

# INFORMATION OUTLOOK

CONNECTING INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS | SPRING 2025

## Changing Standards



### **ALSO INSIDE:**

- *Columns and Highlights*
- *Scholarship Awardees*

# WHAT'S INSIDE

Message from the Editor.....	3
Message from the President.....	4
Standards Feature: Don't Ask What AI Can Do For You.....	5
Standards Feature: Overdue for Accessibility.....	11
History Column: Exceptional Information Delivery .....	16
Fellows Column: Change or Creative Transformation .....	19
Member Highlight: Heather Hedden.....	23
Vendor Highlight: British Standards Institution.....	25
2024 and 2025 Award Winners.....	28
2024 Scholarship Awardee Reflections	
Kelly Wilson.....	29
Shalani Jayamanne.....	30
Sambhav Jain.....	31
Olga Azar .....	32
Bryan Boy C. Cortez.....	33
2025 Scholarship Awardees.....	35
Book Reviews	
<i>A Practical Guide to DDC</i> .....	36
<i>What Every Library Director</i>	
<i>Should Know</i> .....	36
<i>Copyright</i> .....	37
<i>Developing Authorship and</i>	
<i>Copyright Ownership Policies</i> .....	37
<i>The Experimental Library</i> .....	37

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# Message from the Editor

By Dr. Lesley Farmer

The adage “The only constant in life is change” rings true today. Some change is predictable: seasons, life cycles, elections. Some change is inevitable: natural disasters, health status, governance. Some change is seemingly unexpected: pandemics, accidents, economic crisis.

Change is often out of our control, but we have some say in how we react to change. Are you a change agent? In communicating with your colleagues, do you make the communication loop, be in the loop, be out of the loop, or be unaware of the loop?

Which brings us to this issue of *Information Outlook*. The contributors help make the communication as they reflect on professional and personal change, particularly in terms of standards. Our new president Hildy Dworkin sets the stage for change. In the first feature article Marjoria Hlava traces the developments of taxonomies, especially as they apply to AI. In the second feature Bridgid Fennell explains new ADA Title II rules and their impact on libraries.

*Information Outlook* is expanding its columns. The history column examines the 1997 competencies of special librarians. Fellows columnist Nathan Aaron Rosen challenges libraries to consider change or creative transformation in their futures. This issue’s member highlight features taxonomist extraordinaire Heather Hedden. The new vendor column focuses on the British Standards Institution. The book review column covers books about standards as well.

This issue also has the opportunity to announce this year’s SLA scholarship awardees and to share the insights of 2024 scholarship awardees (other 2024 scholarship awardees were presented in the Fall 2024 issue).

Along with the wonderful contributors to this issue, special thanks go to SLA staff Heather Andolsen, designer Dawn Zumbahlen, and the Editorial Board members Tom Rink, Leslie Reynolds, Seema Rampersad, and Susan Hahn. It takes a capable team to make *Information Outlook* possible. Enjoy the fruits of their labor, and change for the better.

AND look forward to this journal’s legacy issue in the fall.



**Dr. Lesley Farmer**

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# Message from the President

By Hildy Dworkin

There's something truly magical about the number 25. In many ways, it's a milestone we hold dear—a symbol of celebration, achievement, and reflection.

I am honored to be president this year which happens to be the perfect year for my 25th SLA anniversary in 2025! Every conference is a moment to honor the journey we've taken and the relationships we've built along the way. I encourage everyone to attend our conference in Pittsburgh June 7-10, 2025, and make this the most memorable conference.

We will celebrate our 116th year history as well as all the years from then to now. I know this is a difficult time for us as SLA's future is uncertain. SLA has always been the people. Many of our careers were shaped by the advice and support the members gave to one another over the years. The conference features over 90 speakers, our supportive sponsors and exhibitors, networking opportunities, and time to unwind and relax with new and cherished friends. 2025 will be the year to remember.

Thank you for being an SLA member, for your dedication to this profession, and for the invaluable contributions you make every day. I look forward to a memorable conference filled with collaboration, inspiration, and a renewed sense of purpose.

As we gather for this incredible conference, we will celebrate John Cotton Dana's vision when he founded SLA in 1909 when a group of 20 librarians gathered at the Mt. Washington Hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to discuss a new kind of librarianship they were practicing. Reflecting societal and technological changes, we continue to shape special librarianship, and I think Dana would be proud of his legacy.

I look forward to sharing our memories and celebrating this legacy with you in Pittsburgh! A very special thank you to the *Information Outlook* Editorial Board. And thank you for all you do for the association.



**Hildy Dworkin**

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# Don't Ask What AI Can Do For You, Ask What You Can Do FOR AI

## Librarians Have The Skills To Guide AI

By Marjorie M. K. Hlava

Two years ago, it looked as though classification, cataloging, taxonomies, thesauri, and other methodologies for the organization of knowledge would no longer be needed. Taxonomies (the hierarchical views of a full thesaurus) would be used for navigation on websites and support in call centers, perhaps in decision trees, author tagging, and few other things. But why, in the halcyon days of full text search, would you need to tag the data or organize it? If you could get knowledge workers to put their treasure trove of understandings, methods, procedures, and general ideas of how an organization works into a knowledge management system would you really need to tag it using a taxonomy of some kind? We were just getting used to the idea of needing SPARQL and ontologies and knowledge graphs and how they are supposed to work to make shepherding and finding nuggets of information easier.

Suddenly, incipient systems like the MIT Sci Gen automatic paper writing systems became much more powerful with the release of ChatGPT 1, then ChatGPT 2. But it was

when Chat GPT 4 burst upon the scene in 2022 that the Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and Large Language Models (LLM) they were based on gave rise to conversational search. In addition, a host of other uses for what is generally termed “AI” appeared. Automation of nearly everything from graphics to 3D printing of parts to writing are suddenly in broad use and very effective. Searching as a conversation with distilled results answering the question rather than providing a list of links to look through and find the answer to your question. It is wonderful.

Not everything is roses, of course. The Gen AI systems do not generally document where the information comes from, so the answers are suspect. Biases transfer from the data mined to produce the answer set with those biases embedded. Web resources were already loaded with misinformation, and it multiplies when regurgitated from the distillation of many erroneous sources. The answers cannot be trusted. This is further distorted by the “hallucinations” of the GenAI systems. Hallucinations are easy to understand when you

consider the use of co-occurrence and vector-based systems driving for answers based on many disparate sources, some of which are not factual. These can then be combined into results, in what is clearly incorrect to the human reader, but is not necessarily so in the algorithmic eye of the Gen AI system based on a Large Language Model corpus. Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) is bandied about as a savior to such problems by finding the most contextually relevant information rather than applying labels like taxonomy tags. But is it?

Where does that leave us now? Where, if anywhere, do the librarian, information scientist, and taxonomist have a role to play in this future?

### Background

First let's get a better understanding of this new area. What are these GenAI things? What are the interdependencies? Where might we fit?

The building blocks of artificial intelligence are not new. Automation of the human activity has been around for well over 100 years. For example, there was mechanical automation of weaving with the jacquard looms in 1804. Then the automation of the U.S. census by Herman Hollerith in the 1890s used punch cards based on the principles from seeing those looms. And then of course the work from the IBM Thomas Watson group in the 1920s really accelerated automated classification. The basic algorithms by George Boole (who lived 1815 to 1864 and invented Boolean algebra) are basic to the design of computer circuits and are also basic to the search algorithms that we use. This logic includes IF/THEN statements, AND, OR, and NOT commands. The rise of AI depends heavily on Boole as well as the theorems of Thomas Bayes (who lived 1701 to 1761) from whom we get Bayesian probability and the related statistics. This work was further enhanced by [Richard Price](#) between 1723 to 1791. Bayesian probability and statistics describe the probability of an event based on the prior knowledge or conditions that might be related to the advantage of this. If it happened once, what is the probability it will happen again – what about if it happened three times... The idea is to get the information to the point of beyond reasonable doubt.

Many factors have come together to give us this emerging industry today. With the sudden appearance of Sputnik in 1957 the space race and the Cold War started. The

U.S. responded with an all-out emphasis on science and technology education and projects, particularly the Council On Scientific and Technical Information (COSATI). The thesaurus that resulted from COSATI is known as the Thesaurus of Engineering, Scientific and Technical Terms (TESTT), and following closely on its heels automated search and retrieval of documents, such as the NASA RECON system were born in the early 1970s. Other contracts that eventually led to the development of the Dialog Information Systems within the Lockheed Corporation's Missiles and Space Corporation. Dialog provided access to a large collection of information that was accessed by users through a groundbreaking interactive search interface. This was the founding modern search engine. It eventually contained over 650 different databases providing a wealth of information access to the world.

Much started with Natural Language Processing (NLP), the symbolic language. NLP is as the person speaks it – not coded or formatted or inverted – just naturally spoken. Much information was distilled in the journal *Mind* in 1950 by Alan Turing in his article "[Computing Machinery and Intelligence](#)." Chatbots started with options like Jabberwacky in 1997, created by British programmer Rollo Carpenter, to "simulate natural human chat in an interesting, entertaining and humorous manner." In the 1990s we also found mature automatic translation systems for many languages used in the government. The NLP based English to Russian machine translation (ERTRANS) and Russian to English (RETRANS), and other rule-based approaches started becoming popular in the early 1980s. These basic building blocks of artificial intelligence evolved over time.

