mission, processes, and deliverables, such as battlecards. The program requires a top-down/bottom-up team approach that goes beyond just the generation of the competitive intel. On one end, it needs executive sponsorship. That can be a cross-functional Executive Steering Committee that provides insight into corporate strategy, market segmentation and messaging, and product development. On the other end, it needs Field Champions, whose role is to deliver feedback on the deliverables. This is not only key to understanding the impact battlecards have for their consumers, but regular quarterly conversations with Field Champions help inform battlecard content with important observations from the front line. Ed concluded the day underscoring that battlecards will have a greater impact when they are created in an orchestrated process with involvement from others.

Day two of the course began with a quick recap of the previous day's content and a reminder of the importance of the CI program and the operations team, including the Executive Steering Committee at one level and the Field Champions at the other. Adjunct team members can include people in legal, procurement, and HR. Before jumping into the day's lesson on battlecard content, Ed shared examples of recruitment requests for executive sponsors and Field Champions to help grow the operations team.

We reviewed several examples of battlecards and discussed who the content is for (e.g., inside sales, external partner, account executives), what level of information (e.g., company, product, persona), and other considerations that differentiated them from generic battlecards (i.e., are they market, industry, or competitive battlecards?). We then discussed the concept of tiering, or the level and amount of research and time you as the creator will deliver. For example, Tier 1 may be the largest commitment that includes battlecards and strategic reports on a monthly cadence. Tier 2 may be a newsletter and state of the market report on a bimonthly or quarterly schedule. Tier 3 may be news alerts pushed out as relevant information is published or surfaced.

Next, we turned our attention to the heart of the battlecard: comparisons. Comparisons define and control how your company differentiates itself from a competitor. It is important to normalize the comparison and seek criteria—the specific, individual items to be compared—that are based on your company's strategy. Note that these may differ depending on the consumer of the battlecard or industry into

which the company sells. Normalized criteria means deciding how to measure the differences of the products. It could be numeric, yes/no, rating symbols like Harvey Balls, or text, if used succinctly. The recommendation is to limit the number of criteria to less than 25 to keep the content manageable and useful. Criteria can be further divided into groups and sub-categories with the goal to make identification of unique differentiation easier. Criteria lists evolve; what was important last year may not be an area of focus now.

The content of day three included crafting competitive messages, including key messages, positioning statements and proof points, and constructing a “Silver Bullet.” Before we started, Ed reminded us that there is not one single best format for battlecards. It can be a one-page document, a multi-page report on a single company, a feature matrix, a competitive playbook, or a sales guide. It is the content and the message that matter more than the format.

Many battlecards fail because of the lack of competitive messaging backed up by hard facts, what Ed calls proof points. The proof points support the key messages that define the positioning statements, which are used to differentiate your company from your competitors. Think of the competitive message as an outline:

- I. Position Statement (“We are the industry leader in widgets.”)
 - a. Key Message 1 (“We are 30X faster than our competitor.”)
 - i. Proof Point (fact from 2023 study from analyst firm)
 - ii. Proof Point (fact from additional analyst report)
 - b. Key Message 2 (“We are 4.6X more productive in accessing and preparing widgets than competing solutions.”)
 - i. Proof Point (fact from benchmark study)
- II. Position Statement 2 (“Our widgets are the most trusted in the industry”)
 - a. Key Message (“9/10 widget users trust our company”)
 - i. Proof Point, etc. (fact from consumer study)

Consider a positioning hierarchy when creating the message. Start with the company's global statement and break it down to the sub-industry level. Good positioning statements are fact-based and clearly identify the strengths of your product, service, or company. Keep in mind the problem the customer is trying to solve and why they should consider your product, etc. Weaknesses of competitors in these areas can be potential attack points.

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Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Attack points work both ways. Competitors will make claims or position statements regarding your product, so you need to be able to defend these statements with fact-based responses. Crafting a Silver Bullet—a refined, specialized proof point—controls the narrative of why the customer should choose your company over a competitor. Ed suggests translating the feature comparisons into customer benefit and loss statements and then identifying areas of advantage. Silver Bullets can be offensive or defensive and target a specific competitor or none at all. For example, your target customer is concerned about the price of your product, which is typically more expensive than the competitor's offerings. The speed at which your company's products operate is an advantage. More widgets produced in a faster period benefit your potential customer resulting in efficiency and increased output. A Silver Bullet statement could be: "Although we may not be the cheapest option, we are the fastest in the industry and we know speed to market is important. We are consistently ranked as Leaders by Analyst Firm X and Analyst Firm Y in this area and in a recent benchmark study, we proved to be 4.6X more productive in accessing and preparing widgets than competing solutions. Sure, Competitor A is cheaper, but their product can't come close to the productivity our widgets offer. You will certainly get what you pay for—decreased efficiency and reduced profits—if you choose to go with them." You can further support the Silver Bullet statement with attack and defend positioning.

An important component of battlecard content is Win/Loss data. Learning from past deals is key to improving the performance of sales teams. Collecting insights from internal and external (customers or prospective customers)

sources is critical to the CI program. The data can be used to better understand differentiation as well as guide the messaging and position statements, making them more meaningful to potential customers and more effective for sales. The information can also inform other departments in the company, such as marketing and product development. Incentivize Win/Loss participation with items like gift cards and show appreciation to those who participate in the interview process by acknowledging them through an internal channel. Remember to run the CI program like a business: collect metrics, survey your users, refine your methodology, and continuously evaluate your deliverables for effectiveness.

On each day of the course, Ed provided opportunities to put what we learned into practice with exercises and discussions. He also offered several book suggestions, including:

- *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance* by Michael E. Porter (Free Press, 1985)
- *Win/Loss Analysis: How to Capture and Keep the Business You Want* by Ellen Naylor (Park Hill Press, 2016)
- *Win/Loss Reviews: A New Knowledge Model for Competitive Intelligence* by Rick Marcet (Wiley, 2011).

The third and fourth days were combined because our previous knowledge of the topic allowed us to move faster through the content. He covered so much in the course that I am sure I have missed a few things in my overview, so be sure to check out the course next time it is offered. Overall, it was beneficial to me and the work I do. It helped me understand what we are doing right and what we can tweak to align with best practices. My thanks to the SLA Scholarship Committee for providing me with the funds to participate in this course.



Jennifer Evans

Senior Electronic Resources Librarian, SAS Institute

Continuing Education Scholarship Awardee

continued

A look at the 2025 MSU IT Educational Technology Summit

By Sophia Guevara

I recently asked for permission to attend Michigan State University's IT Educational Technology Summit. The event was held virtually June 2-5, 2025. According to this page, <https://tech.msu.edu/news/2025/05/msu-educational-technology-summit-showcases-leading-technology-tools-2/>, the event was meant to “highlight the technologies that enhance teaching and learning and promote student success...” After reading this description, I thought that it would be a good idea to write an article about the event as I thought that it would be of particular interest to those in the Academic/Education and IT Communities of the Special Libraries Association.

I reached out to learn more about the summit and was put in touch with K. J. Downer-Shojgreen, Instructional Design Manager within the Educational Technology department of MSU Information Technology (MSU IT). Here are the answers from the interview.

How did the MSU IT Ed Tech Summit come about?

The MSU IT Educational Technology Summit was created to connect our faculty and staff directly with vendors and each other. It's a space to share how they're using tech in the classroom and to inspire others to do the same to provide a better student experience. We within Educational Technology see it as a professional development opportunity focused on enhancing student learning through technology.

Is it all virtual?

Yes, the 2025 Educational Technology Summit was fully virtual.

What kind of value does it present to attendees?

- It provides instructors with a view of how, where, and why a particular technology works, and shows them how to use it in ways that make sense for their own situations, so they can come up with solutions that really fit their needs.

- It fosters better awareness of the technologies that are available to faculty and students at no additional cost, so they can look to those first when integrating technology into their course.
- We also encourage networking and community engagement by providing a space where faculty and staff can trade and share knowledge without having to be in the spotlight.

How does it benefit MSU IT? (For example, does it cut down on the need for one-on-one assistance for tech questions?)

MSU IT benefits from the Educational Technology Summit in many ways:

- It improves the visibility of support offered by MSU IT to faculty and staff.
- It increases the exposure of software faculty and staff have access to for the improvement of their academic efforts.
- It increases awareness of MSU IT's other workshops and certification programs.
- It expands the collaborative reach MSU IT has with other departments to create materials, content, and provide guidance on course design and educational technology.

MSU also benefits from the Educational Technology Summit in many ways:

- It helps to improve student outcomes.
- It provides professional development and growth to faculty, academic staff, and support staff.
- It helps faculty and instructors develop or sharpen skills by learning specific techniques for using educational technologies effectively.
- It fosters knowledge sharing and relationship building for faculty and instructors.
- It provides recognition to faculty and Instructors.

continued

Conference Highlights Sessions: *continued*

Who makes up the team responsible for making this event a reality?

There are a variety of team members across MSU IT Educational Technology, including:

- Sam Abele, Educational Accessibility Coordinator
- Lisa Batchelder, Instructional Designer
- Alyssa Bradley, Video Production Manager
- Dr. Cui Cheng, Instructional Designer
- K. J. Downer-Shojgreen, Instructional Design Manager
- Sarah Freye, Instructional Designer
- Kevin Henley, Senior Educational Accessibility Coordinator
- Dr. Lindsay Tigie, Instructional Designer
- Dr. Jennifer Wagner, Instructional Designer

I saw the call for presentations for the event here: <https://tech.msu.edu/news/2025/03/reminder-msu-educational-technology-summit-presenter-submission-forms-due-march-31/>. What has been the response?

The response from faculty and instructors has been positive. They find value in being able to share their findings and innovations regarding technology. In addition to providing help to those who need it, they can also provide a new level of excitement and insight into technology that has been available for years and showcase a broader range of use cases.

What are some lessons that have been learned from recruiting the speakers responsible for delivering the content?

We've learned to start early and cast a wide net. Repeating the message across different channels and mediums is also beneficial. We partnered with our internal MSU IT Communications Team to send emails and leverage other internal messaging channels that target campus audiences focused on teaching, technology, and accessibility.

I saw the ad for the event here: <https://tech.msu.edu/news/2025/05/msu-educational-technology-summit-showcases-leading-technology-tools-2/>. On average, how many people register for this event?

Over the past 4 years we have averaged 112 people registering for the event per year.

What kind of feedback have you received?

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Attendees consistently highlight the relevance of the content to their specific roles and needs. Sessions are praised for clearly explaining concepts, effectively demonstrating technologies, and presenting findings in a practical, accessible way. The event itself is noted for being well-organized and thoughtfully paced, allowing for meaningful engagement. Most participants report gaining valuable knowledge or skills and express confidence in applying what they learned to their work. 2025 was the best Educational Technology Summit to date with the perceived session quality being even higher than previous years.

For readers who may like to have something similar implemented at their own university, what should be kept in mind?

- It is important to establish objectives and determine what content will be covered.
- An organizational structure needs to be developed—think about how many people are needed to support the event, how many days it should last, and what modality will be the most effective.
- Create data gathering mechanisms that can provide evidence to whether you achieved your objectives. Following the event, evaluate your data and adjust for the next year.

Anything else you would like to add?

For any institution that is planning on conducting an event like this, make sure you give yourself enough time for planning and involve other departments that are willing to participate. Planning for this June event starts in January.



Sophia Guevara
SLA Member



Fellows Column:

Heritage Libraries Preserving the Future

By Dr. Parveen Babbar

Cultural heritage is important for any nation around the world. It not only helps build nations but also contributes to the sustainable growth and development of society. Cultural heritage, including both tangible and intangible elements, serves as a bridge linking a society's past, present, and future (Vecco, 2010).

The concept holds significant relevance for museums, archives, and libraries, which are responsible for storing and restoring memory and contested history. For decades, museums and archives have grappled with the impact of memory and contested history in shaping cultural heritage. However, libraries have generally overlooked these conceptual aspects in their pursuit of digitizing cultural heritage (Baker, 2013).

Heritage Libraries are not a new concept; they have been part of the library landscape for decades and are often included within the category of special libraries. These institutions, sometimes referred to as heritage institutions, are cultural entities that typically incorporate libraries or library archives. Their primary mandate is to collect, preserve, and provide comprehensive access to digital heritage materials.

The preservation of heritage has been advanced by global organizations focusing on safeguarding cultural heritage, thereby promoting the concept of Heritage Libraries. UNESCO has played a pivotal role in this effort. During its seventeenth session, held from October 17 to November 21, 1972, UNESCO emphasized the importance of preserving aspects of cultural and natural heritage of outstanding value, recognizing them as integral to the shared heritage of humanity. Later, during its 32nd session in Paris, held from September 29 to October 17, 2003, UNESCO highlighted the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage as a way to foster closer human connections and promote mutual exchange and understanding (UNESCO, 1972, 2003). UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme provides deeper insight into the significance of "documentary heritage."

In 2009, the World Digital Library was launched as a collaborative project led by the U.S. Library of Congress, with support from UNESCO and contributions from libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, and international organizations worldwide. The library encompasses a broad spectrum of topics, with history and geography being the most prominently represented, featuring a total of 19,507 resources.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasize Goal 11.4, which aims to enhance efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. This goal also focuses on monitoring the total per capita expenditure allocated to the preservation, protection, and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage. These expenditures are categorized by funding

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sources (public, private), heritage type (cultural, natural), and level of government (national, regional, and local/municipal) (United Nations & Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development, 2024).

While reviewing the literature, I came across the recent article in the *2025 Encyclopaedia of Libraries, Librarianship, and Information Science on Heritage Libraries*. The article defines Heritage Libraries as institutions tasked with collecting, preserving, and providing access to the documentary heritage of a geographic entity, such as a country or region. The authors, Leslie Weir and Alison Harding-Hlady from Canada, highlight the significant role of Heritage Libraries in documenting heritage, participating in international organizations, and forming partnerships. Additionally, they are expected to fulfil legislative roles through the enactment of Legal Deposit or Mandatory Deposit legislation, as well as perform leadership roles within the library community by engaging in practices such as cataloging, managing bibliographic data, addressing intellectual property and copyright issues, and undertaking digitization, preservation, and conservation of heritage materials in libraries (Weir & Harding-Hlady, 2025).