Alongside those developments more were being made in the publishing industry. Suddenly, the markup language that publishers were using to typeset their information took a very interesting turn. The closely guarded secret algorithms used in proprietary systems like Apex, Pentax, and Science Typographers were very expensive and did not allow much data transfer. Publishers were locked to the systems starting in the 1960s. Publishers gathered to break up this cartel by creating a standard for typesetting commands, a shared language called the Standard Generalized Markup Language (SGML), published as a standard by ISO in 1986. It was a great start but cumbersome to use. [Brewster Kahle](#), recently

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## FEATURE *continued*

from MIT, came up with a system for putting data on the World Wide Web called WAIS (Wide Area Information Server) in 1989 as the first web publishing service. The invention of HTML by Tim Berners Lee in 1989 and released in 1991 at CERN was another major step forward. Based on SGML, he called it Hypertext Markup Language, or HTML. This has given rise to an incredible variety of information on websites worldwide. HTML made the leap to the graphically based websites that we take for granted today. Meanwhile, the XML was evolving as a new specification under the leadership of Tim Bray from Digital Equipment Corporation. The Extensible Markup Language, which we know as XML. XML ended up being much easier to use, and not nearly as cumbersome as SGML because it lightened some of the rules of SGML. It was also more flexible than HTML for complex documents. Most publishers use XML and their extensions for it today.

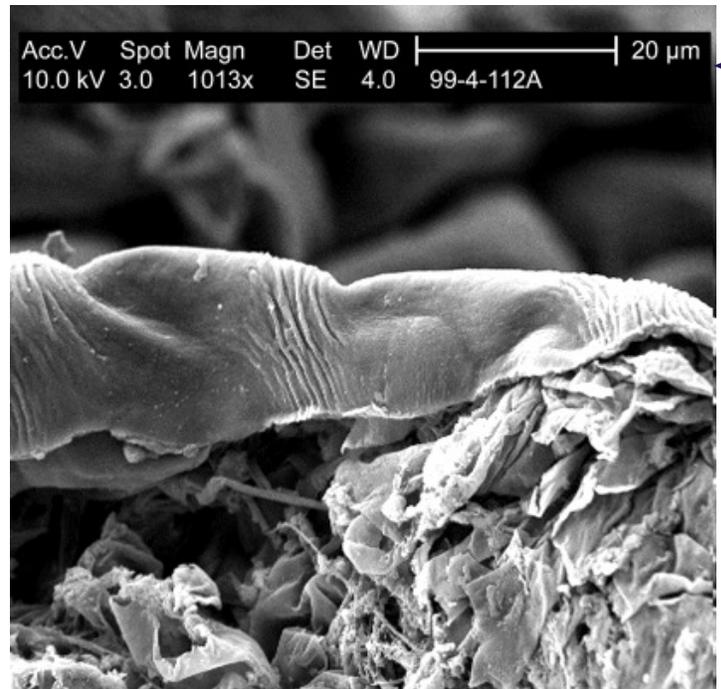
Today we have a lot of “well-formed” data (XML and HTML), which can be pulled from millions and millions of sources and loaded into computers. What has changed and what is the big deal now is that the **power and size** of the processing engines has leapfrogged exponentially. Huge server farms are being built, covering acres of land and using an incredible amount of electrical power, built with computer chips from Nvidia and other companies.

We start with enriched content. It is better if it's tagged with a controlled vocabulary, but I'll get back to that in a minute. We load that tagged information (enriched content) into a Large Language Model that feeds a Generative AI system. GenAI puts new rules in the inference engine to gather the information together so that the search results get better and better and better.

### Cautions

There are some cautions to be had. In one example, a project was identifying cancerous skin lesions in images done by MITRE. The data was fed into the system, and the results came back 100% accurate! How wonderful that this AI system had such fantastic success on the first try! However, when a human looked at them, it was clear that not all of these images that showed lesions were actually cancerous. What was wrong? It took a bit of time to figure it out. The AI had keyed in on rulers in the image, as shown in the upper left-hand corner of *Figure 1*. The AI was looking for the

ruler that showed the size of the lesion and not on the lesion itself. Note that in the set of images, only cancerous lesions were measured. Images that were not cancerous did not need to be measured for further treatment. The human setting up the system needs to be careful about the data set to carefully review the data and not be misled.



**Figure 1:** *Arrow points to the size bar which was interpreted by the AI to be the image and therefore showed 100% ACCURACY. It was not looking at or evaluating the image of the cancer lesion.*  
<https://sites.mitre.org/ai/fails/turning-lemons-into-lemon/>

Most of the AI engines are working on data that is at least two years old, if not more. That's when the data had been trained using a large group of people in countries such as Nigeria. It needs to be constantly refreshed and retrained to keep it current. Let's look for just a moment at how those models are getting trained or fine-tuned and how this special kind of natural language processing or artificial intelligence, meaning that it mimics a human brain, is generated. One of them is Generalized Instruction Training (called GLAN), which breaks human knowledge into domains, subdomains and disciplines. That might sound like a taxonomy to you, divided into subjects, with a syllabus created for each subject or branch, and then special themes can be created as well. When you gather these ideas to produce a variety of

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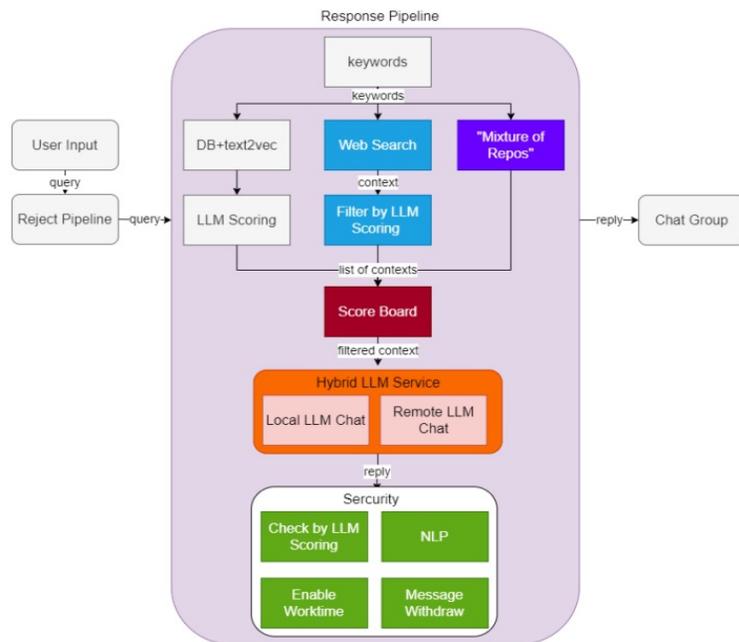
## FEATURE *continued*

instructions, they closely resemble the design of a human educational system, such as a curriculum outline. Producing these instructions on an enormous scale, especially where they are topic or task agnostic, so that they can span a wide range of disciplines, is challenging and labor intensive. That is, humans do it.

A taxonomy can be built with a minimum of human effort through an LLM using prompting and verification to make it better and then folded back into the system so that it covers new fields or skills. However, it still only reflects the content in the data set it came from. This creates an adaptable data set which can be expanded and changed without having to start from scratch. The wide variety of instructions cover every possible combination of human knowledge and abilities and then be semi-automatically generated. These instructions would include coding, logical reasoning, mathematical reasoning, academic testing, and general common-sense instructions. There is no need for task specific training data for these tasks. Then new domains can be added or new proficiencies by adding a new node to the taxonomy. Some are even built on existing taxonomies and then customized to a specific content set.

Some of the known problems with chat systems using LLMs are the flooding of the system with information, irrelevant responses, and lack of precision in answers. The immediate answer to these problems has been fine tuning the system with continuous updates, identifying the key points of the problems, and resolving those, handling multiple target points simultaneously. This will give better answers to complex questions. But what other organizations have been doing is a more focused approach to the handling of queries. This can be done using keywords from the taxonomy and applying those as an incoming filter. When these are added to content responses, they can be better monitored through the logs of the system, providing updates back to the taxonomies and back to the system.

The systems that we give the most attention to are the ones in English like Open AI with ChatGPT, the Gemini system from Google, and Claude from Anthropic that are freely available. There are however a lot of other systems, like HuixiangDou, which are pushing the envelopes of accuracy. They do it by creating a domain specific knowledge assistant powered by the LLM. That knowledge assistant is powered by a taxonomy. *Please see figure 2.*



**Figure 2:** The flowchart of the HuixiangDou leveraging the input of keywords from controlled vocabularies, known as the rake approach. Keyword input is shown at the top of the graph. <https://www.marktechpost.com/2024/01/31/shanghai-ai-lab-presents-huixiangdou-a-domain-specific-knowledge-assistant-powered-by-large-language-models-llm>

## Getting it Implemented

It's important to realize that this is a shiny new tool, a great new piece of technology, so everyone wants to hop on board. But it is a tool and should not be the focus. The content should be the focus. The CONTENT is the main character of the show; the technology is the chorus. Too many companies lead with technology and do not spend time understanding their content, users, or aligning their strategy: any company that has thousands of SharePoint or team sites, or it's stored on massive file net repositories where people still can't find information. There's no way to access the information. They will be very intrigued by this technology.

Most companies have at least five search software systems sitting on the shelf unused and they don't understand why searching doesn't work. It doesn't work for the same reason that LLMs will not work in the future: because the data was not metadata enriched. The key, then, is to do some data modeling using taxonomies as a key and essential component of the investment. Do it upfront, in the beginning of the process. The data must be well sourced, managed, and maintained. It is essential for both ethical and performance issues that the data be well formed BEFORE it is put in the AI system. Companies ignore the data quality at their peril. It is hard work. It does not fit into a two-week sprint, although

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it may fit in a three-month sprint. The first step is to get the executives to agree on the strategy and the structure model. Second, be sure that the model is coherent throughout the governance data pipeline and resourcing. Otherwise, there is absolutely no strategic value to beginning on an AI initiative. Then third, you can start talking about the shiny new tech tools.

### Why A Taxonomy

It's the data!! The content is data. That content data is the core asset. Data is what you're trying to interrogate. It is the essential component of the strategy. Do the data enrichment, particularly the subject metadata enrichment. "LLMs will not only mirror but magnify any problems with data sets. These are problems that many organizations may not even realize they have" (Gary Carlson, Factor on LinkedIn).

A taxonomy matches your content: it needs to be built that way. It scales as the content increases. It has an extensive synonymy, and the LLM will use any of the word term options identifying the concept as a unit of thought and leverage those. For example, within a particular domain much information will need disambiguation. The word "mercury," for example, might be a God, might be a car, might be a planet, might be an element, might be a metal, depending on how it's used. Tagging clearly will make a big difference in how the content is interpreted. Taxonomy creations have built-in feedback loops to keep them current with the content, or at least they should, during the tagging using spot checks by humans to verify hit, miss, and noise information and in the search logs from the users. The addition of taxonomies can help prevent hallucinations by ensuring that words are understood. That is, misunderstandings of multiple world word meanings, or the nonsensical output also known as hallucinations, are avoided by context.

When the LLM is not trained on your own content there may be factual contradictions from the data set used to create the model. To make the result more accurate, taxonomies should be built using your own content and the taxonomy will give them guardrails. Sometimes a query will go against the rules of the internal system, also known as prompt contradiction. Here again the taxonomy can help guide and extend the rules of the system.

As was outlined above we need to prevent disambiguation. We need to ensure that search and retrieval is accurate, and that the data is represented properly. When the taxonomy

term is searched first, the search depends first on the controlled vocabulary, then full text. Historically this was done in the inverted index of a search system, like Lucene or Endeca, by searching the taxonomy terms first, and then the regular full text and the other fields. Using the preferred metadata and the preferred concept in searching provides much better accuracy and retrieval. In the GenAI systems, to ensure consistency and integrity, it is still useful to use the taxonomy as a guideline and recommendations to the rules of the GenAI system. This means using tag sets in addition to only vectors in search. The GenAI can use the relationships in the thesaurus for additional vectors

With such large volumes of data, automatic tagging or auto cat is recommended. It is fast, giving sub-second response, versus maybe 70 seconds per tag by humans. It also has the advantage of always going to the most standard recommended most specific level of the tagging. Automation ensures there are no misspellings and provides excellent consistency. There is no "editorial drift" where people tend to use the same tags over and over, or erroneous tags if their brain was still on the previous article tagged. People tend to tag the next item with a similar set of tags to the last one. Finally, results based on a rules-based system are replicable. Rules based automation is not a black box system, rather people can see how and why the tagging appeared on a particular record.

### Implementation

You can take several approaches to implementing an AI solution. 1) You can leverage the GenAI directly as it was put together by the creator. This will not necessarily cover your content, but it will give you interesting answers in a conversational mode. 2) Take your own content, add it to content already in the LLM and get a possibly enhanced answer. 3) Or you create a Focused Language Model, by putting your content behind a firewall to provide answers to your users. Use the GenAI system algorithms to create the answers on your content. This is not foolproof yet, but it is moving quickly.

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### Summary

Taxonomies help LLMs understand the input, organize the content, ensure proper knowledge representation, provide query expansion based on synonyms, and provide a guideline for quality control by measuring the accuracy. Using taxonomies helps guide the decision making, enhance the systems, and, with general understanding, improve consistency and answers. It also facilitates interpreting data and can help support compliance.

This article outlines a few technologies which have come together to form the artificial intelligence being broadly embraced. Each piece stands alone. Together it is powerful.

The best part is that librarians with reference, searching, technical cataloging, or classification experience are in an excellent position to understand and create the solutions for the organizations of which they are a part.



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**SLA**  
**2025**

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# Overdue for Accessibility:

## New ADA Title II rules require libraries to make their digital content accessible

By Bridgid Fennell, MLIS, M.Ed.

### Updated Federal Rules for Digital Accessibility

Recent updates to the Americans With Disabilities Act (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024) require publicly funded agencies to make their digital content accessible by April 2026.

While core library values affirm equitable access to all users without discrimination, our vast collections interconnected with third-party vendor databases require a systematically proactive approach to serve disabled users and staff and avoid noncompliance with federal disability regulations. This article will review considerations for university libraries, though the recommendations and resources may benefit other libraries.

The ADA Title II updates arrive at a critical time. According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (2024), 21% of American college students report a disability. They complete college at a lower rate than non-disabled students (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2025) and encounter barriers that prevent them from equitable access to online curricular materials.

The core of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibiting discrimination in state and local governments remains unchanged but has been updated to specify all public-facing digital content published by public universities shall meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 level AA. University digital resources include academic, administrative, athletic, research, and healthcare information if the university is affiliated with a medical facility. Any digital content accessed via authentication like course material housed in a learning management system (LMS) must meet this standard, and libraries must ensure digital content from third-party electronic resources vendors or mobile platforms is compliant. The deadline for public colleges and universities larger than 50,000 people is April 24, 2026, while smaller organizations have until April 26, 2027. Private universities are not covered under Title II but are subject to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which states web content and mobile applications must be accessible. Over

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14,000 web accessibility lawsuits were filed between 2017 and 2022 (“ADA Compliance in Higher Education,” 2025), and high-profile cases at private universities such as Harvard and MIT (Lewin, 2015) illustrate the vulnerability for private post-secondary institutions. American universities with a European presence must also comply with the European Accessibility Act (EAA), requiring all 27 EU member countries to adopt WCAG 2.1 AA standards by June 28, 2025.

Organizations that do not bring their digital material into compliance by their respective deadlines face considerable risks. Libraries should prioritize acquiring and publishing “born accessible” materials, which is digital content initially designed to be WCAG 2.1 AA compliant because remediation is labor and time-intensive. If the U.S. Department of Justice determines discriminatory practices due to inaccessible web content, the organization faces fines of up to \$150,000 per complaint in addition to plaintiffs’ legal fees. Lawsuits citing discriminatory practices against disabled students damage institutional reputation and may have a chilling ripple effect. Payan et al. v. Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) (2021) was the first lawsuit to explicitly identify a college library with violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act through systemic discrimination against blind students. Although LACCD did not appeal the Ninth Circuit Court judgment, this case sent shockwaves through the disability community fearing the ADA could be gradually unraveled through a precedent-setting ruling by the conservative-leaning U.S. Supreme Court (Shalby, 2022).

### Technical Specifications

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines are international technical specifications developed by the [World Wide Web Consortium](#) (W3C) that make digital content delivered via desktops, laptops, tablets, and mobile devices accessible to disabled users. When web designers and digital content publishers adhere to these standards, people with physical disabilities like blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, limited movement, and speech disabilities can equitably perceive, interact with, and comprehend digital content. These specifications protect some users from harm as people with photosensitivity can experience debilitating conditions such as migraines or seizures triggered by rapid flashing. There are three tiers of WCAG conformance ranging from A, AA, to AAA. Level AAA includes the most comprehensive specifications but is infeasible for most websites. Under the

new ruling, universities must meet WCAG 2.1 level AA compliance. Some states like New York require WCAG 2.2 level AA which adds more success criteria for low vision, cognitive impairments, and mobile devices. Review both federal and state accessibility legislation to determine your institution’s requirements.

### Exceptions

The Title II updates outline five exceptions to the WCAG 2.1 AA compliance.

The first exception is applied if the accommodation presents a “fundamental alteration in the nature of a service, program, or activity or undue financial and administrative burdens” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). For example, it may be logistically unworkable to provide an alternate text format for an archival sound recording of an obscure or extinct language if a subject expert is unavailable to create an accessible format. The second exception covers static, archived web content created before the deadline, retained exclusively for reference, research, or recordkeeping, and is clearly identified as archival. The rule does not define reference and research in the context of libraries, rather this might apply to local government meeting minutes created before the compliance deadline and retained for government recordkeeping. Documents housed in library resources are held for functional purposes such as curricular resources or scholarly research and would not qualify for an exemption (Association of Research Libraries, 2024).

The third exception covers pre-existing conventional electronic documents. This includes, but is not limited to, portable document formats (PDF), word processing documents, presentation decks, and spreadsheets if those documents are not currently used for public access or participation in the public entity’s services, programs, or activities. Third-party content that is not made available to users through contractual, licensing, or other formalized arrangements is exempted by the third exception. Resources delivered through library databases, discovery systems, licensed citation managers, calendaring systems, and learning management systems (LMS) are contractually engaged by the university and would not be exempt from the ruling.

The fourth exception covers individualized, password-protected, conventional electronic documents. This exception will not likely apply to library collections or services.

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The fifth exception exempts third-party social media posts, but the library must ensure that content posted by library workers is accessible.

### Implications for Academic Libraries

Library collections include significant amounts of legacy content and licensed resources in addition to our digital services, requiring comprehensive analysis to determine the applicability of the Title II updates. The Association of Research Libraries (ARL) (2024, p. 6) presented a useful chart mapping rule exceptions to electronic resource use cases to inform risk assessment and remediation priorities. Librarians should also consult legal counsel to guide them in interpreting the new ruling within the context of the academic library. Even if a resource is determined to be exempt from the ruling, disabled patrons are still entitled to equal access to resources and services, therefore, libraries must provide reasonable accommodations to inaccessible formats to prevent discrimination. Accessibility statements should be prominently displayed and include policies and procedures to request accommodations. U.S. Copyright law empowers post-secondary institutions to create accessible versions of copyrighted works, though libraries must ensure contractual vendor agreements do not restrict this accommodation (Brandon et al., 2019).