A similar Spanish study conducted a decade ago explored the role of historical or heritage libraries within the evolving paradigm of information service centers. The author, M. J. P. Gracia, equated heritage libraries with historical libraries, noting their diverse origins. She characterized heritage libraries as institutions housing documents of historical significance, emphasizing their heritage component. Gracia also outlined the primary functions of these libraries, focusing on four key areas: preservation, dissemination and training, research, and enhancement, in that specific order (Gracia, 2014).

With their focus on preservation, Heritage Libraries and Institutions are particularly concerned about variations in indoor conditions, outdoor climate, environmental pollution, mechanical stress, and chemical and thermo physical changes. These factors can affect artefacts, leading to their deterioration and biodegradation (Cusatelli & Giacalone, 2015).

These libraries are making every effort to safeguard heritage materials through multidisciplinary monitoring systems and the application of Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) and HVAC systems. The technologies help maintain a stable and optimal climate to protect materials such as paper, wood, textiles, metals, and organic artefacts, safeguarding them from

biological and environmental contamination (air and surfaces) as well as adverse microclimatic conditions (Pasquarella et al., 2015).

In addition, information professionals are rooted in information depth, which is grounded in a research framework for reclaiming and restoring heritage-based competencies. A recent U.S.-based study analyzed “Footed” as a methodology that advocates for reclaiming and restoring heritage-based knowledge to actualize a justice-based identity and praxis for LIS (Library and Information Science) professionals. The concept of Footed is based on a threefold approach: studying and identifying the kinds of publicly accessible resources, understanding literacy practices, and acknowledging the ways present-day heritage-based collections are managed in libraries. This methodology facilitates a process of rediscovering heritage-based knowledge, connecting LIS practitioners to their historical roots and emphasizing their heritage and identity (Irvin, Rogers, & DeRiggs, 2024).

Future explorations have focused on AI-based Digital Heritage Libraries, which incorporate 360-degree panoramic views to showcase preserved and non-movable cultural heritage information. An example is the E-Dunhuang Cultural Heritage Digital Library, which highlights the cultural and historical significance of the ancient Silk Road, including murals and stone caves in Dunhuang, a remote city in northwest China (Hu, 2018). The application of Linked Open Data (LOD), natural language processing, 3D visualization, Extended Reality (XR) (Cross Reality), virtual exhibits, virtual reconstructions, semantic web, deep learning, and Heritage Building Information Modelling (HBIM) are some of the promising approaches Heritage Libraries need to undertake for making themselves visible in the web world. Linked Data (LD) is a potentially useful technology which provides a meaningful interlinking of collections and can be useful for enhanced discoverability (Kumar & Gireesh, 2025).

A China-based study has proposed a research framework divided into three key components: (1) intangible cultural heritage data collection and resource description, (2) knowledge fusion based on linked data, and (3) knowledge release and application. The study employs knowledge organization theory and semantic web technology to describe intangible cultural heritage digital resources using metadata specifications. Additionally, ontology theory and technical

continued

methods are utilized to construct a conceptual model for the intangible cultural resources domain, defining concept sets and hierarchical relationships. Semantic web technology is further applied to establish semantic associations among intangible cultural heritage resource knowledge. Given that intangible cultural heritage resources encompass diverse formats such as texts, videos, images, and animations, the designed ontology model is capable of describing and managing multi-source, heterogeneous data. The semantic retrieval enhances knowledge granularity and facilitates the visualization of intangible cultural heritage knowledge content (Fan, 2024).

Preserving a nation's cultural heritage is a collective responsibility that involves every segment of society. It is essential that Heritage Libraries, both within and across borders, actively participate in preservation efforts while embracing the latest trends and technologies. Heritage libraries, along with other historical and cultural collecting institutions, face the formidable challenge of collecting, storing, describing, managing, and preserving vast quantities of historical information. Library professionals working in these heritage institutions and libraries play a crucial role in making cultural heritage accessible online for future generations. By digitizing, preserving, and managing historical collections, they ensure the continuity and relevance of this heritage in the digital age. Their efforts will surely bridge the past and the future, safeguarding cultural knowledge for generations to come.

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Member Highlight:

Penny Leach

I am honoured to be invited to submit a profile for this final issue of *SLA Information Outlook*. During my career I have taken pride in my extra-curricular involvement in the information industry, particularly via SLA. This is an opportunity to reflect on my career and the part SLA has played in it, as I move out of work into the next phase of my life, and as SLA also faces a major transformation.

I became a member of SLA when I joined Goldman Sachs International as a Manager in their Business Information Services department in 1993, a year of several personal milestones for me. I had started my professional career in academic libraries, including Durham University, King's College London, and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. My first move to the commercial world was into the legal sector, becoming Vice-Director, Library Services, at McKenna & Co. (now CMS). After a stint in media intelligence as Head of Content at Gorkana (now Cision), I went back to the banking sector at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 2011, finishing there in 2024 as Associate Director, Head of Integrity Services and Research.

SLA membership made perfect sense for me as it offered a global cross-sector network, opportunities to learn at American-based conferences to which my GS colleagues could travel, and the prospect of developing new contacts locally in the financial data world and beyond. I had already found it rewarding to help shape the activities of membership organisations, culminating in being Chair and then Trustee of the City Information Group, a London-centric sub-group of the (UK) Library Association (now CILIP). Ready for a new challenge, I stepped up my originally low-key involvement with the European Chapter of SLA, becoming President in 2008 and ensuring our rebrand to SLA Europe. I was then Chair Elect and Conference Programmer for LMD in 2015, Chair in 2016, and in the COVID years B&F's Corporate Information Centres Section Chair and Co-Chair for the Content Buying Section of LMD. I was delighted to be inducted into the SLA Hall of Fame in 2021.

One of the key secrets to happiness is typically listed as social connections—and in SLA I found my 'tribe' as Seth Godin notably explained at the 2008 Conference in Seattle. For me this has translated into several valuable friendships with proactive and inspirational SLA colleagues across the globe, and from both 'sides', buy and sell sides (aka librarians and vendors). Another path to happiness is lifelong learning—and SLA offers many such opportunities to be curious and learn for learning's sake, not necessarily direct or immediate application. I have attended several SLA annual and leadership conferences—from SLA Global in 2000 to Pittsburgh in 2025—valuing the range of sessions and especially the direct contact with a huge pool of energy and enthusiasm, knowledge and a willingness to share expertise. Significant also were keynote speakers that gave us a wider picture, such as Al Gore in Denver in 2007, on the importance of information and data in a warming and volatile world. In essence, the conferences provided me with an annual 'shot' of 'info mojo', re-fueling me for my return to the office.

continued

MEMBER HIGHLIGHT *continued*

SLA Europe has also run a strong programme of awards, aimed at recognising and giving opportunities and confidence to information professionals early in their career as well as those at later stages. The impact of such is witnessed by the great careers of many of our winners, one of whom has written a heartfelt tribute. If I have one piece of advice for SLA members it would be to get actively involved in the organisation: to foster your own sense of belonging, to shape opportunities for others to learn, to develop your own soft skills, EQ and commercial awareness. This was my main message when I crossed from a chapter to divisional role (SLA Europe family: Penny Leach, a longtime supporter, reflects | SLA Europe).

If this all sounds serious, well, let me finish with another secret of happiness—having fun! And SLA certainly has provided me with many opportunities for that. A key highlight of fun Conference events I attended was the celebration at the 2016 Conference in Philadelphia for LMD's 40th birthday party. SLA Europe's regular events always had a strong social element, including its own 40th birthday party in 2011, held in the prestigious new Rothschild HQ in London, and in 2022 its 50th. SLA Europe is also famous

for its annual Winter Warmer Quiz, with intense but friendly competition between multiple teams. And of course the conferences gave me a reason to travel to American (and Canadian) cities I might not have otherwise visited, and to revel in art, one of my main extra-curricular interests. For example, at the Conference this year in Pittsburgh I found time to visit one of Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece Fallingwater.

Now that I am not working I am catching up with old friends (more travel!), TV watching (I loved The Residence), music (including my first London 'prom'), and reading. In true librarian style I have several books on the go, including Kate Crawford's Atlas of AI lent to me by an SLA contact, as well as many subscriptions, such as *Jinfo*. I am also exploring volunteering opportunities in other spheres, while fully intending to maintain an active connection to the information profession—including SLA to which I wish all the best in navigating to a new incarnation. Trustworthy information and data is more vital than ever, and info pros are essential to ensuring access. Through collaboration we can overcome the social disconnect of our increasingly virtual world.



Penny Leach

SLA Member

Community Reports

SLA Europe: 53 years of communities in Europe

By Hilary Oakley



As many of you will know, 2025 is our 53rd anniversary year. Since our founding in 1972 the Community has continued to thrive. This represents a huge achievement for all of us and recognition of what we achieved over this time.

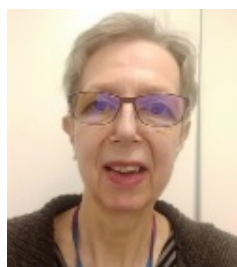
Our members have weathered many changes over this period from the days of big conferences in the USA which had a ripple effect of bringing members and supporters together here in Europe. Throughout this time we hosted many community events. These ranged from one of the first SLA Conferences in Brighton to larger professional development and social events mainly in London. We also have collaborated with many other partners for conferences, such as the *Online Conference* and other industry partners for new professionals. Some of our best events were run in iconic venues and locations that were either places where our members worked or where we were able to hold events. These included our famous Summer Soiree, held annually to bring our members together, our Career Stories event and Tips on Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence in recent years. Our proudest achievement was organising our first ever conference at the University of Cambridge, at Newnham College in 2019. In the last ten years we developed more webinar programming such as 'Wednesday Wisdom' which seemed advanced before the pandemic of 2020, which made online programming more common. Throughout this time we were able to support our members to be at the forefront of information technology, the internet and more digital developments which not only impacted on our work, but also our lives. As for social networking—our annual quiz was always a highlight of the winter and our summer soiree was the place to be in the summer!

For almost twenty years we have supported early career development by presenting the Early Career Conference Awards (ECCA) for newer professionals to attend the SLA Conference in the USA with the support of other SLA communities. This forged experience, confidence and

developed great international relationships amongst our members and ECCA winners. We have awarded about 30 ECCA winners in just over a decade, and we have also had some SLA Europe members attend the conference in the USA. In conjunction with BIALL and CILIP, we have held an annual Careers Evening for students and early career professionals looking to understand more about different job paths and opportunities from our selected speakers. Often current or past members share more about their journey into becoming an information professional. We hope that opportunities will be there in the future for those new to the profession who would like to experience SLA's legacy, a welcoming professional community, and make connections that will last throughout their career.

We continue to be big advocates for professional development, networking and learning new skills. SLA Europe has given our members the opportunity to volunteer for roles in various aspects of running a community with international connections. Over the years our members have sat on committees and contributed to the development of SLA at conferences, events and even helped SLA members make connections when they visit Europe. Many of our members have also been recognised with SLA Awards for their contributions to the association, other members and the profession.

We look forward to continuing hosting events and facilitating members to make new connections as we close this chapter and start a new one with ASIS&T Europe—come and join us there!



Hilary Oakley
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SLA Europe President*

continued

SLA New England Community Legacy

By Kathleen Berger and Kelli Costello

The SLA New England (NE) Community (known as SLA Boston until 2011) has been an active and vibrant community since 1910. The chapter now represents Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. Since its founding, SLA New England has been dedicated to providing professional development, networking, and engagement with its SLA NE members as well as across SLA. SLA NE has had many wonderful boards with dedicated leaders throughout its history.

We have had a strong Programming Committee and amazing leadership through our Programming Co-chairs that have provided monthly events both in person and on Zoom. There are too many to mention but to highlight just a few recent events: Tour of the Worcester Art Museum, Museum of Fine Arts library tour, Yale Libraries site visit, Navigating LLMs and Generative AI: A Primer for Information Science Practitioners (Virtual Event), The AI Explosion in day-to-day Library Services (Virtual Event) and numerous coffee chats. We have done event collaborations with the Massachusetts Library System and with the SLA East Coast boards on community meet-ups during various SLA Conferences.

SLA NE has been actively involved with the SLA@Simmons student chapter at Simmons University over the years and have helped promote Simmons student events and encouraged Simmons students to join SLA and the SLA NE Community. Student relations are very important to our community, and we have had a SLA NE Student Relations Chair on our Board for many years. Our Communications Directors over the years have worked tirelessly to promote our events to our members through evolving communications channels.

Our strong Executive Boards throughout our history have planned engaging annual business meetings both in person and virtually to provide members with professional networking opportunities, professional programming, and information about the growth and state of SLA and the SLA NE community.

The dedication and work of our board leaders, committee chairs, and members have helped to grow and sustain our community and provided valuable support, networking and information for our members.



Kathleen Berger
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2025 SLA New England Community President*



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2025 SLA New England Community President-Elect*

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A Century of Trailblazers: SLA-NY's Dynamic Community and Enduring Legacy

By Michele Costello and Flordalisa Lopez

SLA NY has a history of innovative programming which embodies SLA's core values of leadership, service, innovation and continuous learning, results and accountability, and collaboration and partnering (Special Libraries Association, 2023). The chapter has also maintained a unique spirit over the years, described as “a home where I was able to explore, learn, lead and give back” by outgoing chapter president, Flordalisa (aka Lisa) Lopez (F. Lopez, personal communication, August 15, 2025).

Starting with informal meetings in 1913, formal organization in 1915, and official SLA affiliation in 1924, our chapter was an early advocate forged in the image of the diverse New York metro area community. Our 53 charter members represented institutions ranging from the Municipal Reference Library and New York Public Library to Columbia University, Western Electric Company, and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (Sinclair, 2009). Membership and programming over the decades has continued to reflect New York information professionals' prominence in government, academia, finance, law, communications, science, medical areas and the arts.

Our early civic engagement promoting special libraries in the 1939-1940 New York World's Fair and the wartime Victory Book Campaign demonstrate a commitment to public service and information leadership. The New York chapter was also a trailblazer in special librarianship education, developing a library training course at the YWCA Ballard School in 1948 and a special librarianship program at Queens College in 1953 (Special Libraries Association, New York Chapter records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library). Past leaders had the vision to preserve our chapter's fascinating legacy in archives housed at the New York Public Library, including interesting tidbits such as the catering invoice from Martha Stewart for SLA NY in the 1960s.