Market pressure from large public institutions and the collective library accessibility community will force vendors to improve product accessibility, though smaller libraries may lack the infrastructure to compel vendor compliance. The [Library Accessibility Alliance](#) (LAA), a partnership of eight regional American library consortiums, advocates for product accessibility with vendors and offers toolkits, training, and other resources for the academic library community. Their [e-Resource Testing](#) initiative presents major library vendor evaluation summaries which are publicly available for any interested party and not restricted to consortium members. Model third-party vendor licensing language is available through the [Big Ten Academic Alliance](#) (BTAA) and UC Berkeley Libraries (Association of Research Libraries, 2024, p. 8). The [Dear Library Partner Vendor Letter](#) can help technical services teams initiate dialogue around accessibility expectations with vendors who are in the early stage of disability-inclusive products.

### Strategies to Implement Digital Accessibility throughout the Library

Bringing any organization into digital accessibility compliance can feel like an overwhelming feat. Many universities have not prioritized disability inclusion unless under duress, assuming a reactive stance rather than a proactive and equity-minded approach. Planning, collaboration, strategizing, and prioritization can help organizations transform into disability-inclusive cultures with a results-driven approach.

#### *Campus Coordination*

As the ADA Title II updates will impact every campus organization, college and university libraries will benefit from expertise and perspectives from colleagues across the campus. Assembling communities of practice inviting representatives from student disability support offices, instructional technologists, centers for excellence in teaching, general counsel, procurement teams, and information technology teams promotes information sharing, planning, and potential workflow coordination. Including representation from disabled students, faculty, and staff will leverage expertise from people with lived experience navigating digital barriers.

#### *Library Planning*

If your library does not have a coordinated accessibility plan, start by convening representatives from each unit to announce the new regulations and consider implications for library operations and resources. Stakeholders should conduct an environmental scan to determine potentially impacted resources and review existing accessibility policies, noting gaps, risks, and necessary compliance updates. Inventory digital resources and prioritize remediation for the most frequently used materials, for example, curricular materials. Some universities may have staff or student workers who can remediate documents or offer training and other support. University counsel, compliance offices, and the information technology unit can provide expert advice and feedback. Once a thorough survey has been conducted, the library accessibility working group should establish a comprehensive plan for bringing the organization into compliance with the ADA Title II updates. Include priorities for remediation, policies, staff training, workflows, and deadlines. Document progress toward goals and celebrate small victories to raise awareness and morale.

## FEATURE *continued*

### *Working with Third-party Electronic Resource Vendors*

Major electronic resource vendors are rolling out accessibility improvements in their products, largely due to the Title II compliance deadline and efforts from disability advocates. Libraries must still implement policies and procedures that require third-party providers to ensure their products meet regulatory compliance. Technical services teams should work with institutional procurement offices to incorporate accessibility checks in the evaluation, acquisition, and adoption of digital resources. Processes should mandate that vendors complete the Voluntary Product Accessibility Template (VPAT), a standardized document indicating the level of WCAG criterion success, along with the Accessibility Conformance Report (ACR) that details product accessibility. Qualified staff should evaluate VPATs and ACRs to confirm that new licensed digital resources under consideration are adequately accessible. Educause's [Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit](#) (HECVAT) is a free, comprehensive, and customizable tool designed to evaluate various vendor risks, including accessibility, security, and privacy. Furthermore, technical services teams should review existing third-party electronic resources for accessibility and make vendor compliance a condition for product renewal.

### *Library Worker Training*

A successful culture of inclusivity and accessibility can only be achieved with invested leadership committed to staff growth and development. By requiring basic accessibility training alongside other compliance training

like data security or Title IX, leadership empowers staff and librarians to publish accessible content and evaluate digital collections. For example, representatives from the business team and technical services should have a working knowledge of VPATs and ACRs, while everyone should apply basic accessible web authoring skills such as using a heading structure, understanding and incorporating alternative (alt) text best practices, and including meaningful hyperlinks. If the university does not offer digital accessibility training, consider the publicly available free course from the University of Michigan [Self-Paced BTAA Cultivating Belonging: Library Accessibility Essentials](#). The DAISY Consortium, an organization that advocates for accessible publishing for people with print disabilities, offers free self-paced instruction modules in their Learning Platform and customizable organizational training. Microsoft's [Accessibility Fundamentals](#) offers free self-guided learning modules on topics including web accessibility principles, authoring accessible content, building accessible SharePoint sites, and accessibility evaluation and testing. Libraries might seek referrals for third-party accessibility review services such as Deque Systems or Pope Tech, but exercise caution from companies promoting accessibility overlays that claim to instantly make websites accessible. These so-called accessibility widgets, plugins, or AI add-ons promise quick fixes but are known to violate privacy laws, miss accessibility errors, and introduce source code that prevents assistive technology devices from functioning properly (*Overlay Fact Sheet*, n.d.).

## Call to Action

Academic libraries have a legacy of cultivating inclusive collections and services to meet community needs with justice and equity, providing success models for library accessibility initiatives. We've made strides in disrupting harmful cataloging terminology through anti-racist language, and we continue to cultivate safe spaces and services to welcome marginalized and underrepresented populations. We monitor and respond to regulatory developments around privacy, copyright, and network neutrality, as well as policy issues such as intellectual freedom, censorship, and public access to government data. Best practices for digital accessibility are new responsibilities for many library workers, but our commitment to regulatory compliance and inclusive libraries indicates we will rise to the challenge through collaboration, information sharing, and professional growth. Small changes lead to big impacts, so focus on progress over perfection, plan, and let's get to work!



*continued*

## Resources

- [Association of Research Libraries ADA Title II Regulations: Implications for Libraries](#)
- [Library Accessibility Alliance](#)
  - [e-Resource Evaluations and Reports](#)
  - [Dear Library Partner](#) (vendor letter)
- [Big Ten Academic Alliance \(BTAA\)](#)
  - [Library E-Resource Accessibility – Standardized License Language](#)
  - [ADA Title II and Academic Libraries](#)
- [University of Michigan Self-Paced BTAA Cultivating Belonging: Library Accessibility Essentials](#)
- [DAISY Consortium Training](#)
- [Microsoft](#)
  - [Accessibility Fundamentals](#)
  - [Make your content accessible to everyone](#) (Microsoft 365)
- [Higher Education Community Vendor Assessment Toolkit](#)
- [ADA National Network](#)

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# History Column: Exceptional Information Delivery: Use the TQM–QIM–SLA Competencies Connection

(extracted from August, 1997, *Information Outlook*, p. 17–20)

By Guy St. Clair

For specialist librarians/information management specialists seeking to achieve excellence in information delivery, three management concepts provide a perfect framework. Combining the basic principles of total quality management (TQM), an information-focused version of TQM that I call “quality information management” (QIM), and the ideas put forward in SLA’s *Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century* (“The SLA Competencies Statement”) creates a solid foundation for organizing and implementing a superior information services operation. Linking TQM, QIM, and the SLA Competencies Statement positions the information operation as an organizational functional unit that works, that is, one which provides information customers with the information products, services, and consultations they require, advances the mission (whatever it is) of the parent organization or community that supports the information services unit, and gives the information workers themselves job satisfaction, confidence, and the assurance that they are contributing to the success of the enterprise that employs them...

The unifying thread, it seems to me, is understanding and adhering to the concepts embodied in total quality management, quality information management, and SLA’s *Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century*. Here is how it works.

Total quality management (TQM), at this point in the twentieth century, does not need to be defined for today’s information management specialist, simply because TQM is so deeply inculcated into our management thinking these days. Most information managers accept that when applied properly and given time to work, TQM efforts pay off, and are recognized for the value they bring to organizational management.

TQM works because it is customer focused, because it relates to the very goals that information management specialists are aspiring to achieve. William A. Duncan puts it this way: “TQM is a system by which continuous improvement of all value-adding processes performed by the organization may be achieved. The customer determines if value has been added based on his or her own satisfaction. TQM is predicated on the participation of each organization member to improving products, processes, services, and the company culture.”

Given that definition, isn’t it obvious that TQM connects to excellence in information delivery?

We would like to think so, but perhaps everyone is not convinced. So let’s look further, at something I call quality information management (QIM), a more information-related version

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## HISTORY COLUMN *continued*

of TQM. This particular formulation comes from Michael Barrier, writing for Nation's Business, with a little Guy St. Clair thrown in. For Barrier, the TQM "essentials" (as he calls them) are:

- An intense focus on customer service
- Accurate measurement
- Continuous improvement
- New work relationships based on trust and teamwork

To these essentials, I am strongly compelled to add: a desire for quality, on the part of all information stakeholders, and the commitment and enthusiasm of senior management in the organization.

When we apply these six characteristics of quality management to the work we do for (and with) our information customers, it follows naturally that we (and they) will be satisfied with the results.

But will they? Are the results we're providing *exceptional* results? Are we providing excellence in information delivery?

Not necessarily. TQM and QIM are fine, workable approaches to information services management, but the excellence of the effort – the exceptional information delivery proposed in this article's title – doesn't really come into play until the SLA Competencies are linked to TQM and QIM and they're all used together.

The competencies statement developed by the association's Special Committee on Competencies for Special Librarians is truly a fine piece of work, and if we information management specialists are smart, we'll use it to describe what we do (and what we believe) to our customers, our managers, our suppliers, and any other interested parties who make up that wide network we call "information stakeholders."

"But why," many ask, "do we need to go out to others?"

Because they don't know what a specialist librarian/information management specialist does, and the SLA Competencies Statement tells them. In fact, it also tells others in the library and information services profession as well, and it's a message that needs to be delivered. For many years there has been tension within the profession about specialized librarianship. Although most specialist librarians are educated and trained as librarians, their work is clearly different from that of public

and school librarians. The SLA Competencies Statement makes it clear that special librarians are different.

In 1991-1993, the first formal steps to recognize these differences and to address the issue of competencies for specialized librarianship were undertaken in the work of SLA's Presidential Study Commission on Professional Recruitment, Ethics and Professional Standards, popularly known as "The PREPS Commission." Underlying the work of the commission was the premise that special librarianship is a unique branch of librarianship and that despite the great diversity within special librarianship itself, special libraries nonetheless have different missions, focuses, and purposes than libraries in the other branches of the profession. What the SLA *Competencies for Special Librarians of the 21st Century* does is to take that recognition – that specialist librarians/information management specialists are different – and identify the competencies that are required for these practitioners to perform well.

While this is obviously not the place to repeat the 11 professional competencies and the 13 personal competencies that Chair Joanne Marshall and her excellent team of visionaries came up with, we can with some success condense the SLA Competencies Statement to five broad component issues, with these five keywords: resources, content, media, manager (or management), and advocate (or advocacy).

With this approach, and thinking about how the SLA Competencies connect to TQM and QIM, the following picture comes into view: The information management specialist has expert knowledge of information *resources*; within a specific subject field or fields, has specialized knowledge of the *content* of these resources; understands and implements information delivery *media*; performs as a manager within the organizational entity, whatever it is; and serves as an information *advocate* within the organization or community at large.

These characteristics, when linked to the TQM and QIM criteria previously described and applied by the specialist librarian/information management specialist in the pursuit of his or her information delivery goals, will inevitably permit the information practitioner to provide services that are exceptional and which will not only meet the needs

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# HISTORY COLUMN *continued*

of the information customers, but will do so in a manner that matches the information customers' perceptions and expectations about information delivery. They lead to that happy state of affairs by moving the information worker from the position of being simply an information provider to one in which he or she takes an aggressive and interpretive role in the information transfer process. The specialist librarian/information management specialist becomes, by virtue of his or her participation in the TQM/QIM/SLA Competencies link, an entirely different information services employee. This worker becomes, in effect, a knowledge management expert, an insourced information specialist whose information

management responsibilities are identified, codified, and positioned at the same management level (within the organizational management structure) as other important management functions (financial management, research management, human resources management, etc.).



*Guy St. Clair was the president of SMR International, a New York-based management consulting, publishing, and training firm. A past president of SLA, St. Clair has authored several books on information management.*

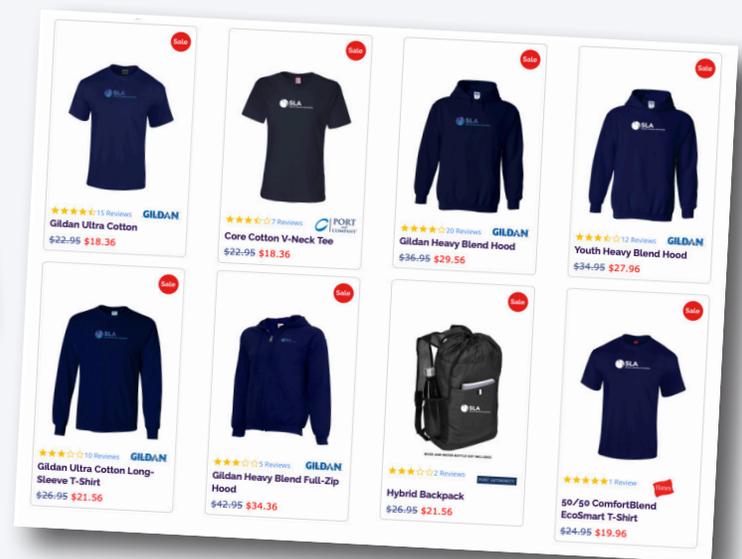
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# Fellows Column: Change or Creative Transformation

By Nathan Aaron Rosen

Imagine stepping into a library. The scent of aged paper and leather bound spines fills the air, mingling with the faint, almost imperceptible hum of digital devices. Sunlight streams through towering windows, illuminating rows upon rows of silent sentinels – books that hold the collective knowledge of humanity. But beneath this serene façade, a quiet revolution is brewing.

The digital age has unleashed a relentless torrent of change upon these hallowed halls. Once bastions of quiet contemplation, libraries now find themselves at a crossroads. Will they merely adapt, tweaking existing services to accommodate the digital deluge? Or will they boldly reimagine their role, transforming into vibrant community hubs that pulse with creativity and innovation? Picture two paths diverging before you, shrouded in mist. One is well-trodden, familiar, and safe – the path of incremental change. The other represents uncertainty, beckoning with whispers of uncharted territory – the path of creative transformation. Which path will libraries choose? The answer will determine their fate in the 21st century.

This exploration is not just an academic exercise; it is a quest for survival. It is a roadmap for libraries to evolve from repositories of the past to architects of the future. By understanding the subtle yet profound differences between change and creative transformation, librarians and information professionals can chart a course that not only keeps pace with societal shifts but also actively shapes the future of information services.

In the ever-shifting landscape of information services, libraries stand as beacons of knowledge, constantly adapting to the tides of change. Yet, in this digital age where information flows like a torrent, merely changing is no longer enough. Imagine a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly; while change might be akin to the caterpillar growing larger, creative transformation is the dramatic shift from crawling to soaring. Libraries must undergo a metamorphosis, embracing creative transformation to remain vibrant and relevant in their communities. This is the distinction between survival and thriving in an era of unprecedented technological and social upheaval.

Change and creative transformation are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct differences. Understanding these differences is essential for libraries and information institutions to stay relevant and thrive. Think of it as the difference between renovating an existing house and conceiving an entirely new type of dwelling.

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ASPECT	CHANGE	CREATIVE
Scope	Small, isolated	Holistic, far-reaching
Approach	Tactical, linear	Strategic, iterative
Focus	Immediate issues	Long-term innovation
Outcome	Improved existing	New, innovative solutions
Resistance Management	Adjustments to change management strategy	Addressing organizational culture and leadership styles
Examples	Upgrading technology	Developing makerspaces, AI-driven services

## Similarities between Change and Creative Transformation

Change and creative transformation differ in significant ways, however they do share many fundamental commonalities. Both involve a transition from the status quo towards a new state. Both necessitate a willingness to adapt and evolve. Both are frequently spurred by external factors, such as technological advancements or shifts in user expectations, therefore both invariably involve addressing resistance and managing stakeholder expectations. Both processes require vision and leadership. Both can enhance services and user experiences.

The two approaches can also be seen on a spectrum, where the distinction is determined by the degree of difference between the original state and the intended goal. For example, the shift from print to digital resources exemplifies a change that can drive creative transformation, prompting the development of novel digital collections and services. Implementing a new library management system encompasses both change (upgrading technology) and creative transformation (reimagining user interactions).

## Key differences between Change and Creative Transformation

While change and creative transformation share certain similarities and objectives, they diverge significantly in their depth, scope, and ultimate impact.

Change is often tactical, small, isolated, and typically incremental, focused on solving a specific problem or improving an existing process. Creative transformation, conversely, is strategic, holistic, far reaching, and radical. It demands deeper shifts in organizational culture and leadership approaches. In practice, change typically involves a more linear approach or minor adjustment, addressing immediate issues. Creative transformation often embraces an iterative and experimental methodology, fostering long-term innovation and adaptability. Change improves what exists while transformation creates something new.

CHANGE	CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION
Transition from physical card catalogs to an online catalog system	Creating a digital library with AI driven search capabilities
Shifting from Dewey Decimal to another classification system	Reimagining the library as a community hub
Updating a book edition	Creating an interactive multimedia e-book

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### Creative Transformation in Libraries

Libraries and library service have been in a state of constant change, adapting to evolving user needs and technological advancements. While libraries adapt, their core functions endure – to provide cost efficient and user-friendly access to information and to foster a love of reading.

Information professionals have and continue to provide information resources, evaluate critical information, organize information, and train users on best techniques to use information tools. Libraries are uniquely positioned to drive creative transformation within their communities, effectively leveraging their role as hubs for learning, innovation, and creative activity.

Libraries can establish makerspaces (where patrons can work on creative projects) and provide access to emerging technologies, such as 3D printing, virtual reality, and coding. This development reflects a fundamental shift in how libraries approach community engagement and learning. The Chicago Public Library's Maker Lab exemplifies creative transformation in action, providing community members with access to cutting-edge technologies and resources. Libraries can engage with their communities through outreach programs, workshops, and events that foster creativity and innovation. By strategically partnering with local organizations, businesses, and educational institutions, libraries can effectively drive creative transformation and economic development.

Both change and transformation can meet resistance, as they may challenge established practices and require staff and patrons to adapt to new ways of operating. Common hurdles to creative transformation that must be overcome include budget constraints, staff resistance, technological limitations, and community skepticism, as well as the natural human tendency of not wanting to change. But they can be defeated by enthusiasm and a clear plan articulating the benefits of change and the detriment of maintaining the status quo.

### Innovative Ideas for Creative Transformation

Here are some innovative concepts for fostering creative transformation within libraries and information institutions:

- **Virtual and Augmented Reality Experiences:** Develop immersive virtual reality experiences that allow users to explore new worlds, historical events, or cultural heritage sites. Include virtual tours of the library collection and immersive learning experience.
- **AI-Powered Research Assistants:** Utilize AI to enhance cataloging and search capabilities. Develop AI-powered research assistants that can aid users navigating complex databases, identify relevant sources, and provide personalized reading and research recommendations based upon user preferences and reading history.
- **Community-Driven Archives:** Establish archives that empower users to contribute their own stories, photos, and artifacts, thereby creating a rich and diverse cultural heritage collection. Examples include the British Library's use of digital archives to preserve and provide access to historical documents.
- **Makerspaces for Social Impact:** Establish makerspaces that focus on social impact, such as developing assistive technologies, creating sustainable products or addressing community challenges.