Our chapter's approaches to continuous learning, networking, professional development and collaboration have evolved over the decades in response to members' interests and expertise. As past president Victoria North observed, “SLA NY represented a welcoming community of fellow information professionals when I moved to New York...Networking opportunities and educational events helped me quickly integrate...” (V. North, personal communication, August 15, 2025). We leveraged New York City's vibrant neighborhoods to develop the “Immigration Experience Walking Tour of the Lower East Side—Walking Tour Series.” North also observed, “the community became a life-line to the outside world” during COVID, spurring innovative virtual programming such as virtual walks and tours (V. North, personal communication, August 15, 2025). The chapter has continued very popular in-person walks with Leigh Hallingby through 2025, such as “Treasures of the Middle of the Upper West Side.” The “Financially Savvy—Financial Literacy Panel” was geared to prepare members for next stages in careers, while a series of university trading floor talks brought financial database vendors and practitioners together. The “Health Sciences Librarianship: Beyond the Basics” seminar leveraged SLA NY medical experts, and our Basics



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Community Reports *continued*

of Law Librarianship series was an innovative collaboration with Law Librarians of Greater New York (LLAGNY). The upcoming Fall 2025 seminar series, featuring “Generative AI and Libraries” and “Practical AI: Tools You Can Use Today,” represents our commitment to innovation and forward-thinking approaches to emerging technologies. These examples demonstrate how our community has uniquely aimed to “strengthen its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives” (Special Libraries Association, 2023).

As we stand at this pivotal organizational moment, we are profoundly proud of our journey and legacy. While organizational structures may evolve, the enduring values that have guided us will remain. In sage parting words as outgoing president, Lisa also said “give yourself the opportunity to volunteer and give back to the profession...it’s truly a valuable experience.” (F. Lopez, personal communication, August

15, 2025). Looking back with gratitude for the leadership, learning, and fun along the way, we eagerly anticipate the continued contributions of this remarkable community to the field, confident that their expertise, innovation, and collaborative spirit will advance special librarianship’s vital work well into the future.

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continued

Pacific Northwest Community History

By Laura Grove

In the fall of 1944 a group of librarians from the University of Washington in Seattle began to organize a local chapter of SLA. At the first meeting, there were 41 members, and annual dues were \$5. The first annual business meeting was May 23, 1946, by which time membership swelled to 71, including members from Oregon, British Columbia and Washington.

The name changed to Pacific Northwest Chapter in 1963, and by 1965 the boundaries also included Idaho, Alaska, and Alberta. Montana was included in 1976.

PNW was the first North American chapter to be officially international, but that ended in 1984 with British Columbia exiting to join the new Western Canada Chapter. The geographic coverage was constant since then with the states of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Alaska when Oregon re-merged with PNW in 2016.

With five state coverage but a population density in the Puget Sound area, most meetings were held there but the chapter conducted a number of regional conferences that partnered with neighboring Oregon and/or Western Canada chapters. This included a conference on Pacific Rim Information in 1986, and one on networked electronic information in 1996. In 2006 we had a regional conference in Vancouver, BC, on Content Management: Converging Information, People & Technology.

In 1988 the PNW chapter hosted a rare meeting featuring the Presidents of both SLA and ALA, Emily Mobley and Margaret Chisholm, providing their perspectives on the future of librarianship and the information profession.

Chapter membership topped out in the late '90s with around 350 members. In 1997 Seattle hosted the SLA Annual Conference for the first time, with an attendance of almost 7000 and the keynote speaker being Bill Gates. The annual conference returned to Seattle in 2008.

PNW held a number of events including Career Night in collaboration with SLA-UW, the student chapter at the University of Washington, and Holiday Parties at the Microsoft Corporate Library and the Museum of Flight. In conjunction with the merger with ORSLA, a weekend of library tours and social events was planned in Portland and another weekend in Seattle.

In 2018 and 2019, the Winter Reception was held at Folio, a private library in the Pike Place Market. With the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, meetings and events switched to Zoom, and we held a very successful Holiday Party and Mixer in December 2020. By 2021, meetings began to return to being in-person with an online component. We held several library visits online in collaboration with the Washington Library Association Special Libraries Division.

PNW had a great 80-year run and was invaluable to regional members for continuing education and professional networking. We look forward to participating with ASIS&T.

Laura Grove

SLA PNW Community Convener

continued

Academic and Education Community Legacy

By Stacey Greenwell

In 2008 the idea was born for a generalist academic division to complement the subject-specific divisions of SLA. A growing group of subject specialist academic librarians wanted a space for programming and networking focused on broader issues in college and university libraries, particularly as careers may shift from subject-focused librarianship to more general library administrative roles. After a petition drive, town halls, and ultimately a SLA Board of Directors vote, the Academic Division launched in January 2009. With its initial funding from a SLA Centennial Video Contest award, Academic held roundtable programming that became an annual conference event, covering topics initially such as instruction, promotion/tenure, the evolving reference desk, and building faculty relationships. In 2010 Academic began an annual open house tradition with offerings such as karaoke, trivia, and even briefly a second dance party. It wasn't all parties though, as Academic either led or co-led a Spotlight Session each conference that SLA selected, in addition to offering numerous other sessions and webinars.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Academic was the launch of *Practical Academic Librarianship: The International Journal of the SLA Academic Division (PAL)* in 2011. The open access, peer-reviewed journal is still publishing in 2025 with record numbers of submissions and readers. As far as record numbers go, SLA often recognized Academic for its growth and activity, including awards for the largest increase in total members and largest percentage increase in membership. Academic offered its own awards such as the

Outstanding *Practical Academic Librarianship* Article Award (2012-present), Springshare Innovation in Academic Libraries Award (2011-2016), and the Outstanding Member Award (2011-2016). Academic also co-sponsored new academic librarians to attend the SLA Annual Conference through SLA Europe's Early Career Conference Award (ECCA) in 2014-2018. As Academic grew, it formed sections such as the Scholarly Communications Section and the Higher Education Administration Section to develop focused programming and networking in those areas.

In 2020, SLA units were rebranded as Communities, and around that time, discussions began to merge the Education Community with the Academic Community. Founded in 1974, Education had a scope complementary to Academic with a focus on education as a discipline as well as education libraries and educational publishers. Education too has a successful journal, *Education Libraries*, SLA's first peer-reviewed journal which was founded in 1975 and continues to be published. Education also annually bestowed the Anne M. Galler Award to a member for professional excellence. In 2021, members of both communities voted to merge the Academic and Education (A&E) communities. Since then, A&E has remained one of SLA's largest communities with an active Board, monthly webinars, regular communications, conference programming, and two active open access, peer-reviewed journals: *Practical Academic Librarianship* and *Education Libraries*.



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continued

SLA DICE: A Legacy

By Michael Sholinbeck

This document describes Diversity Inclusion Community and Equity Caucus's (DICE) accomplishments and significance. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list of DICE activities. By 2023, DICE's distinct presence started waning, due in part to changing priorities within SLA and DICE leadership; by 2024 our role was mostly ad hoc advisory, helping to infuse DEI in SLA programming and policy. DICE has left a lasting legacy in SLA and its members, current and former.

DICE acknowledges other efforts by members and SLA units toward diversity and inclusion; DICE is not the first nor only group to do such work. We honor the work of the Women's Issue Caucus (1990), the Diverse Issues Caucus (1991), the Diversity Leadership Development Program (1995), the Gay & Lesbian Issues Caucus (1995; becoming the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Issues Caucus in 2006, and still doing the work!), and the Inclusion Caucus (2005). Also, DICE acknowledges ourselves: our efforts involved thousands of hours of collaborative work. Although much of what we advocated for never came to pass, we hope that all our work was for the better.

2016

In November, the Diversity & Inclusion Task Force (D&ITF) was created by then-SLA President Dee Magnoni. It was charged to make recommendations to the Board to develop internal procedures and propose a committee(s) structure that would provide focus to diversity and inclusion initiatives for the association.

Initial members of the D&ITF were Clara Cabrera (Chair), Amanpreet Kaur, Michael Sholinbeck, Michele Villagran, Andrew Grissom, Erin Agobert, Dan Odenwald; Seema Rampersand was recruited very soon after the creation of the TF.

2017

First meeting of Diversity & Inclusion Task Force. Initial discussion ideas included:

- Assist SLA units on their diversity initiatives, including developing a "toolkit" for projects and initiatives;
- Review D&E initiatives/statements from other LIS associations for ideas to incorporate into SLA;

- Review conference events and presentations of SLA and other associations to see how many were devoted to D&I topics;
- Promote and advance diversity in SLA membership, including celebrating successes;
- Conduct a regular survey of SLA membership of D&I initiatives, needs and wants;
- Provide mentorship to LIS students and new members;
- Create a D&I topic blog;
- Offer an annual scholarship in order to promote and retain underrepresented groups.

One of the D&ITF's first efforts was a survey of SLA leadership (unit heads, etc.) on their D&I initiatives: what works, what they need, whether they have done any D&I work at all, their commitment and knowledge. Results of the survey helped inform the task force's work for the remainder of its term.

The D&ITF Final Report was delivered to the SLA Board on November 1, 2017. From the Executive Summary: "This report's suggestions and proposals endeavor to create the foundation of **a permanent, organized presence of diversity and inclusion** [emphasis in original] within and for the association and its members."

The Report's Conclusions and Recommendations:

- Future permanent entities should be established within SLA dedicated to addressing diversity and inclusion. This effort should be largely member-driven and oriented with access and support from the leadership.
- SLA leadership should fully commit to diversity and inclusion within SLA and demonstrate this commitment through action.
- Diversity and Inclusion should be addressed at the volunteer leadership level, the administrative staff level, and the individual and collective membership level.
- SLA should commit monetary resources and technical or soft tools, as well as allow the creation of tools and resources that are detailed in this report.

continued

- All levels of the information and activities SLA creates and puts out should include diversity and inclusion in its planning and execution. This includes, but is not limited to, the marketing materials, the education materials, the programming at the headquarters, conferences, webinars, and unit levels.
 - SLA should always endeavor to assess, benchmark, and produce innovative practices in diversity and inclusion.
- At the November 7, 2017 SLA Board Meeting, the Board declared SLA “fully commits to D&I based on actions and suggestions within the report.”

2018

At the January 2018 SLA Leadership Symposium, a petition to create the Diversity, Inclusion, Community, Equity Caucus (DICE) was circulated. A new caucus required 15 signatures; within a short time, this petition had 50 signatories.

SLA DICE Caucus created; the initial co-conveners were Clara Cabrera, Jesse Lambertson, and Michael Sholinbeck; we were joined by Michele Villagran later in 2018. Unlike all other SLA units at the time, membership in DICE was open to all with no annual membership fee. Also unique was our leadership structure: 3 equal co-conveners, rather than a hierarchy of chair, chair-elect, etc.

By March, the SLA DICE Connect and website were up. Content included both inward facing documentation (reports, etc.), and outward facing content (blog posts, etc.). Lively and productive conversations ensued on Connect almost immediately.

All members of 2017’s D&ITF received Presidential Citations in early 2018.

DICE had a room at the 2018 Annual Conference where folks could engage and ask questions. DICE leadership and members provided ideas and advice on submissions for the 2019 Annual Conference. This became a key role for DICE: both the leadership, and the membership, served as sounding boards for folks’ ideas for conference and other event submissions, including ideas for Annual Conference keynote speakers.

2019

In December 2018, DICE co-conveners proposed an all-member SLA climate survey. In February 2020, SLA sent the survey to the membership, the results of which are discussed below.

DICE’s website content included “topic boxes” with relevant material, upcoming events, and more. We released a website checklist to ascertain inclusivity, accessibility, and non-divisive language.; we produced a document on making conferences and meetings more inclusive and family-friendly; we advocated for more DEI-relevant sessions at annual conferences. Collaborative conversations with the GLBT Issues Caucus and members of SLA staff leadership were held. Some of these ideas were instituted by SLA. DICE started a tradition of suggesting keynote and other speakers at the Annual Conference.

All DICE co-conveners received an SLA Presidential Citation in January.

“Social Justice in Cleveland” was the first of a series of social justice conference sessions presented at the SLA Annual Conference; other “Social Justice in ...” sessions were presented in 2020, 2021, and 2022. These were produced and run by DICE member Brady King; each examined a social justice topic selected and refined in consultation with the appropriate local Chapters and with DICE members. Each of these sessions highlighted information professionals’ involvement with that social justice issue. The first ever SLA land acknowledgment spoken was at the SLA Annual Conference in June. This was advocated by DICE, and these acknowledgements continued for a time.

A history of diversity at SLA was added to the DICE website.

Chrissy Geluk was added as a co-convener; Jesse Lambertson retired his co-convener role.

2020

April: Guidelines for units about choosing diverse speakers at events were completed in April and were shared with the SLA leadership.

In June, DICE facilitated a three-part workshop on “Implicit Bias; a Virtual Roundtable on Social Justice & Change”; planned future virtual Roundtable on Social Justice themes; and started a Social Justice Reading discussion group. at the SLA Annual Conference, “Social Justice in Charlotte: Health Inequality,” the second in a series of social justice conference sessions, was presented. This was the year the conference was supposed to be in Charlotte, but was shifted to online.

continued

In July, DICE presented results of the climate survey. Membership overwhelmingly saw SLA as welcoming and respectful; a significant minority of respondents did not see SLA as diverse nor inclusive. In addition, many folks felt that not all voices were listened to or respected, nor that folks of all backgrounds were given an equal opportunity to succeed at SLA. Many felt themselves subjected to microaggressions, particularly due to their age or position status. The survey results include a rich trove of comments.

DICE facilitated a virtual Roundtable on Social Justice issues (Protest Music). DICE also added a plethora of social justice resources and resources for Land Acknowledgement to the DICE website.

DICE advocated to the Board about making SLA, as well as the fields of librarianship/information professionals, more inclusive and diverse.