### Conclusion

Change and creative transformation, while sharing some similarities and common ground, diverge in their scope, nature, drivers, approach, and outcomes. Both are essential to growth and enduring relevance of the information profession. Change typically represents a refinement of the existing, while creative transformation signifies a bold leap into the uncharted territory. By understanding these distinctions, we can better navigate the complexities of our world, embrace innovation, and shape a future filled with possibilities.

Libraries and information institutions must nimbly navigate both change and creative transformation to remain relevant and thrive. To that end, libraries and information services must proactively evolve to meet changing needs, with librarians playing a critical key role in guiding communities through these processes.

## FELLOWS COLUMN *continued*

Creative transformation requires a fundamental shift in perspective, approach, or culture, which can lead to more radical and innovative outcomes. Libraries are uniquely positioned to drive creative transformation within their communities, effectively leveraging their role as hubs for learning, innovation, and creativity.

Therefore, as librarians and information professionals, let us embrace the challenge of creative transformation, leveraging our expertise, creativity, and unwavering passion to drive

innovation and positive change in our communities so that we can most effectively serve our patrons and community.

As facilitators of knowledge, let us guide information professionals as they navigate and adapt to changes. As innovators, let us actively contribute to creative transformation through the development of new services and technologies, thus ensuring that we continue to be vital centers for learning, discovery, engagement, and answering the questions posed by our patrons.



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### **Author's Note: Using AI in Content Development**

Various Generative AI tools were used to brainstorm the ideas of change versus creative transformation including Copilot, Gemini, ChatGPT, Grok, Perplexity, Meta AI, and Claude. Each provided interesting and stimulating ideas, examples, and suggested ways to describe the process. Use of this new innovative tool is recommended at the article development stage as each provides unique ideas based upon their particular Large Language Model and algorithm. Training on how to effectively use Gen AI is absolutely necessary to provide useful results. Teaching prompt engineering, like database search, is a prime opportunity for information professionals to stay relevant and enlarge our public footprint.



# Member Highlight: Heather Hedden

Heather Hedden has been a taxonomist most of her career, dating back about 30 years when she got promoted from an indexing role into controlled vocabulary management at a periodical article database library vendor, then Information Access Company (since merged into Gale). Considering herself an information professional rather than a librarian, Heather joined SLA as soon as its Taxonomy Division was created in 2009. She then attended and presented at her first SLA conference immediately thereafter in 2010.

“Unless they specialize in a subject area or are very lucky, taxonomists tend to change jobs relatively often,” Heather observed, and this has been the case with her career, too. Since getting laid off from Gale (then a part of Thomson Learning) in 2004, she has been employed in taxonomist roles for a search software startup that didn’t make it, two consulting companies, a wind energy company, a return to Gale (then a part of Cengage Learning), a taxonomy/ontology software vendor, and since March 2025, as taxonomy manager with a market and competitive intelligence vendor, Northern Light LLC, in her local city of Boston.

What is less typical is that Heather has also been self-employed between employed jobs, and this has even been by choice. Three times she left employment to be an independent taxonomy consultant/freelancer, in addition to other times after being laid off. Heather started freelancing in 2004 as a back-of-the-book indexer, since she had prior experience indexing and book indexing is mostly freelance work. She then gradually added in the freelance taxonomy work, which was just starting to be an option. “I see benefits in both self-employment and employment, so I have enjoyed a career of both,” Heather observed. “But at times it was a difficult decision between one path or the other.”

Professional teaching has also been part of Heather’s career. She taught an online course in taxonomy creation through Simmons University School of Library and Information Science for many years until Simmons sunseted its continuing education program in 2016, when Heather continued to teach the course on her own. She further developed conference and customized corporate taxonomy workshops. The original Simmons workshop also served as the basis for her book, *The Accidental Taxonomist*, which was first published in 2010 and is now in its 3rd edition (2022). To promote her freelance services and book, Heather has presented at many conferences in multiple fields that related to taxonomies: taxonomies, indexing, library science, knowledge management, enterprise search, text analytics, information architecture, content strategy, digital asset management, technical communication, digital employee experience, semantic technologies, data, and knowledge graphs. She has presented at eight SLA Annual Conferences and several New England Chapter and Taxonomy Division events. Although she has no plans to write another book or edition, Heather continues to write on taxonomy topics in her blog, <https://accidental-taxonomist.blogspot.com/>. Her February 2025 post is about getting work as a taxonomist.

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## MEMBER HIGHLIGHT *continued*

SLA has been especially valuable to Heather for the network of taxonomists in the Taxonomy Community, in which she has volunteered in various capacities, but she has also had other beneficial networking SLA connections. SLA Fellow Brandy King, also an independent information professional, whom Heather got to know through SLA chapter events, brought Heather in as subcontractor on a project for Berklee College of Music. At the time, spring 2019, Heather was still employed at Gale but was thinking of a change, so this SLA contact opportunity made Heather decide to quit to become a freelance taxonomist again. Also that year, a previously unknown contact through SLA who worked at Facebook (not yet Meta), invited Heather to give a paid onsite two-day taxonomy training workshop to Facebook employees at the company's headquarters in Menlo Park, California. This turned out to be the first of several onsite corporate taxonomy training workshops that Heather gave through February 2020. Most recently, through attending the SLA Asia Community meeting at the SLA Annual Conference in 2024, Heather met SLA Fellow and award-winner Nabi Hasan, who arranged for her to present at one-day workshop on open access publishing hosted by the Central Library of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, when Heather visited India as a tourist in January 2025. "I've always appreciated the international aspect and connections of SLA," says Heather. This has also included SLA Europe meetups in London associated with the Taxonomy Boot Camp London conference (which is now virtual).

In addition to international travel, non-professional interests and activities of Heather's include walking, jogging, cross-country skiing (when there is enough snow locally), singing in a choir, and photography.

Heather is also active professionally outside of work through her involvement in standards committees. She previously served on the NISO (National Information Standards Organization) Content and Collection Management Topic Committee's Bibliographic Roadmap Project's working group, which created NISO Technical Report TR-06-2017 "Issues in Vocabulary Management." Currently she is serving on the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) working group ISO/TC 46/SC 9/WG 8, for which she has contributed to the review and revision of the international standard for thesauri, ISO 25964-1:2011 "Information and documentation: Thesauri and interoperability with other vocabularies: Part 1: Thesauri for information retrieval." The working group is led by Marjorie Hlava, SLA Fellow and Past Chair of SLA Taxonomy and Information Technology Divisions. As taxonomies are more informal, no best practices standard exists, but the thesaurus standard comes the closest, and professional taxonomists often refer to the thesaurus standard in their work. NISO also has a comparable thesaurus standard to ISO 25964, which is ANSI/NISO Z.39.19, and Heather hopes to be involved whenever a committee forms to revise that standard again.



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# Vendor Column: The Evolution of Standards for a Fair Society and Sustainable World

By Anne Hayes



Over the past century, standards have grown from simple technical guidelines into key drivers of economic and social progress. Initially designed to ensure consistency in engineering and manufacturing, they now play a vital role in promoting quality, safety, and functionality. They also contribute to environmental responsibility across every aspect of our modern world.

According to an independent report by CEBR (*The Economic Contribution of Standards to the UK Economy*), standards make a strong contribution to the UK economy, supporting 28.4% of annual GDP growth. Beyond their economic benefits, standards underpin initiatives that protect communities, accelerate innovation, and enable inclusive progress on a global scale. Organizations using BS 25700 Organizational Responses to Modern Slavery reported that the free standard helped them to comply with the law.

## What are the origins of standards?

The development of standards can be traced back to the industrial era, when technical specifications were first introduced to ensure that different components and processes worked together safely and efficiently. Back then, standards were created to tackle engineering challenges, streamline production, and boost product reliability.

During this period, the British Standards Institution (BSI) emerged as a key player in the UK, set up by industry to help the UK compete with the US and Germany. In 1942, BSI was designated by the UK government as the nation's sole standards issuer, setting the stage for its role as a champion for consumers in post-war Britain. During this time, standards covering everyday items, from seatbelts and motorcycle helmets to furniture, ensured that products met essential quality and safety benchmarks.

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# VENDOR COLUMN *continued*

As technological advancements and societal challenges evolved, the scope of standards expanded far beyond manufacturing. The importance of management processes was recognised with the introduction of Total Quality Management. BSI published BS 5750 on quality management, which later became the world-famous ISO 9001 standard. Today, standards are also used to address pressing social and sustainability issues, from establishing ethical benchmarks against Modern Slavery (BS 25700) to promoting workplace inclusivity through standards on Menstrual Health (BS 30416).

## What is the core methodology for standards development?

At the heart of every standard is a process built on open dialogue and collaboration. Rather than being dictated by a single group, effective standards are created through a consensus-driven process that brings together industry experts, academics, regulators, policymakers, consumer representatives, and those affected by the standards.

This collective effort ensures that the resulting guidelines are not only practical, but also trusted across different sectors. By welcoming diverse viewpoints, standards development builds confidence among businesses, regulators, and communities alike.

From the outset, BSI prioritized inclusive, consensus-based standards development. They did this by inviting consumers to influence standards development through initiatives like the Women's Advisory Committee (a precursor to today's Consumer and Public Interest Network), laying the groundwork for the participatory approach that remains central to global standards development today. ISO has a simple mantra, "All Voices Heard," which reflects their ambition that all stakeholders can participate through a national delegation process.