2021

DICE continued to advocate for an updated Code of Conduct, with a stated goal to have SLA programs, proposals, and policies reflect a commitment to antiracism, belonging, etc. (SLA did update the Code of Conduct, in 2024).

Mid-year, Michele Villagran retired her co-convener role and Erica Miller stepped up as a co-convener. Liz Boniface produced a prodigious number of film, book, etc. reviews; these were sent to DICE membership via Connect.

In March, all DICE co-convener were again awarded SLA presidential citations.

In June, DICE reached out to our Board liaison to brainstorm whether and how to approach the organizers of the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color (JCLC) to see if they would be amenable to some kind of SLA participation; perhaps a sponsorship or scholarship. The JCLC organizers were amenable, and DICE successfully proposed to the SLA Board that SLA offer a competitive scholarship for a free ride to the 2022 JCLC conference. See below for more on this initiative.

“Social Justice Online: The Digital Divide,” The third in a series of social justice conference sessions, was presented at the SLA Annual Conference.

2022

Early in 2022 a scholarship committee was recruited from SLA membership to review applicants for the

Joint Conference of Librarians of Color scholarship. We independently reviewed the applicants, and all agreed on a winner. (Due to unforeseen circumstances, JCLC was postponed until 2023.)

“Social Justice in Charlotte: Gerrymandering,” the fourth in a series of Social Justice conference sessions, was presented at the SLA Annual Conference. In addition to this, there were many DEI-related sessions, as well as three diverse keynote speakers who foregrounded inclusion, equity, diversity and social justice in librarianship.

DICE submitted comments to the SLA Board on updating SLA’s Competencies for Information Professionals that included antiracism and justice, equity, and other relevant competencies. DICE advised on a disability/accessibility event planning guide, and advised SLA units on developing their own DEI efforts.

2023

DICE collaborated on a statement in support of ALA President Emily Drabinski, who was coming under fire by right-wing forces. This was worked on for much of 2023 and a statement was released in April 2024. Ms. Drabinski was the keynote speaker at the 2025 SLA annual conference.

DICE held a town hall, with a report back from the 2023 Joint Conference of Librarians of Color. Ideas from this report that DICE might consider included:

- Revising and updating SLA Code of Conduct;
- Panel or discussion on recent news items;
- Casual get-togethers (in person) for folks in SLA and other LIS orgs;
- DEI-related “work parties.”

2024 – 2025

With the assistance of Marlene Lozano, DICE documentation and website was updated and cleaned up. This will help ensure DICE’s work remains visible.



Michael Sholinbeck
*Librarian Emeritus,
University of California Berkeley*

continued

SLA Transportation Community Legacy

By Michel Wendt

While transportation libraries existed in the 19th century, the SLA Transportation Community has its origins in a Transportation Committee formed within SLA's Commercial-Technical Group in the 1920s. Collaboration between rail and aeronautical librarians increased in the run-up to and during World War II, so in 1943 the SLA Transportation Group was formed. SLA changed Groups to Divisions in 1950, so it was called the SLA Transportation Division until 2020 when Divisions were renamed Communities. With the explosion of automobile sales after World War II, libraries whose focus was roads and highways were created and were integrated into the division. Over the years, the SLA Transportation Community has welcomed librarians from railroads, airlines, aviation manufacturers, automobile manufacturers, state departments of transportation, transit agencies, and more from around the world.

Contributions from the SLA Transportation Community to transportation libraries are many and varied. These contributions have included:

- Members were instrumental in the creation of the transportation literature database sponsored and hosted by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) that would eventually become TRIS (Transportation Research Information Services).
- The Transportation Research Thesaurus (TRT) sponsored by TRB originated as a recommendation from the SLA Transportation Community.

- The group has provided a platform for the Government Transportation Research Information Committee (GTRIC), a group of state department of transportation libraries with common interests. For decades the group held a meeting during the annual SLA meeting with a full slate of programming of interest to state DOT librarians.
- Throughout its history, members have given presentations, lightning talks, and poster sessions at the annual SLA meeting.
- The group recognizes outstanding member contributions through the Transportation Community Professional Achievement and Transportation Community Innovation Awards.
- The TRANLIB-L listserv has allowed transportation library professionals from around the world to exchange ideas and information for decades. Many transportation librarians are solo, so this forum provides a crucial lifeline.
- In 2022, the group began hosting a series of Collection Showcases to highlight special collections from and of interest to members of the SLA Transportation Community.

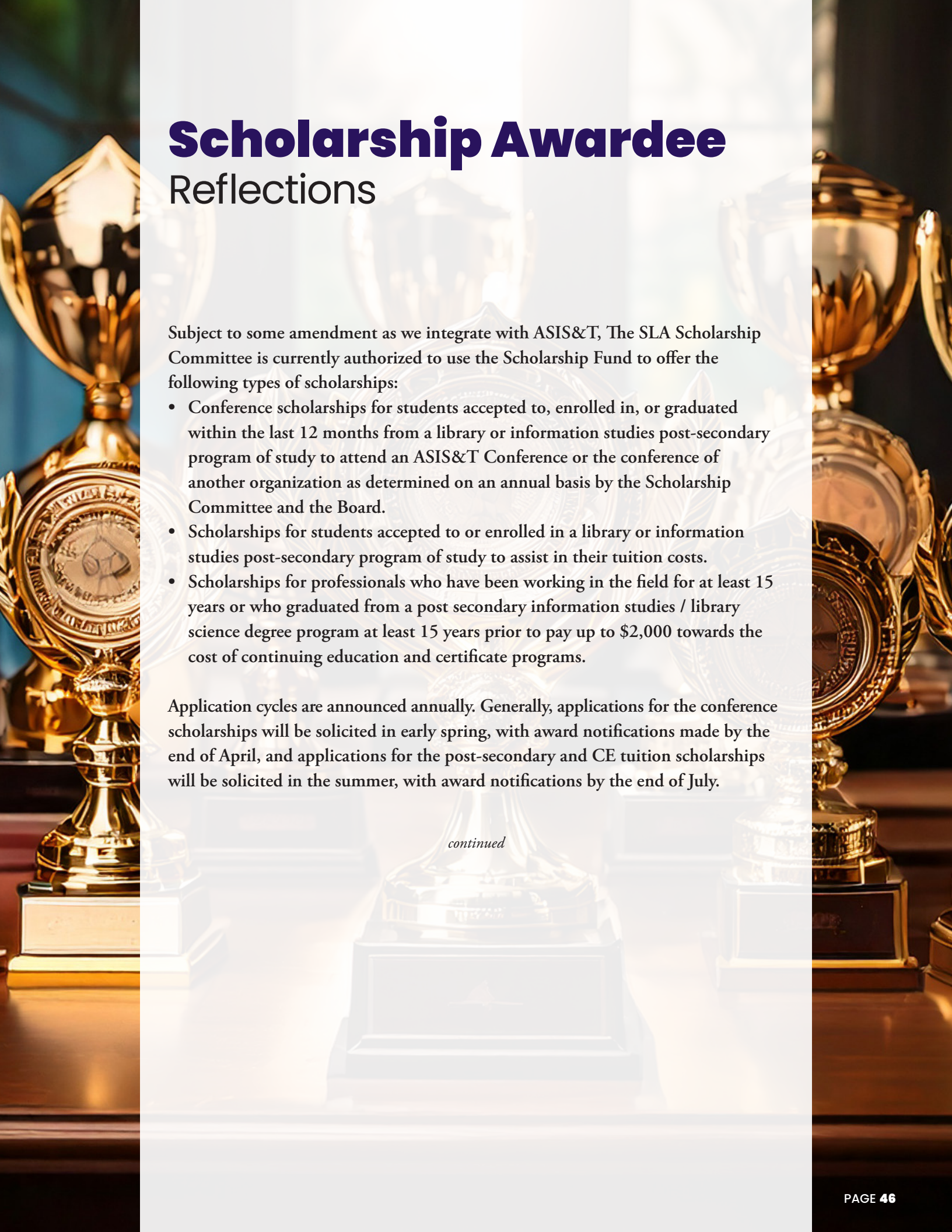
In these ways and others, the members of the SLA Transportation Community—and its predecessors—have always sought to strengthen and lengthen the paths of knowledge for our fellow librarians and those whom they serve. Even with the dissolution of SLA, this will continue to be the shared mission of transportation librarians.



Michel (Mike) Wendt, MLIS

Head Librarian

*Research & Library Services | Transportation Safety and Systems Analysis
Washington State Department of Transportation*



Scholarship Awardee

Reflections

Subject to some amendment as we integrate with ASIS&T, The SLA Scholarship Committee is currently authorized to use the Scholarship Fund to offer the following types of scholarships:

- Conference scholarships for students accepted to, enrolled in, or graduated within the last 12 months from a library or information studies post-secondary program of study to attend an ASIS&T Conference or the conference of another organization as determined on an annual basis by the Scholarship Committee and the Board.
- Scholarships for students accepted to or enrolled in a library or information studies post-secondary program of study to assist in their tuition costs.
- Scholarships for professionals who have been working in the field for at least 15 years or who graduated from a post secondary information studies / library science degree program at least 15 years prior to pay up to \$2,000 towards the cost of continuing education and certificate programs.

Application cycles are announced annually. Generally, applications for the conference scholarships will be solicited in early spring, with award notifications made by the end of April, and applications for the post-secondary and CE tuition scholarships will be solicited in the summer, with award notifications by the end of July.

continued

Aligned Core Values and Commitment

By Sonia Santana Arroyo

Discovering the Special Libraries Association (SLA) felt like the most natural thing in the world. With more than two decades of experience in academic libraries, first as a medical librarian in Cuba, and later as a data librarian in the United States, this prestigious organization aligns perfectly with the core values and commitment I have maintained throughout my career.

Learning that I had won the SLA Tuition Scholarship was both a privilege and an honor. Without a doubt, this represents one of the most outstanding achievements of my career so far. Beyond the significant financial support, this scholarship served to recognize a passionate and dedicated professional who has always worked to contribute meaningfully to the field of library science and remains committed to advancing the profession while supporting others in their career journeys.

In my current role, I lead data management initiatives and develop innovative approaches to research data preservation. Winning the SLA Tuition Scholarship has opened extraordinary learning opportunities and has provided an ideal platform to connect with colleagues in the field. It also

offered me the opportunity to become an SLA member: my first membership in a U.S. professional organization, an enriching experience that represents an important step forward in my career development and growth.

This scholarship will perfectly complement my pursuit of a Master of Science in Information degree, providing the foundation to refine my technological skills and achieve my goals. The award also brings another valuable benefit: the privilege of collaborating with SLA through volunteering. This creates exciting opportunities to learn from experts and colleagues while sharing my own experience to contribute alongside other information professionals.

All of this combined will help consolidate and strengthen my career in the United States within the challenging and rapidly evolving information environment we face today. I feel rewarded in so many ways and cannot thank the organization enough for this opportunity to be part of such a remarkable community. I truly believe there could not be a better companion to start my master's degree journey and to accompany me on my professional path.



Sonia Santana Arroyo
Florida International University
2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

A New Chapter in My Life

By Julia Bhojoo

2025 marks a new chapter in my life, both professionally and personally. I have written elsewhere that I became an information professional by accident, and I started my first role at an international law firm, which blended my interest in history, politics, and law. Since then, I have experienced the many challenges and issues that law librarians encounter, including a law firm merger, restructuring, an office move, and the challenge of remotely managing a library collection and keeping services running during the pandemic.

I have been fortunate to have had fantastic managers who have supported my professional development and, if it wasn't for their encouragement and support, I don't think I would have joined SLA and SLA Europe. Thanks to Seema Rampersad, who recruited me at the SLA Europe Conference in 2019, which was held at Newnham College at the University of Cambridge, I have been able to give back to SLA Europe. First, I supported the Digital Communications Committee, looking after our social media and launching our own YouTube channel, then later, taking over as webmaster for the SLA Europe website. Using my skills and experience to give back to my professional association has been hugely rewarding. I'm also grateful to the many people I have met and worked with in SLA, including the Technology Subcommittee, the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Community, as well as the short-lived revival of the DUX (Design and User Experience) Community. These experiences in working with others boosted my confidence to apply, and then become, the 2024 President for SLA Europe. During my Presidential term, I was in awe of the amazing work that many other communities were doing, and I was keenly aware that we still needed to do a lot of work to support our members, who were still navigating some of the after-effects of the pandemic and changes to different sectors here in the UK. As such, this supported a lot of our events programming, including webinars on kindness and leadership skills, as well as presenting at our annual joint event with other professional associations: BIALL (the British and Irish Association of Law Librarians) and CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and

Information Professionals). I am also hugely thankful to the past Presidents of SLA Europe for lending their experience, expertise, and advice throughout the years and for making our 50th anniversary celebration in 2022 such a wonderful memory.

Another change for me this year is that I'm due to start my Master's at UCL. It's something I wasn't sure if I'd ever do, but as the new term approaches, I'm excited to meet my fellow students and learn more about my chosen modules, knowledge management and information governance. My journey to starting my master's is, in part, thanks to the 2025 SLA Tuition Scholarship, which is one of two bursaries I was successful in being awarded and ensures I have the opportunity to continue giving back to my professional associations. I'm also keen to continue supporting students and encouraging anyone interested to join the profession, especially as I know what the benefits of a professional network can do to someone learning more about the opportunities and roles there are for an information professional, especially with the development of AI and what it means for the future.

With the dissolution and merger of SLA with ASIS&T, I'm excited to be working with the European group to continue supporting our members and meeting other professionals in this new network. There are a lot of skills I'd like to learn as I continue to progress in my career, and as I begin my studies, I'm sure I'll be meeting many more talented people with interesting and varied careers who will fuel my interest in learning something new.



Julia Bhojoo
Information Officer, Kingsley Napley
2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

continued

Feeling It Since 1909

By Cat Dinh

When I was a student at San Jose State University, the student chapter of SLA was incredibly active. They invited speakers who motivated me and other iSchool students to explore how librarianship and information services were specialized—and necessary—in diverse kinds of environments. I had always heard that SLA was a great resource for early career librarians, and I considered joining.

When SLA announced its plans for dissolution a few months ago, I felt a rumble in the library community. People's fond memories of SLA conferences flowed through my ears and my inbox. Reflecting on the outpouring of enthusiasm for the association, I decided to apply for a scholarship to attend the 2025 conference. I was excited to learn that I was being granted a stipend; now I could experience for myself one of the conferences that I had heard so much about.

Being on my own at a conference with established librarians and information professionals felt intimidating, so, I appreciated many of the events dedicated to first-timers and early career librarians. The Fellows and First-timers event brought together veterans and newbies with icebreaker games, putting names to faces and developing familiarity at the board meetings and workshops, even passing by in the hall. These introductions were crucial as it made the social events feel safe to let loose and have fun in good company.

As a newly minted graduate and engineering librarian at an academic library, I sought out workshops I found interesting or potentially beneficial on those fronts. I managed to attend presentations of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory library's participation at their hackathon, the standards update (where ASCE, IEEE, SAE, UL, and Accuris came to highlight changes in their content), navigating copyright and AI, understanding company identifiers in financial databases, and a PAM roundtable of publishers and vendor partners where they discussed their current challenges and future opportunities for collaboration with SLA members.

The topics were so varied, but familiar enough to make connections to my own library environment; it felt like fireworks.

At the board meeting, the behind-the-scenes updates provided context for the Merger Town Hall, where the executive director of ASIS&T appealed to SLA members about combining forces. During the Q&A, a few members spoke up about concerns, including the preservation of the SLA communities and the issue with ASIS&T's preference for researchers' priorities that had previously led to an exodus of practitioners. One member shared her optimism in the strength of ASIS&T's researchers and SLA's pragmatic membership being complementary and having the potential to transform into something better and beyond what they are today. I echo this hopefulness that information scientists and professionals can be unified in our processes and protocols to be the drivers of information science and technology in our work environments, especially as we figure out how to work with AI.

AI was a constant theme during the conference and something on every information professional's mind. In an economic and political landscape that aims to increasingly rely on AI, our keynote speaker, former ALA President Emily Drabinski, drummed up solidarity across communities, reminding us to bring access where information poverty persists and working together to overcome difficulties. Upon hearing some of the shared challenges in a panel talk on why it's great to be a special librarian, I wondered if we could expand to include other kinds of information professions, such as data scientists and UX designers. Combining with these professionals may help us in finding, understanding, and disseminating information, thoughtfully and meaningfully, in our working environments.

continued

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE REFLECTIONS *continued*

I can only imagine the ebb and flow of technologies and types of professionals in this 116-year-old organization. But even with those changes, SLA has endured to be an anchor and pillar for librarians all over the world. I met an attendee from Hokkaido, Japan, whose last SLA conference was 20 years ago. It was truly an honor to be a part of an event with a deep history and geographic reach, and I hope to be a part of its future.

A huge thanks to all the organizers who made this a great conference, including the Rising Stars, Scholarship Committee,

my fellow scholarship winners, the PAM community, and a special shout-out to the other Vietnamese-Americans who attended (that was two more than I expected, wow!).



Cat Dinh

Arizona State University Library

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

Prepared to Serve our Communities

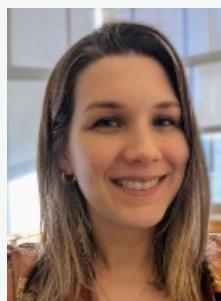
By Dana Ellwood

I am deeply honored to be a recipient of the Special Libraries Association's (SLA) 2024 Tuition Scholarship. I received this scholarship during the last year of my studies toward my Master of Library and Information Science degree, which I earned this past May from San Jose State University. As a mid-career professional, returning to school in my 30s while working full-time was a huge challenge, which required balancing both my time and finances accordingly. This scholarship made it possible for me to end my master's degree journey on a high note, lessening the worry and burden that comes along with tuition bills. In fact, thanks in part to this scholarship, I was able to travel from New York to attend my graduation in California. It was an amazing trip, as I was able to meet fellow student friends and faculty whom I had only interacted with remotely while in school. It was so special to celebrate this huge achievement in person, and I am so grateful I got to do it.

Since finishing my MLIS degree, I've continued in my current role as a reference law librarian at the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. I provide research assistance to judges, clerks, and staff attorneys, finding case law, legislative histories, and historic documents and records. In addition to reference service, I also work on civic education initiatives, contributing to the creation of high school arts programs centered on the themes of justice and law, as well as leading high school visits to the courthouse. During these visits, students view oral arguments, talk with both an attorney and

a judge about their professions, and participate in a mock trial activity. I get to make teenagers care about civics, and help them understand why a healthy democratic society depends on them being informed. I've worked in public service for most of my career, but nothing I've done previously has come close to being as rewarding or satisfying as my current role. I have my school and wonderful organizations like SLA to thank for that.

SLA's scholarships make it possible for students like me to grow into well-rounded professionals who are prepared to serve our communities, in addition to being upstanding custodians of information. I look forward to continuing to make meaningful contributions to the field of librarianship, and I hope to honor your support by paying it forward to others in the years ahead.



Dana Ellwood

Law Librarian, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit

2024 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

continued

My Library Journey

By Amanda Espinoza

Many years ago, back when I was in the fourth grade, my elementary school held an assembly where students were recognized for their social and academic achievements. It was at that assembly that I received the “Future Historian” award. At the time I was flattered to win the award, and I hung it very proudly in my room, but as the years have gone on, I cherish it more and more because it is a reminder that history and learning have always been passions of mine, and that finding a career that keeps me connected to those things is the greatest gift that I can give myself.

Librarianship is one of those careers that I believe is misunderstood. Not only is it much more complex than most people know, but it can also be incredibly fascinating and exciting in a way that not many are able to see. Fortunately for me, I have found myself at San Jose State University (SJSU), where I am in my final year of earning my Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS) degree, and during my past two years of studies, I have learned about a wide array of topics, from the history of books to cataloging, reference services, metadata, and more. The variety in the classes that SJSU offers helps students like me explore different types of librarianship, and in my two years of studies, I have found that government and law are the two types of librarianship closest to my heart.

Attending SJSU has afforded me wonderful opportunities, such as an internship with the Law Library of Congress and a student job at the California State Library, where I worked in the Government Publications Section (GPS). In addition to those roles, I have become an executive board member for the SLA Student Chapter (SLASC) on campus, where I am our group’s archivist. The future for libraries seems uncertain in these times, but working with the students on the SLASC team gives me hope that we will find a way to continue to run and honor these important institutions in the years to come.

Being awarded this scholarship helps me to continue toward becoming the historian that my teacher predicted me to be all those years ago because librarians truly are historians. I have seen it firsthand over these past few years in my work and volunteer opportunities in ways too numerous to explain here. Not only does this scholarship help with my courses and books, but it also helps to provide me with the time in my schedule that I need to continue my internship and volunteer experiences, which are just as valuable in preparing me to be a librarian as my MLIS coursework. Thank you very much for this opportunity.



Amanda Espinoza

San Jose State University

2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

SLA 2025: A Scholarship Winner's Observations

By Justin Gaynor

In the area where I live, I occasionally have to share the road with one or two magnificent horses, slowly clopping along the pavement in the shade of scrub oaks and manzanitas. Should I ever encounter one of these animals in the breakdown lane, hood up and steam coming out of its radiator, so to speak, I would be helpless to intervene on its behalf. The care, feeding and equipping of *Equus caballas* are bits of knowledge best passed down from parent to child, from blacksmith to apprentice and from veterinarian to student. Google or Claude.ai could doubtless provide me detailed instructions on how to shoe a horse, but woe unto any animal unfortunate enough to rely on me for help. It would likely die of old age before I managed to kill it with ineptitude.

And yet, for centuries, in any village across the globe, there were people skilled in the arts of ironworking, saddlemaking and riding. To maintain continuity, people started learning these skills in childhood or early adulthood, playing close attention to resident experts. Only after years of training would people entrust their animals to the skills of a new practitioner, and it was accepted that mistakes would be made—an important part of the learning process. Over time, education has become both more general and more standardized. Students today have access to tools our ancestors could only dream of. Still: in converting knowledge to skill, there is no substitute for sitting at the knee of an expert and watching them perform their art.

And that is what the SLA Travel Scholarship has meant to me.

Sure, I had read this journal, among others, to get a feel for the concerns of Special Librarians. I was well aware of the fractious relationship between Emily Drabinski and certain factions of the American public. Heck, I even attended her keynotes—twice, in fact. But it wasn't until we shared a bus back to the airport from the Pitt campus that I really got to know her. This is simply not something that could have happened through a computer screen. I knew that librarians

were embedded in many different areas of public life, but I had not really considered what transportation librarians do until attending one of their meetings. Although I have a background in the semiconductor industry, I had never considered the vital role librarians play in search functionality until I met the group from Analog Devices and learned about the work they're doing. People I have known for months via Zoom and email were suddenly people I was sharing a meal with or sitting across from a meeting table. And of course, I had the chance to meet many people that I had not yet encountered in any context. Special Librarianship is a bigger world than I'd realized.

During a tour of an astronomical observatory, I heard questions from a librarian at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. I compared notes with fellow students from India and England. I learned about the psychology of searching from a speaker with dual experience in psychology and librarianship. The opportunities to learn new things face-to-face with experts was unmatched.

In the course of a long pre-MLIS career, I have attended a couple of dozen conferences, at least, but this was different. This was an SLA conference. The people who attend this have a desire to help others wired into their DNA. As a student who has only seen the profession from afar, I was amazed at how easy it was to strike up conversations with people, ask them about their work and get meaningful answers. I now feel free to call upon many experts around the country and the world with questions. The theme this year was "Creative Transformation," but from my perspective, it could have been "Go ahead, ask me!"

Finally, I truly enjoyed meeting the other Travel Scholarship winners. We all gained a lot from this, socializing, asking

continued

questions, paying attention. For the long-time members of SLA, I hope the presence of this pack of newbies barking at your ankles was energizing and inspiring. This organization will see some new faces, but the travel scholarship program ensures that the practice of passing down skills from experts to novices will continue unabated.



Justin Gaynor, Ph.D.
San Jose State University
2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

SNIP! Meeting a Community of Special Librarians

By Zoe Hiscutt

The 2025 SLA conference was the most incredible opportunity to learn and meet a community of special librarians, not just in the US, but internationally. As a student and new professional ('SNIP!'), the conference scholarship allowed me to attend for the first time and contribute to that community.

One of the highlights was a trip to the Allegheny Observatory, organised by Justin Gaynor in the Engineering community. Most attendees were from non-science backgrounds, cementing how curious librarians are about absolutely everything. It was an opportunity to learn about the architecture and history of the building and telescope use, and the research being done by physicists, astronomers, and eighth-grade students.

Sessions covered a huge range, including copyright, competitive intelligence, cybersecurity, budgeting, leadership, advocacy, collective action, data and AI. Interwoven into sessions and throughout, there were discussions about advocacy, and one of the emerging conference themes was the importance of the library community and collective action. One standout session was Carrie L. Wardzinski's talk on the skills crossover between librarianship and political organising. Wardzinski discussed how misinformation and disinformation from all sides of the political spectrum is difficult to realise; sensationalisation; and the concept of 'news deserts,' where communities suffer from a lack of reliable, trustworthy journalism and information. Another memorable session

was by Emily Pavuluri and Kyle Turner on their designing the Vanderbilt Law School's AI workshop series. This series included practical steps for researching, proposing, running and evaluating an AI workshop series, with immensely detailed strategies for connection and engagement with students, including alternative indicators of success.

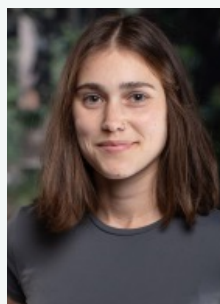
For SNIPs, conference sessions can be overwhelming for those that feel they do not yet have the same level of knowledge or expertise as the presenters. The SLA conference did not feel overwhelming at all, and sessions were aimed at a range of audiences. One talk that encapsulated this accessibility was by Julie Smith Maekask, Christine Pelosi and Karen Neinstadt who shared their expertise and knowledge on the profession. It was an uplifting reminder of the shared challenges between special librarians, as well as insights into 'Why It's Great to Be a Special Librarian' (the session's title).

The one thing I will remember most were the people I met and their enthusiasm, support, care and admiration for librarianship and for each other. There was a real sense of identity of special librarianship, with people discussing their love for their job and the profession throughout. It was the SNIPs lunch on the Saturday where I first met the people I would end up spending the most time with throughout the

continued

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE REFLECTIONS *continued*

conference. I spent the last day at the Phipps Conservatory (the city's botanical garden), seeing Pittsburgh's public library, a local secondhand bookshop, and drinking iced coffee in the Schenley Plaza with others also waiting for their flights. The planning committee did an excellent job at facilitating time for connection throughout, and these things are what made the conference so remarkable. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity.



Zoe Hiscutt

University College London

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

Yay, Scholarships!

Jennifer Hunter

In the fall of 2024, I was one of the lucky recipients of a tuition scholarship courtesy of the Special Libraries Association (SLA). This generous scholarship meant I did not have to worry about my final semester tuition at San José State University (SJSU), as I finished up my Master of Library Information Science (MLIS). The weight of that alone being lifted from my shoulders was life changing. I want to express my gratitude for the ability to focus on my final semester without the weight of worry about having to pay tuition. Thank you.

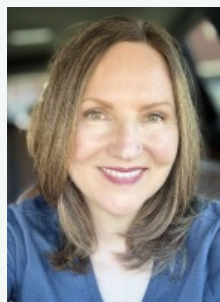
I decided in February of this year to do a poster presentation at the American Library Association (ALA) for SJSU at their annual Networking Reception. I submitted a poster proposal that encompassed a synopsis of my capstone project from my AI, Data and Ethics course with Dr. Norman Mooradian. The leftover funding allowed me to have the professional experience of doing a poster presentation at an international conference, along with my colleagues. Doing a poster presentation was an important first step in getting out of my comfort zone and experiencing a conference, not just as a participant from the attendee side of the aisle, but as a presenter. It was a worthwhile experience which gave me the confidence to seek out other opportunities in the future. I also invited one of my colleagues from the SLA Student Chapter at SJSU, who I thought would be fantastic at giving a poster presentation. They applied and attended ALA to do a poster as well.