## What is BSI's international influence?

*"BSI in its role as the national standards body for the UK plays a crucial role in shaping global standards, ensuring they reflect the needs of an interconnected world. Through our active participation in international standardization and the global standards community, we help create the stakeholder-led consensus business information that fosters innovation, strengthens trust, and enables seamless collaboration across industries and borders."*

—SCOTT STEEDMAN,  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF STANDARDS, BSI

BSI was instrumental in the founding of ISO, IEC and the European standards organisations CEN and CENELEC and the UK continues to be one of the six permanent members of the governance of ISO and IEC. In both technical and policy terms, BSI has consistently demonstrated its leadership in international standardization for over 100 years. BSI was a significant contributor to the development of pivotal standards such as ISO 9001 for quality management and ISO 45001 for occupational health and safety. Both standards started life as British Standards.

By actively engaging in international initiatives, BSI works to harmonize guidelines across different regions, addressing national needs while tackling global challenges. This spirit of collaboration not only strengthens international supply chains, but also fosters a shared commitment to social justice and environmental care.

## How do standards remain agile in today's changing world?

As market dynamics evolve at breakneck speed, the standards ecosystem has adapted by embracing more agile frameworks. Two innovations leading this evolution are BSI Flex and PAS (Publicly Available Specification) standards.

BSI Flex embodies a flexible approach to standardization, enabling rapid adaptation to emerging technologies and shifting market conditions. By streamlining the update process, Flex ensures that standards stay both current and effective in today's fast paced environment.

PAS, on the other hand, bridges the gap between traditional standardization and immediate market demands. It provides a quicker route to establish guidelines aligning seamlessly with the robust quality controls that have always defined the standard development process.

Together, Flex and PAS demonstrate how the standards community harmonizes speed with the integrity of a consensus-based system, delivering timely, reliable guidance that industries can trust.

*continued*

### What does the future hold for standards?

Looking ahead, standardization is set to become even more dynamic and influential in addressing global challenges. The emergence of SMART standards, an acronym for Standards that are Machine Applicable, Readable and Transferable, will respond to the digitalization of industry processes and the way that users in the 21st century want to engage with standards and regulatory information, and transform the way that organisations can develop actionable insights.

However, even as new frameworks emerge, for BSI the core principles of standardization remain unchanged. Trust, inclusivity, and a commitment to consensus continue to be the hallmarks of effective standards. These enduring values ensure that as standards evolve to meet modern challenges, they remain robust tools for supporting progress and well-being.

Ongoing research and insights from BSI consistently highlight the significant impact of a well-structured standards ecosystem. As a key component of the UK's National Quality Infrastructure (NQI), standards play a crucial role in ensuring trust, consistency, and excellence across industries.

From reducing business risks to enhancing public safety and environmental sustainability, the benefits are both profound and far-reaching. Without a doubt, standards are paving the way for a future that is fairer, safer, and more sustainable for everyone.



#### **Anne Hayes**

*Director of Sector and Standards Development at the British Standards Institution (BSI), a global leader in standards development and certification. Anne joined BSI in 2001 following an extensive career in publishing. Anne leads a team covering sector and standards development to ensure that BSI is developing the standards to support our clients and key stakeholders tackling current and future challenges.*

<https://www.bsigroup.com/>

# INFORMATION OUTLOOK

## **Contribute to SLA's Legacy!**

Consider writing an article for this journal's next issue: **LEGACY** is the theme.

We will be honoring the achievements that have shaped SLA, sharing SLA's lasting impact, and discussing the future of special libraries and their enduring principles.

The deadline for submissions is September 15, 2025. Email queries to [Lesley.Farmer@csulb.edu](mailto:Lesley.Farmer@csulb.edu) or another member of the journal's editorial board.



# 2024 and 2025 Award Winners

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is proud to announce the winners of its 2024 Awards, recognizing individuals and organizations for their extraordinary contributions to the field of special librarianship and information science. These awards celebrate innovation, leadership, and dedication that advance the profession and inspire the global SLA community.

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## **FELLOWS OF SLA RECIPIENTS:**

**2024 – *John Kromer and Nathan Rosen***

**2025 – *Abby Thorne, Chris Doty,  
Shiva Kanaujia, Zac Painter***

Fellowship in SLA is bestowed on active, SLA members in recognition of past and present service, as well as expected future contributions to the association and the profession. Typically with at least 10-15 years of experience in the profession, Fellows are called upon and expected to advise the association's Board of Directors, prepare necessary documentation, and alert the membership to issues and trends warranting action.

## **JAMES M. MATARAZZO RISING STAR AWARD RECIPIENTS:**

**2024 – *Kelli Costello, Tsveta Rafaylova,  
and Erin Robinson***

**2025 – *Bidhan Dolai, Justin Gaynor,  
Laura Dowell, Tim Palmer***

This honor is bestowed annually to recognize outstanding new SLA members who show exceptional promise of leadership and contribution to the association and profession. Nominees must have one to ten years of professional experience as an information professional and have been an SLA member for ten years or less.

## **ROSE L. VORMELKER AWARD RECIPIENT:**

**2024 – *Nabi Hasan***

**2025 – *Wei Zakharov***

The "Rosie" is presented to a member in good standing who actively teaches and/or mentors students or working professionals.

## **SLA HALL OF FAME AWARD RECIPIENTS:**

**2024 – *Cindy Hill and Debal Kar***

**2025 – *Eileen O'Rourke, Ty Webb***

Membership in the SLA Hall of Fame is accorded to SLA members in good standing who are at or near the end of their active professional career to recognize service and contributions to the association. Hall of Fame recognition also is granted for lengthy distinguished service to an SLA chapter or division that has contributed to the success of the association.

## **JOHN COTTON DANA AWARD RECIPIENT:**

**2024 – *Praveen K. Jain***

**2025 – *Deborah Hunt***

The John Cotton Dana Award is SLA's top honor, named for SLA's founder and first president. It is granted to an information professional to recognize a lifetime of achievement as well as exceptional service to SLA and the library and information profession.

The recipients were honored virtually at the SLA 2024 Annual Business Meeting on December 19, 2024. Next year's recipients will be honored in person at the Annual Conference, which will take place at the University of Pittsburgh, June 7-10, 2025. This event will bring together SLA members, industry leaders, and thought leaders to celebrate the achievements of this year's award winners and foster meaningful connections within the information community.

# 2024 Scholarship Awardees Reflections



## European Scholarship Awardee Reflection

By Kelly Wilson

### *Why did you join SLA? How long have you been a member?*

I am relatively new to SLA, but I was first introduced by my colleagues a few years ago when we attended the SLA Europe events such as their quiz. I decided to officially become a member earlier this year as I wanted to get more involved, engage further with the industry, and to keep up to date with new trends and developments.

### *What makes SLA valuable to you?*

The SLA has existed for 115 years, which shows it has a great history and demonstrates the long-running importance of the library and information field which I find encouraging as a new member. SLA is also valuable to me as it provided me the opportunity to connect with other information professionals in the field and learn directly from them, as well as network with professionals from around the world, due to awarding a scholarship that allowed me to attend this year's SLA conference in Rhode Island.

### *Based on your experiences, what advice would you give other SLA members?*

As an SLA scholarship recipient, I would say to make sure to engage with all the opportunities and events that SLA offers. I'd like to particularly highlight for current student members that in 2024 they are offering \$5000 tuition fee scholarships, which is a fantastic opportunity for those studying a Library/Information Science degree program!

### *How has your career benefited from being an SLA member?*

Due to winning the scholarship, I was able to make new connections with members of SLA Europe. This has given me the chance to get involved and volunteer with SLA Europe which will ultimately allow me to develop new skills and knowledge which I hope to bring to my current role as a Senior Information Officer in a corporate library.

### *Winning a scholarship to the SLA conference*

As previously mentioned, I was fortunate enough to win one of the eleven scholarships that SLA awarded to attend the

SLA conference in Rhode Island. This was a very exciting and interesting experience for me, particularly travelling from the UK. I was able to meet a lot of people who worked in the library and information profession around the world, which gave an insight into the different ways in which professionals approach their roles globally. There were also many unique places people worked, including a librarian for Rolls Royce, Disney, an institute for the visually impaired, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, to name a few. It was fascinating to learn about the libraries needed for these companies, and reinforces the view that libraries are still important!

The conference encompassed many sessions covering a variety of themes such as new and innovative technologies, knowledge and records management, data science and research, cyber attacks (particularly focusing on the huge cyber-attack the British Library experienced last year, which happened to directly affect me personally as it was during the midst of writing my dissertation!), and many sessions focusing on AI, such as generative AI, navigating copyright, the ethics of AI, and the challenges and opportunities it brings to the library and information field.

These sessions, and the conference as a whole, enabled me to develop a great understanding of the breadth and scope of services, research and emerging technologies and trends within the library and information world.

I am very grateful for this experience and would like to thank SLA for giving me the opportunity to attend the 2024 SLA conference.



**Kelly Wilson**

RSM UK and City, University of London

## Redefining the Future of Library and Information Science

By Shalani Jayamanne

I am Shalani Jayamanne, a PhD student in Library and Information Science at the School of Computing and Information, University of Pittsburgh. I am incredibly grateful for the scholarship I received from the Special Libraries Association (SLA), which enabled my participation at the SLA Annual Conference 2024 in Kingston, Rhode Island. The conference brought together information professionals from diverse sectors and backgrounds, embodying the spirit of its theme, “Collaboration for Innovation.”

My SLA 2024 Annual Conference experience was invaluable in a multitude of ways. The conference served as an exceptional platform for nurturing the evolving landscape of our field. It was more than just an event; it was a vibrant confluence of ideas, strategies, and forward-thinking professionals dedicated to redefining the future of library and information science. Engaging with such a diverse group of experts facilitated rich discussions, and innovative insights were inspiring and will undoubtedly shape our practice moving forward.