If I had known about the impending changes and dissolution of the SLA, I would have certainly allocated my additional funds to attending the SLA Annual Conference. Unfortunately, I did not have the finances to do both and had already committed to attending the ALA, and I am not one to break my commitments. As a member of the SLASC executive board for

most of my master's program at SJSU, I was saddened by the news of the dissolution. However, I am grateful for the work the board has done to find a new home in the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T). I am hopeful that this new chapter builds up membership and opportunities for all involved.

My involvement in the SLA Student Chapter at SJSU was invaluable. Attending an online master's program is convenient and allows you to complete the work on your schedule. But because you are not attending in-person classes, it can be an isolating experience. Joining SLASC allowed me to form connections, have experiences in leadership, create programming, work with others, and add value to education experience. I never would have thought of applying for a scholarship but remembered hearing that you don't know if you don't try.

I am grateful for my colleagues who inspired me to go further, try new things, and be bold. Otherwise, I might have missed out on the opportunity of this wonderful scholarship that allowed me to flourish in my final semester at SJSU. The SLA was instrumental in the best of my experiences in my master's program. Additionally, I am currently on the SF Bay Area Chapter Boards as the Alumni Student Liaison between the SLASC and the SLA-SF. Thank you.



Jennifer Hunter

San Jose State University

2024 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

Reconceptualizing Prison Libraries

By Alex Kessler

I attended the SLA 2025 Annual Conference with a specific question in mind. As a newcomer to the field, just beginning to immerse myself in the foundational literature of Library and Information Science, I had been wondering: do prison libraries really belong in the special libraries category? My instincts told me no. My research told me no. And the SLA Conference schedule, devoid of any sessions or presentations focused on prison librarianship, told me no.

Libraries and prisons are odd bedfellows: two diametrically opposed institutions that must nonetheless operate under one roof. That prison libraries exist at all is a theoretical paradox rife for study at the abstract level, but since they must persist for the time being, it is worth reconsidering how we categorize them in practice. Special libraries are usually designated as such because of their highly specialized collections—law libraries, medical libraries, corporate libraries, etc.—not their unique environments or the legal status of the populations they serve. By haphazardly relegating prison libraries as special libraries, the American Library Association (ALA) perpetuates the dangerous assumption that incarcerated individuals are not part of the public and do not have the same rights to a diverse and continuously evolving collection of information resources as the general population.

In a more perfect world, we might simply reconceptualize prison libraries as branches of their corresponding public libraries: professionalized institutions that offer unmitigated services to their patrons as part of their constitutional rights. If this seems too far-fetched a goal to be accomplished in our increasingly dystopian reality, however, it might be in our best interest to officially recognize prison libraries as their own distinct category or type of library so that they may receive the visibility and advocacy they so desperately need.

Clearly, the SLA has more immediate concerns at the moment as the merger with the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T) is negotiated and the bricks for the ever-uncertain future are laid. Moreover, the onus is really on the ALA to make any widescreen changes to the standards and guidelines undergirding librarianship. Still, I found it a bit concerning that there was no representation for prison librarianship across the conference's four days and dozens of hours of programming. In lieu of any major conceptual changes from powers that be, the SLA would do well to rethink this should the conference return in 2026.

Alex Kessler

Dominican University

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

Finding a Place

By Katherine Knight

I was both surprised and honoured to find myself one of the SLA scholarship winners this year. Having not been to an SLA conference before—or indeed any library conference, nor having stepped foot outside Europe—I was unsure quite what to expect. My link to special libraries was itself unconventional: an academic librarian by training with a research interest in prison libraries. Would I find a place here?

The answer, of course, was yes. Upon my (very reluctant, jetlagged) return to work, I asked my colleagues if it was usual to have a dance party, complete with karaoke, at the end of a conference. (The rather bemused answer was no.) From an orientation lunch and a fellows and first-timers mixer to the celebratory lunch on the final day, I remain eternally grateful to the conference organisers—and the SNIPs crew in particular—for ensuring no newcomer felt left behind.

But it's always strange starting something at a time of change. One of the first talks I went to was the SLA roundtable, where members who had been part of this association for thirty, forty years came up one by one to argue for the future of the association and the parts that made it special. A slightly abashed newcomer, it was an education in what makes an organisation work, and I particularly enjoyed learning from 'SLA Fellows' about their experiences into and through librarianship. These intergenerational talks occurred throughout the conference, and formed one of the highlights for me. ("How do you get budgeting experience?" "Volunteer for us!")

And as always, things were changing on the wider stage. We had already felt them—changes to Library of Congress taxonomies, for example, had already been felt on the other side of the pond, one of the many international libraries that use them. It was such a privilege to hear such moving keynote speeches from Emily Drabinski on the state of the profession, and to learn, near-continuously, from my US colleagues about the way things were done—and how we could do better.

Talks were of course the highlight. AI has been at the forefront of my mind over the previous year, and I was pleased to see so many speakers provide input on what had worked (and what hadn't) with their information literacy programs. A particular highlight for me was hearing from Abigail Ellsworth Ross on how they had implemented a way to test AI outputs within their institution; my favourite, unexpected takeaway from the talk was that we have a moral duty to train AI to be polite. I was privileged over the course of this conference to learn how to budget, how to organise a (successful!) student chapter, and how to use our platform for social good, beyond the bounds of the library.

I came away from the conference refreshed, energised, and looking forward to giving back to the organisation which gave me such a wonderful experience. Communities like this don't just end and I look forward to helping with SLA, in whichever form it might take, in the year to come.



Katherine Knight
Oxford University

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

Building Community, Embracing Change: My First SLA Conference

By Sarah Lancaster

As a current graduate student and emerging professional, attending the SLA Conference this June was a truly transformational experience. When I applied for the scholarship, I had little expectation of what would come from it. I hadn't heard much about SLA until an alum from my school shared the opportunity, and while I was interested in libraries, I had only a vague understanding of what "special libraries" actually entailed.

From the moment I arrived, I was struck by the warmth, camaraderie, and genuine community that made up the conference. Everyone I met was welcoming, supportive, and eager to connect which made this a very special experience.

Attending at such a pivotal moment, when the association itself is discussing a potential dissolution or merger, and libraries across the country are facing increasing challenges, could have led to a grim atmosphere. Instead, I found a community full of hope, resilience, and determination. There was a strong future-oriented energy, especially evident in sessions focused on AI. These panels were not only timely but incredibly valuable; whether we embrace it or not, AI is part of our professional landscape, and understanding its applications and risks is essential to serving our communities effectively. I hadn't had the opportunity to learn so much about it before this.

What stood out most to me was the emphasis on community-building. From the opening keynote by Emily Drabinski to sessions highlighting the SJSU student chapter, the value of community was woven throughout. The very structure of the conference itself, from newcomer sessions and community lunches to the dance party, reflected the value that SLA places on a welcoming community.

I also gained valuable insights into the diverse roles within special librarianship. As a student and early-career professional, I had limited awareness of the range of opportunities available. Panels by and about corporate librarianship, law librarianship, competitive intelligence, and solo librarianship opened my eyes to potential career paths I hadn't previously considered. Beyond specific job titles, I came away with a better understanding of the transferable skills librarians bring to any organization and how to advocate for the value we provide - an essential takeaway.

Attending SLA has left me feeling energized, inspired, and deeply grateful. I've made new friends and professional connections, and I've gained a clearer vision of what's possible in this field. Most of all, I feel a renewed sense of hope for the future of librarianship and am honored to be part of such a passionate community.

Sarah Lancaster
University of Michigan

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

SLA's Many Firsts

By Kimberly Lin

I received a conference award for students and recent graduates to attend the Special Libraries Association Annual Conference. The conference was held at the University of Pittsburgh campus from June 7-10, 2025. This conference represented many “firsts” for me as an LIS student. Not only was it my first library conference in person, but it was also my first time in Pittsburgh, first time experiencing the “dorm life” with other SLA members, but most importantly, the first time meeting other LIS students, recent graduates, and seasoned information professionals.

I joined SLA during my first semester in the MLIS program at San Jose State University (SJSU) after attending the SLA SF Bay Area community's Centennial Party and meeting many information professionals, many of whom are SJSU alumni. I also knew SLA's mission aligned closer to my career pathway goal of working in specialized librarianship. There also seems to be more flexibility in the special libraries sector with more opportunities to showcase transferable skills, a common theme I heard from speakers and panelists during my time at the conference.

As an LIS student embarking on a career transition, some of the important advice during my library internship was to attend conferences and network as much as possible. As an introvert, it meant entering the field with an open mind and embracing those opportunities that come my way. Attending the SLA conference is the very beginning of my journey of what it means to be an information professional.

There were some great and very practical sessions on copyright, budgeting, leadership, data and AI. The welcoming keynote address, by Emily Drabinski, discussed advocacy, and the emerging conference theme was the importance of the library community and collective action. Librarians and information professionals are not just adapting to, but leading the evolving information landscape that will shape our future.

One of the biggest highlights (and a very welcoming surprise) was meeting a couple of my SJSU classmates in person. Because SJSU's MLIS program is virtual, it can be difficult to meet one another in person, and this conference provided this opportunity. I enjoyed attending the Student and New Information Professional (SNIPs) community Get Together on my first day and later in the day, the Fellows and First Timers community Event, meeting new and seasoned professionals providing their insights, guidance, and wisdom on navigating the conference, and the profession itself. I felt I had found my community, and I could be a part of something greater.

Overall, it was truly an amazing experience for my first library conference and a great opportunity to meet other fellow scholarship winners and information professionals. This will have a lasting impact on me as a current student, and where my information professional journey will take me to.

Kimberly Lin

San Jose State University

2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

Building a Meaningful Career in Special Librarianship

By Dina Madan

I received the SLA 2025 Tuition Scholarship to support my Master's in Library and Information Studies at University College London (UCL). When I learned that I had been awarded the scholarship, it felt like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I have been pursuing a career in librarianship since 2024, and the journey has been a bumpy road.

After completing my CILIP accredited undergraduate degree in 'Digital Media and Information Studies' from the University of Glasgow, I worked in unscripted television production before realising that I was chasing the wrong career path. My true calling was in library services. However, I quickly discovered that my transferable skills alone were not enough to secure a position in the sector. To gain experience, I volunteered for a mobile library service in Suffolk. This gave me my first taste of what it felt like to provide a valuable community service. I found it incredibly rewarding and wanted more of it. Soon after, I secured a role as a library assistant at Huntingdon Library in Cambridgeshire. I absorbed so much, not only from the role itself, but especially from the staff who formed the heart of the library. I was inspired by the breadth of knowledge that my colleagues carried with them and knew I wanted to build the same kind of expertise myself. At the same time, I became increasingly interested in another side of librarianship. I secured a six-week work placement at Churchill College, University of Cambridge, which specialises mainly in STEM subjects. Here, I had the opportunity to see the inner workings of an academic library. I was fascinated to see how the librarian, without a STEM or teaching background, was still able to provide crucial academic support through journal recommendations and managing course reading lists. Watching her make vital managerial decisions within such a specialised environment really sparked my interest in special librarianship. It also showed me the value of experience and advanced study, which ultimately led to my decision to pursue the MLIS at UCL.

Receiving the SLA tuition scholarship has made that possible. The financial support has relieved a great deal of stress and anxiety, allowing me to dedicate myself fully to the course. However, this scholarship offers more than just financial assistance. SLA provides a network and space to connect with diverse librarians working across a wide range of specialised sectors. Being part of an association that has existed for more than 115 years feels both exciting and humbling. I want to take full advantage of this opportunity, not only by learning from experienced professionals but also by connecting with fellow students who are starting out like me. I hope to explore career pathways I may not have considered, discover niche areas of librarianship, and contribute to the wider conversations shaping our profession. I believe that being part of a wider professional home is a vital part of librarianship. Successful libraries are built through shared strategies and a collective commitment to improving standards across the sector. SLA embodies this belief perfectly. I am excited to contribute to the community by attending conferences and webinars, and volunteering with one of SLA's committees to begin my role as an active member.

Receiving the SLA scholarship has confirmed my decision to pursue a career in special librarianship. My goal is to become a librarian, managing information services for a law society or firm, or a private members' association, where I can provide highly tailored support to a close-knit community and work in an environment where the collection is focused. I am drawn to law libraries because of the responsibility to provide accurate and timely information which directly impacts professional practice. At UCL, I will be taking eight modules which give me the foundation to build this expertise and prepare me for a career dedicated to serving a smaller community at the highest standard.

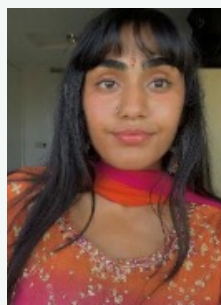
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SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE REFLECTIONS *continued*

In the 'Managing Collections' module, I will learn how to plan and evaluate stock acquisitions, manage budgets, and balance user input with institutional policies. This will prepare me to make informed decisions about maintaining collections that truly serve the needs of a specialist community. In the module 'Managing Information Organisations' I will explore the ethical and legal aspects of information work from the perspective of all stakeholders. I am looking forward to this class as it will prepare me for decision making in managerial roles, something I aspire to take on later in my career. Another module, 'Using Technology in Information Organisations,' will introduce me to the key information systems used in libraries. A major project will involve creating a specification brief for a new catalogue. I am eager for this opportunity as I want to deepen my understanding of the technological standards and systems that libraries rely on and practice the kind of work I will carry into my career. I have also chosen an optional module called 'Historical Bibliography.' This class explores rare book collections, and I will learn how to catalogue, classify, and handle them using

professional standards. I am particularly excited to produce a bibliographic description of a rare printed item, which will be a hands-on project I can showcase in future applications and interviews. This module will give me a chance to explore a new interest of mine, and I see it as a valuable addition to my studies.

Thanks to this scholarship, I can now take the first major step toward building a meaningful career in special librarianship. More importantly, I am doing so as part of an association that shares my belief in knowledge sharing.



By Dina Madan
University College London
2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

This is Not the End, But Only a New Beginning

By Christine Thuy Minh Nguyen

Attending the SLA 2025 Annual Conference in Pittsburgh was a remarkable and timely experience, especially knowing it was SLA's last annual meeting before its merger with the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T). Being present for this transitional moment gave me a unique sense of history and reminded me of the importance of carrying forward the community and expertise SLA has cultivated for decades.

As a current MSLIS student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and emerging information professional, I found attending this conference highly beneficial to my growth and career development. For starters, the sessions I attended felt highly relevant to my career path in digital information work, particularly in digital archives, digital asset management, and electronic records management. Two of my favorite sessions were Bias in Taxonomy Design and Application: Sources,

Solutions, and Implications for AI Tools and Algorithms and Transforming Digital Collection Stewardship with AI-enabled Solutions. The first explored how taxonomies, though intended to organize knowledge, can unintentionally perpetuate bias with downstream effects on AI tools. The second was an exciting live demo of JSTOR's new AI-driven tool to tackle the ever-growing backlog of materials to be described and made accessible, a challenge many cultural heritage institutions can relate to. Compared to other conferences I have attended, SLA's focus on niche topics such as taxonomy provided me with the rare opportunity to learn from long-term professionals in the field and left me feeling as though I had found a professional community that truly resonates with my interests.

continued

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE REFLECTIONS *continued*

Beyond the sessions, one of the main reasons, if not my primary objective in attending conferences, was to expand my network of like-minded colleagues. SLA provided a welcoming, close-knit environment where I could engage professionals from all stages of their careers—current graduate students, emerging information professionals, and seasoned experts with decades of experience. Whether through structured events like the first-timers and early-career meetups, open discussions, and conference-wide activities such as the well-loved Annual Dance Party, or simply sitting next to someone new and taking the chance to strike up a conversation, I never felt my early-career status was a barrier. On the contrary, everyone I met was genuinely eager to connect, share insights, and offer guidance. I am once again reminded of the importance of cultivating strong professional communities, especially in our profession devoted to serving our user communities. Wholeheartedly, I can confidently say the connections I made will extend well beyond our weekend in Pittsburgh.

Overall, SLA 2025 was both a significant professional milestone and an inspiring personal experience. It strengthened my sense of direction as I pursue a career in digital information management and reminded me of the collaborative spirit that sustains our profession. I am grateful for the scholarship that enabled me to attend, and I look forward to carrying the lessons, connections, and spirit of SLA forward into my work and future involvement in our wonderful community, now together with ASIS&T. This is not the end, but only a new beginning.



By Christine Thuy Minh Nguyen
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
2025 Conference Scholarship Awardee

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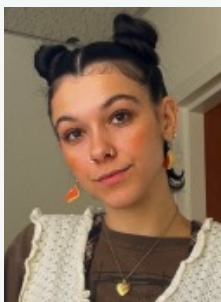
What Is a Library?

By Kennedy-Grace Pierce

As I begin the final year of my master's in library science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I've found myself reflecting on libraries as a concept. I realized that while I could rattle off loaded definitions of the basic functions and purposes of most libraries, I kept falling short when attempting to verbalize the feeling, the heart, of a library's impact. As a new library professional, it feels important to examine the question of what libraries are from every possible angle. Because to truly know and pursue my own aspirations, I must first fully understand their substance and the vein through which they flow.

What is a library? A question so seemingly simple that it feels almost silly to ask. But as Dr. Maya Angelou once said, "The epitome of sophistication is utter simplicity." So recently, I've spent many an hour in the sticky-sweet North Carolina heat trying my best to determine the genesis of this feeling. To familiarize myself with the winding roots of its heart. Roots that somehow remain grounded in an earth made of innumerable, constantly evolving contexts. But alas, I'm no Maya Angelou. And the summer heat is only sweet until it melts over the sticky, souring in their sweltering union.

And so, then, I walk into the air-conditioned reprieve of a library for the steep price of FREE.99. I share a smile with a stranger, settling into renewed, chilled sweetness as I receive enthusiastic guidance to the works of Angelou. The support I've received through the 2025 Special Libraries Association tuition scholarship feels akin to this in its nature. The value of this award in the accomplishment of my academic and professional pursuits has, much like the efforts and impacts of libraries, been immeasurable. Serving as a stabilizing hand as I took my next steps forward. As a reassuring squeeze of the shoulder when it shook. As a reminder that I'm not alone. Even when I faltered in the face of physical adversity and financial uncertainty. It is this opportunity that has led me to believe that perhaps—as a feeling, at its core—in a library, is the spirit of a true friend. It is both a privilege and an honor to join hands with a friend such as the Special Libraries Association.



Kennedy-Grace Pierce
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

Volunteering with the SLA Midwest Virtual Symposium

By Nicholas Pyzdrowski

I am incredibly grateful for the scholarship I received from the Special Libraries Association (SLA). Not only did the scholarship provide me with the opportunity to connect with professionals working in special libraries and information centers, but it also exposed me to work in the field that broadened my knowledge horizon.

A central aspect of my scholarship award entailed volunteering with a SLA community, association committee, subcommittee, or working group. After investing time in the spring of this past year connecting with and sitting in on virtual meetings hosted by multiple SLA communities, I elected to join the planning team for the SLA Midwest Virtual Symposium. As a member of the planning committee, I helped to solicit and select speakers and abstracts for the symposium. I also developed social media for the event and helped to market and promote it. This was my first time planning a symposium of any kind, and so I learned a lot from being involved in its development and execution. From my time volunteering on the SLA Midwest Virtual Symposium planning committee, I learned methods for coordinating a call for proposals in addition to strategies for developing guidelines and support for presenters. I also was able to gain meaningful experience in designing a set of criteria for reviewing, selecting, and scheduling speakers for a symposium, as well as in promoting the event through newsletters and other channels.

On the day of the symposium, it was incredibly rewarding to see all the hard work of the planning committee pay off in the form of an engaging and well-attended professional development experience. Presenters at the symposium gave talks on a variety of topics, including methods for planning outreach events to boost MLIS students' knowledge about topics in special librarianship, evaluating commercial data quality, structuring MLIS student internships in meaningful ways, amplifying research using features of digital

repositories, promoting leisure reading in medical science libraries, implementing efficient weeding practices in special collections, and more. It was great getting to learn about all the cool and innovative work my fellow librarians and information specialists are doing in the field, and to play a role in helping others to learn about their work. From the talks, I was able to glean several takeaways, including ideas for AI tools I can use to streamline my workflows as well as strategies I can use to boost MLIS student engagement with the special libraries student chapter I co-chair at my university. As I prepare for the upcoming academic year, I look forward to taking the lessons I learned from my time volunteering with the SLA Midwest Virtual Symposium planning committee and putting them into action.

Another benefit of volunteering with a SLA community is that I was able to network with professionals working in special libraries and information centers, and in doing so I was able to forge connections with individuals interested in helping me to raise awareness among my MLIS peers about the important work happening within the field of special librarianship. By virtue of a contact I made on the SLA Midwest Virtual Symposium team, I was able to get in touch with a cohort of special librarians and information professionals passionate about connecting with MLIS students to share their insights from working in the field. In partnership with this team, I was able to organize a panel discussion to take place at my university in the fall. As part of this event, the MLIS students at my university will be able to hear the panelists talk about key aspects of working in special libraries. I am appreciative of the time and effort the panelists have set aside to speak with my MLIS peers, and I am excited to make this conversation a reality for my classmates—something which may not have come to pass if I had not been chosen as a recipient of the SLA scholarship.

continued

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE REFLECTIONS *continued*

Looking forward, I see myself employed at a museum, historical society, or government library, connecting patrons with information, developing special collections, and solving problems of user access to extant catalogs. The SLA scholarship has strengthened my connection to the SLA community and deepened my understanding of methods for facilitating professional development opportunities amongst practitioners in the field. I consider myself blessed to have received this award, and I look forward to the prospect of using what I have learned from my volunteering experiences with SLA to continue to grow and give back to the profession.



Nicholas Pyzdrowski
St. Catherine University
2024 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

Supporting Native Collections and Communities

By Ruby Rhodd

My name is Ruby Rhodd, and I am from White Cloud, Kansas: a small, historic town in the northeastern part of the state. The city of White Cloud was named after my ancestor, Chief Francis White Cloud, who led the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska. I am proud to be an enrolled member of the Iowa Tribe and the granddaughter of Chief Jim A. White Cloud Rhodd, the last chief of our people. My parents, Jim and Linda Rhodd, along with my two older siblings, Rachel Kent and Jimmy Rhodd, have been instrumental in shaping the person I am today. Their unwavering support has been the foundation of my success.

I was raised near the Iowa Tribe's reservation and graduated from Doniphan West High School in 2013. From 2011 to 2013, I had the honor of representing my tribe as the Ioway Tribe's Powwow Princess. I went on to attend the University of Kansas, earning dual bachelor's degrees in Visual Art and the History of Art in 2017.

After graduation, I began working at my tribe's casino, where I eventually became a Gaming Inspector. Although I spent five years in that field, I realized that my true passion lay elsewhere. I fondly remembered my time working in one of KU's campus libraries and how much I enjoyed being surrounded by books and history. That experience stayed with me, and in 2022, I returned to KU—this time as the Special Collections Serials Cataloger at the Kenneth Spencer Research Library.

I thrive in detail-oriented work, and cataloging serials in a research library has proven to be a perfect fit. Being part of a team committed to preserving history has been both fulfilling and inspiring. I'm especially passionate about tribal archives and the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge, language, and culture. This focus has led me to pursue a Master's in Library and Information Science at Emporia State University, where I'm currently in my second year, specializing in archives. Most recently, I completed a Rare Book School course titled "History of the Indigenous Book in the Americas," which deepened my understanding of Indigenous print history and strengthened my commitment to supporting Native collections and communities through archival work.

I'm honored to receive the 2025 Special Libraries Association Tuition Scholarship. This support has enabled me to focus more fully on my education and professional development. I look forward to continuing my involvement with SLA, connecting with colleagues across the country, and learning from the broader community of special library professionals.



Ruby Rhodd
Emporia State University
2025 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

continued

Why Students Need Belonging in Professional Associations

By Caitlin Sheil

Students entering the fields of librarianship and information science often turn to professional associations to find what coursework alone cannot provide: community, mentorship, and hands-on experience. Organizations like the Special Libraries Association (SLA) have historically offered low-barrier opportunities for students to connect with professionals, build leadership skills, and participate in programming that is directly relevant to emerging careers.

With the dissolution of SLA in 2025 and the ongoing merger discussions with the Association for Information Science & Technology (ASIS&T), the landscape is shifting in ways that matter deeply to students. On one hand, the merger holds promise. Combining SLA's practitioner-focused networks and chapter-based structure with ASIS&T's strong academic foundation could create a broader and more diverse organization where students gain exposure to both research and professional practice. This blending of traditions has the potential to expand opportunities for mentorship, the presentation of student work, and access to job leads.

However, mergers also bring uncertainty. Students who relied on SLA's student-friendly model may wonder where they now fit or how to access the same level of support. As a member of the San Jose State University's SLA Student Chapter (SLASC) board, I have seen how vital these opportunities are. Our chapter has provided students with hands-on leadership experience, a space to design programming for peers, and direct access to professionals who are willing to mentor and guide us. For many students, SLASC has been the first professional home they felt truly a part of, and the dissolution of SLA raises questions about what will happen to that supportive structure.

My own experience planning events, collaborating with peers, and hearing directly from working professionals through SLASC has reinforced how much students gain from active participation. These opportunities are not easily replaced by coursework or casual networking. They help students build confidence, practice leadership, and begin to see themselves as colleagues within the profession. Losing or diminishing that structure could create real gaps for those trying to establish themselves.

For the new organization to thrive, it must ensure continuity in supporting students. Clear communication, affordable membership and conference rates, and active pathways for student leadership should remain priorities. Local chapters and virtual platforms, which often serve as the first point of entry for students, must also be preserved and strengthened. When students are given meaningful roles and are recognized as future colleagues, they not only gain valuable experience but also bring fresh energy to the profession.

As the merger progresses, the challenge and the opportunity lie in finding a balance between honoring SLA's tradition of accessible, practice-oriented engagement and embracing ASIS&T's scholarly contributions. Done well, the result could be a stronger professional home where students are not only welcomed but empowered to shape the future of the field.



Caitlin Sheil

San Jose State University

2024 Tuition Scholarship Awardee

The Impact of the SLA Scholarship

By Ellen Woolf

I was very fortunate to be one of six recipients of the 2024 round of tuition-based scholarships from the Special Libraries Association. Winning the SLA Scholarship has had a profound impact on my life, and I am delighted to have the opportunity to share what that looks like for me.

When I applied for the SLA Scholarship, I was just entering the third and final year of my Masters in Library & Information Studies at University College London (UCL). I didn't want to take out another loan and add to my undergraduate debt, so in order to fund my studies, I was using my savings and working two part-time jobs, amounting to nearly full-time hours on top of the time dedicated to my studies. I would start my day in a special library, finish my working day in an academic library, and then go home and read and write about libraries for my course. I often joked that my life was "all libraries, all the time" whenever anyone asked me what I do.

I was conscious that working like this would make it incredibly difficult to complete my final piece of work: the all-important dissertation. When I received the SLA Scholarship, not only was I able to pay off my remaining tuition fees, it also became possible to vacate one of my two roles. Since the end of February 2025, I have been working exclusively in the special library and have had an extra 20 hours per week to focus on my dissertation. As well as the funds, the scholarship has given me the invaluable gift of time. The impact of this cannot be overstated; it has fundamentally transformed my student experience and allowed me to live a simpler and happier life.

With the scholarship also comes the opportunity to volunteer with an SLA Community or other group. It is my great pleasure to volunteer with my Regional Community, SLA Europe, on events taking place online and in London. Most recently, I was thrilled to contribute to the BIALL and SLA Europe Online Careers Evening in June 2025. Volunteering in this way is a wonderful opportunity not only to give back to the organisation that has given me such incredible support, but also to develop my skills and meet other professionals within SLA and beyond.

Winning the scholarship has felt like a dream. The recognition of my commitment to the profession makes me very happy, but the genuine material support is something that I never imagined possible. I was amazed to find out that SLA has been doing this for new professionals for decades, with Maria Kochanowsky receiving the first SLA Scholarship Award in 1955. In every way, this scholarship has reaffirmed my decision to pursue this career, and has made me feel incredibly lucky to belong to such a supportive professional community. Whatever the future holds for SLA, I will be forever grateful to have been one small part of its long history.



Ellen Woolf

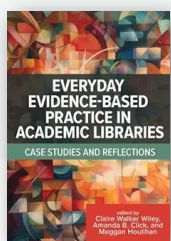
University College London

2024 Tuition Scholarship Awardee



Book Reviews

Reviewed by Lesley Farmer



Wiley, Claire Walker, Click, Amanda B. Click, & Houlihan, Meggan. (Eds.). (2023).

Everyday Evidence-based Practices in Academic Libraries: Case Studies and Reflections.

American Library Association. 364 pages.
ISBN: 978-0838939857

Increasingly, evidence-based professional practice has become the default model for planning and assessment. However, especially if librarians have not been trained in this approach, the process may seem daunting. Thus, the editors have provided concrete examples to prove that evidence-based practice can realistically be embedded into their everyday professional life.

The editors and the 47 contributors all have served as U.S. academic or special librarians. While the basis for selecting case studies for this book is not evident, all of the examples exhibit articulate and thoughtful processes and analysis.

The book starts by introducing the foundations of evidence-based practice (EBP), outlining Koufogiannakis and Brettle's five cyclical steps that facilitate continuous improvement: articulate, assemble, assess, agree, and adapt. The authors also recognize that other EBP models exist, which are mentioned in several case studies. In terms of evidence, the authors give examples of three kinds of everyday evidence: research-based, local-based, and professional knowledge. The editors also emphasize that collecting and analyzing evidence informs librarians so they can customize the library program to meet their community's needs. Chapter 1 details the evolution and implementation of EBP within the library and information practice.

The rest of the book consists of twenty chapters clustered into five thematic parts: understanding users, leadership and management, instruction and outreach, collections, and open initiatives. Between three and seven case studies address each part, detailing their processes and outcomes. Case studies vary in length from ten to thirty pages. Library settings range from small private academic libraries to large research I institutions. Impetus ranges from assessing one-

shot instruction to accreditation requirements. Constituents range from first-generation students to research faculty. Most methodologies are qualitative: surveys, interviews, focus groups, collection audits, benchmarking, and content analysis. Chapters include lessons learned, clarifying tables and figures, references, and tools such as interview protocols and checklists that can be easily adapted. A grid or index of constituencies, subject matter, methodologies, and instruments would have been useful. A concluding chapter asserts the need for reflection in order to optimize and systemize evidence-based practice.



Sannwald, William W. (2024).

Checklist of Library Building Design Considerations. (7th ed.)

American Library Association. 229 pages.
ISBN 978-0-8389-3864-5

Libraries continue to have a physical presence and importance as an organizational and community space for learning, enjoyment, and connection. On his part, library manager and urban architecture consultant William Sannwald has continued to update his classic book on library building design, which has a 35-year history.

Sannwald rightly considers new aspects of library issues such as sustainable design, air quality (thanks to COVID-19), telecommunications and technology advances, electronic media, inclusionary elements such as gender-neutral restrooms, and the Internet of Things/AI. He also expanded his discussion of construction issues. Throughout the book, Sannwald uses a user-centric framework, and encourages the need for flexible arrangements of space.

Part 1 deals with planning, starting with a needs assessment and essential personnel, noting joint use considerations.

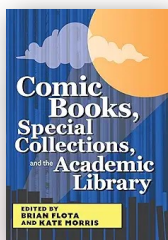
Part 2 compares construction alternatives such as a new building versus additions or renovations. Part 3 focuses on site selection, noting issues of community plan, accessibility, environment, and safety. Part 4 details issues of sustainable design that can aim for a LEED certification; features include water, energy, materials, air quality, lighting, roofs, and

continued

BOOK REVIEWS *continued*

heating. Part 5 considers general exterior elements such as the building exterior, landscaping, parking, loading and returns, trash, and signage. Part 6 focuses on the organization of the interior in terms of services, resources, community use, displays, signage, storage, and offices. Part 7 addresses accessibility standards (more than might be imagined). Part 8 deals with telecommunications, electrical aspects, and other equipment. Part 9 discusses interior design and finishes. Part 10 deals with entrepreneurial and collaborative spaces. Part 11 delves into materials handling and storage. Part 12 details building systems. Part 13 addresses safety, security, and public health. Part 14 explains building and property maintenance. Part 15 deals with building construction issues. Part 16 focuses on the ceremonial aspect of building. Each chapter features checklists of questions and aspects for consideration to help librarians address the many details involved in facility design and construction. Most parts include recommended resources. A bibliography and index complete the volume.

Sannwald's writing is engaging and practical. His scope pays attention to different types of libraries, explicitly addressing special librarians in the mix. For librarians considering facility change, this is a great source to use—and its use will impress architects and construction personnel.



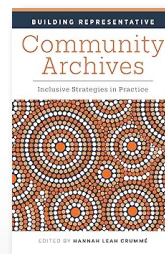
Flota, Brian, & Morris, Kate. (Eds.). (2023). *Comic Books, Special Collections, and the Academic Library*. American Library Association. 305 pages. ISBN: 978-0838939505

Comics and graphic novels (sometimes grouped as comix or sequential arts) have become largely mainstream, and comic studies in academic have increased. Nevertheless, academic libraries have been a bit cautious in collecting these formats, not only because of their under-estimated value but also issues in processing them. To address such issues, this vanguard book showcases best practices in developing and using comic book special collections within academic libraries. In the process, the book provides a pathway to more diverse and inclusive resources.

The two James Madison University librarian editors work with special collections, including comic books. The twenty chapters are written by 31 contributors, mainly academic librarians who reside in the United States. A few are archivists, curators, historians, or comics aficionados.

The book is arranged in four parts: 1) why institutions should collect comics, 2) steps in collecting comics, 3) engaging in library instruction and outreach with comics collections, and 4) using comics and primary and secondary sources. Each part consists of four to seven chapters. Part 1 discusses past and present barriers and community building as they relate to collecting comics in both the US and the UK. Local productions and minicomics are noted, and using comics to teach literacies is mentioned, highlighting indigenous graphic novels. Part 2 features sample comics library collections, including their processing and maintenance. Part 3 largely treats historic comics and cartoons. Part 4 deals with topical comics and crowdfunding. Each chapter is well researched, and includes notes and selective bibliography. Color images and pull-out quotes dot the volume.

While this book is not definitive, it provides an engaging sampling of approaches to collecting, managing and leveraging comic collections in academic settings.



Crummé, Hannah Leah. (Ed.). (2024). *Building Representative Community Archives: Inclusive Strategies in Practice*. American Library Association. 264 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8389-3959-8

As asserted in Caldera and Neal's 2014 book *Through the Archival Looking Glass* (p. x-xi): "history is not what happened in the past, but rather what is communicated about the past. And what is communicated about the past is shaped by what survives and is deemed valuable enough to preserve." In that process, populations' artifacts may be lost or omitted. This book addresses this issue, sharing the stories of archivists who are reconsidering their current collections, examining cultural and historical barriers and processing errors, and then working with their communities of trust to preserve shared histories.

The editor heads Lewis and Clark College's special collections and archives division. She has also edited several academic collected publications. The nineteen contributors reflect the experiences of post-secondary archives and other library professionals, whom Crummé contacted.

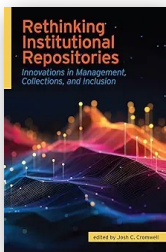
The editor provides a rationale for the book and introduces each case study. Ten chapters of case studies demonstrate a variety of diversity/equity/inclusion (DEI) approaches, such

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BOOK REVIEWS *continued*

as oral archives of BICOP and other under-represented voices such as LGBT+; partnerships with community to collect and curate artifacts; and reassessment of existing collections and relationships, such as religious ones to gain new insights. Details include issues of planning, building support, personnel issues, and space management case studies from ten to sixty pages long. They describe their collections and contexts, then detail their projects and outcomes, and provide supporting notes and references as appropriate. Occasional tables, forms and figures help readers replicate efforts. An extensive bibliography and index complete the volume.

The case studies do not shy from social and cultural issues, but rather provide candid and thoughtful examination of archival work and its value within the community. This work is more of a series of narratives than a reference work, and does not address all issues. Nevertheless, practitioner archivists will appreciate the efforts, and entering professionals will gain important insights into this field's practices.



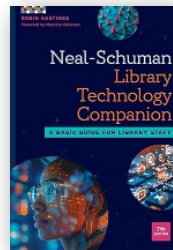
Cromwell, Josh C. (Ed.). (2023).
Rethinking Institutional Repositories: Innovations in Management, Collections, and Inclusion.
American Library Association. 259 pages.
ISBN: 979-8892555432

Increasingly, academic libraries have created and maintained institutional repositories. The next step is effective use and leveraging of these repositories, which this edited book highlights.

The editor manages scholar communications at the University of Southern Mississippi. The 41 US academic contributors all handle scholarly communication in general or specifically institutional repositories.

The volume addresses institutional repositories in three sections: management, projects, and inclusivity, with each section containing seven or eight chapters that are each about a dozen pages long. Notes and a bibliography conclude each chapter. The chapters draw upon research and the experiences of the contributing librarians at their sites, who provide practical, proven advice. Occasional images offer additional insights. The management section covers planning, migration, remote repositories, use and assessment. The projects deal with podcasts, grey literature, student scholarship, digital curation, and partnerships. Issues of inclusivity address accessibility, marginalized voices, policy, and DEI assessment and associated action. Technical, administrative and communication aspects are considered.

Academic and special librarians will appreciate, and be able to take advantage of, the clearly detailed processes that the contributors share in optimizing their institutions' repositories.



Hastings, Robin. (2025).
***Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff.* (7th ed.)**
American Library Association. 160 pages.
ISBN: 979-8892553100

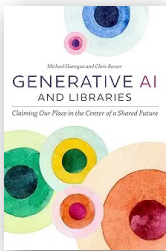
Library technology keeps changing so it is fortunate that this book updates its 2020 6th edition. The new author is a public library services consultant. She has written and presented widely on library technology.

The book consists of 16 chapters divided into five parts. The first part provides a historical context for library technologies and their impact. Part two, Mission Critical Technologies, deals with free information resources, library electronic resources, easy-to-find organizational systems, and computing devices in libraries. Part three addresses library productivity technology: websites and web services, social networking, professional development platforms, and makerspaces. Part four suggests ways to build and maintain technology environments in libraries: acquisitions, universal design and assistive technology considerations, ergonomic and sustainable infrastructures, security and privacy, and preservation and deselection issues. The final part predicts library technology futures and ways to keep current. Chapters include useful examples, often accompanied by tables and screenshots., review questions, and further resources. An extensive e glossary and index complete the volume.

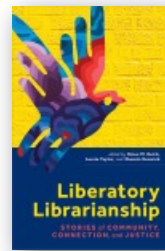
The information is clear, straightforward and easy to understand. The scope is generic library aspects. As the title indicates, this book provides a basic introduction to help librarians consider a variety of technology issues. It does not go into technical detail so it is not very useful if the librarian needs to troubleshoot a specific problem.

continued

BOOK REVIEWS *continued*



Hanegan, M., & Rosser, C. (2025). *Generative AI and Libraries: Claiming Our Place in the Center of a Shared Future*. American Library Association. 160 pages. ISBN: 979-8892553100



Keith, B., Taylor, L., & Renwick, S. (2024). *Liberatory Librarianship: Stories of Community, Connection, and Justice*. American Library Association. 172 pages. ISBN: 978-0-8389-3661-0

Libraries have dealt with technological changes for centuries; these changes vary in significance, with artificial intelligence (AI) being globally impactful. Yet the library itself remains central in its ethical stewardship of information for their communities. Starting with this fundamental stance, the authors explore AI in general, and generative AI specifically, using a human-centered paradigm. The authors assert that the libraries have transformative potential via the “dynamical mechanism of technology and social mediation.” To this end, they see libraries as centers of AI discussions and decisions in terms of being “in the world” with practical implementation, “of the world” with existential implications, and “for the world” with transformative purpose. Thus, in integrating AI, libraries claim agency and practice transparency, curiosity, rigor, including, and exploration.

The rest of the book defines and describes AI, identifies AI technologies for libraries and their contexts, discusses navigating change, and uses metaliteracy as a way to integrate AI. One chapter details the AI integration process. Another chapter provides a framework for AI adoption for sustainable integration, based on the elements of shared language, habit (internalizing), skill, and motivation. The next chapter access unseen costs and possibilities of AI integration (e.g., the behind the scenes work, infrastructure, continuous improvement, the human element, and resources). Chapter seven explores the intersection of AI and the ACRL literacy framework. Each chapter concludes with references.

This book offers a philosophical approach to libraries as they work with AI to provide effective service that empowers their communities.

This book’s editors define liberatory librarianship as “work that uses library capacity and expertise to uplift the spirit of freedom, justice, and community through shared contributions and collective benefits, and as work that supports the ability for minoritized and oppressed people to—with the collective support of the community—be better positioned” (p. xiv).

To model this philosophy, the editors brought together practical success stories of librarians who function in different areas for the same ultimate goals of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). The editors are university librarian leaders. The twenty-two chapter contributors reflect a broad spectrum of experience, from doctoral student to Far East cataloguer, and all are connected with the open-access Digital Library of the Caribbean.

These personal stories offer unique, authentic voices of librarians effectively working towards DEIJ for their community, from the local to the international stage. Chapters range from 2 to 18 pages long; a few black-and-white images dot the book. The majority of efforts have occurred in the academic arena, but some public and a couple of special libraries are also represented.

Part I features four exemplary liberatory librarians. Part II describes two programs in California that support liberation, one at the Oakland Public Library and the other at Stanford. Part III recounts instances of the personal as professional nature of DEIJ. Part IV traces the history and changes of liberation librarianship. Part V provides two examples of liberatory instruction and training: library instruction for students with disabilities and a basic archives workshop. Part 6 as the conclusion imagines and enacting liberation librarianship together through empathy. An index ends the volume.

Readers may be inspired by these stories, and recognize the challenges and hard, sometimes slow, work that is involved—and keeps evolving. In that respect, the book serves as a valuable collection of case studies for all librarians, particularly those who want to further their DEIJ work.



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