The opening keynote session, delivered by Brian Pichman, offered a compelling exploration of innovation, highlighting the collaborative efforts among information professionals, technologists, and researchers as they navigate the emerging challenges and opportunities artificial intelligence (AI) presented. As a PhD student focusing on AI’s impact on student learning outcome assessment in the LIS field, this session and other sessions exploring a broad spectrum of AI use, challenges, and opportunities for information professionals resonated deeply with my research interests.

Moreover, discussions on information literacy preparation for the workforce, competitive intelligence, what library science students learn today, and research data management were very insightful. These sessions examined how future library and information professionals can expand the boundaries of LIS education to become more successful and competent. The invaluable insights I gathered from these discussions inspired me and will significantly enrich my journey as I enter the LIS academia and research, guiding my efforts to foster innovation and collaboration. Additionally, the poster sessions provided an excellent opportunity for informal interactions, allowing for deeper engagement with emerging ideas and research in the field.

Furthermore, I had the privilege of contributing to the session titled “Fostering Innovation through Collaboration: Asian Special Libraries Unite,” presented by SLA Asia. As one of the speakers in this collaborative session, I focused on “Innovations in Libraries in Sri Lanka,” sharing insights into how innovative and collaborative efforts within the library system in Sri Lanka contribute toward developing a knowledge-based economy and fostering innovations.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the SLA family and the scholarship working group for their support in encouraging emerging scholars and for offering valuable opportunities for professional development and engagement in the field.



**Shalani Jayamanne**

*PhD student in Library and Information Science*

*School of Computing and Information, University of Pittsburgh*

## SLA Conference Reaffirms Career Choice

By Sambhav Jain

Being selected as one of the scholarship recipients for the SLA 2024 Annual Conference was an incredible honor. It not only filled me with excitement but also gave me a unique opportunity to engage with professionals and deepen my understanding of the information science field. As a student at the beginning of my academic journey in this dynamic field, I recognized that attending the conference would provide a rare chance to gain valuable insights into both the theoretical and practical aspects of information science. Thanks to the scholarship, I had the privilege of connecting with experts, discussing real-world challenges, and learning how the principles of information science are applied in various industries. Little did I know, the experience would exceed my expectations, leaving me inspired and more motivated than ever to pursue a career in this field.

The conference took place at the University of Rhode Island, offering a vibrant and welcoming environment for such an important event. The campus was filled with energy, bringing together professionals and students from around the world to exchange ideas, experiences, and knowledge. The theme for the 115th anniversary, “Back-to-Basics,” resonated deeply with me, emphasizing the core principles of information science that continue to drive innovation. The sessions combined new ideas with practical solutions, showing how these core principles are used in today’s changing digital world. One standout session was a workshop focused on the future of information curation. It introduced innovative tools and strategies for managing the ever-growing volume of data in today’s world. I also found a keynote session on the ethics of data collection particularly impactful as it sparked thought-provoking discussions on privacy, trust, and the role of ethics in the digital age. These sessions not only broadened my perspective but also fueled my passion for exploring how these evolving concepts can be applied in my future career.

Attending the SLA 2024 Annual Conference was an eye-opening experience that significantly enhanced my understanding of the information science field. The sessions not only deepened my knowledge of data curation and management but also introduced me to emerging

trends, such as the integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning in information systems. This sparked a new area of interest for me that I am eager to explore further in my studies. One of the most impactful moments was the discussion on the ethical considerations of artificial intelligence in data management. It made me realize how essential it is to balance innovation with responsibility, ensuring that technology serves society without compromising privacy or trust. This conversation also made me reflect on the ethical dilemmas we face in our data-driven world, pushing me to think critically about my role in solving these challenges. The conference provided practical takeaways that I could apply immediately, such as innovative methods for organizing research data and ethical approaches to data use. Networking with professionals and fellow scholarship recipients was also an invaluable part of my experience. One conversation with an SLA leader stands out, where I received insightful advice on navigating the early stages of a career in information science. This discussion encouraged me to seek mentorship and be proactive about identifying opportunities to grow professionally. Inspired by the experience, I plan to stay connected with the SLA community by staying active online and participating in future events to continue learning and engaging with others in the field. This experience has helped me realize the importance of collaboration, and I am more determined than ever to work alongside like-minded professionals to drive meaningful change in the industry.

The SLA 2024 Annual Conference had a lasting impact on my personal and academic growth, shaping my career outlook in ways I hadn’t expected. Before attending, I had a broad understanding of information science, but the conference helped me see its vast scope and the significant role it plays in various industries. Through workshops, keynotes, and interactions with fellow attendees, I gained a more detailed view of how information professionals shape society by ensuring access to accurate, organized, and meaningful data. This experience not only solidified my passion for the field but also gave me a clearer sense of purpose in my studies. I feel more confident about how the skills I am developing will contribute to addressing real-world challenges. The

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# 2024 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES REFLECTIONS *continued*

conference also reinforced my desire to pursue mentorship and further opportunities for professional development, particularly in areas like ethical data management, data curation, and applying technology to streamline information services. With this newfound clarity and sense of direction, I'm more motivated than ever to continue my academic journey and ultimately contribute to the transformation of the information science field.

In conclusion, the SLA 2024 Annual Conference was an incredibly enriching experience that has had a profound impact on my academic and professional journey. It not only provided valuable knowledge and insights into the information science field but also inspired me to take an active role in shaping my future career. Through engaging sessions, meaningful networking, and thought-provoking discussions, I now feel more prepared and confident in

pursuing my aspirations. I am incredibly grateful to SLA for offering this scholarship, which made this transformative experience possible. The knowledge and connections I gained at the conference will continue to shape my academic path, and I'm eager to apply them as I move forward in my studies. Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue contributing to the field, staying involved with the SLA, and utilizing the inspiration and clarity gained from this event to help drive innovation in information science.



**Sambhav Jain**  
*Bachelor of Library and Information  
Science at Indira Gandhi National  
Open University*

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## Building Community: Valuable Conference Outcome

By Olga Azar

I joined the Special Libraries Association after meeting a law librarian at a book reading; I explained my dilemma about feeling disconnected from the library community as a distance learner (my university, Charles Sturt, is in Australia) and my interest in cultural heritage institutions. She immediately suggested that I join SLA, which I did almost as soon as I got home. I didn't know what to expect. I never anticipated it would so swiftly affect my summer plans when I was granted a scholarship for this year's conference in Rhode Island.

In my application essay to the scholarship committee for this year's conference, I wrote about my hope that attending would give me the opportunity to learn more about the information sector and forge connections in the community to which I hope to contribute. I am pleased to report that although I didn't have any expectations of the conference (I was too intimidated to think too much about it, because if I had, I might have chickened out), my hopes were fulfilled. Meeting others in the information sector offers a human component often lacking in distance learning, both socially

and professionally. At the conference, I encountered librarians from around the world and an eye-opening variety of roles, from academia and the military, to corporations and nonprofits, among many others. I met fellow students, which afforded us the chance to compare notes about our programs, giving me equal doses of comfort and envy: You get to do that? And, thank goodness I don't have to do that!

Through the course of the conference, I was able to gain insight in the wide field of librarianship far beyond what I had so far learned at university. There is only so much that can be absorbed through course instruction in a discipline that requires long practice, and I have come to realize that I am much better equipped to understand the material when it is related to real life. I wasn't able to attend all of the programs of interest to me, because so many had appeal, but of the programs I did attend, presenters not only discussed practicalities of the profession such as CV development, but also delved into taxonomy, news aggregation, the U.S. Census, and others which would typically not be explored

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in-depth through course study. They also made me aware of current concerns, developments, and innovations that I would get nowhere else in such an accessible way.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn so much about special libraries, from conversations I had, the presentations I soaked up, and the overall collegiality of the conference. This knowledge now informs me as I approach decisions about which direction I would like my career to take, which is of great assistance in a field with such a wealth of specialties.

As you are undoubtedly aware, in our increasingly online world, forging connections is easily neglected. Other than my

local public libraries, I don't have much opportunity to meet people in the field. Studying online in California through an Australian university can be a little isolating at times, and I miss having a sense of community. I am grateful to now count SLA as part of my community.



**Olga Azar**

*Master of Information Program at Charles Sturt University, Australia*

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## Empowered by Knowledge: My Transformative Experience at SLA 2024

By Bryan Boy C. Cortez

Traveling nearly 9000 miles from the Philippines for my first visit to the USA, I was filled with excitement and pride as I prepared to represent my country at the Special Libraries Association (SLA) 2024 Conference and Expo at the University of Rhode Island. This opportunity provided a chance to attend an esteemed event, share my experiences in special librarianship, and gather invaluable insights from leading experts in the field. My goal was to explore how I could implement global best practices in our local context, enhancing library services back home, and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation in our profession.

As I stepped onto the beautiful campus of the University of Rhode Island for the SLA 2024 Conference & Expo, a wave of excitement washed over me. This event was more than just a conference, it was a vibrant gathering of librarians, information professionals, technologists, and researchers, all eager to share valuable insights and innovations that are shaping the future of library and information science. I felt incredibly grateful to the SLA Board for selecting me as one of the Scholars to attend this significant event, which promised to profoundly impact my career and perspective.

The theme of the conference, "Collaboration for Innovation," resonated deeply with my aspirations to foster collaborative projects within libraries. Throughout the conference, I engaged in sessions on critical topics such as data science, competitive intelligence, and knowledge management, which provided me with practical skills and insights I could apply in my career. Networking opportunities allowed me to exchange ideas with professionals from diverse sectors, further shaping my approach to library services.

The celebration of 115 years of SLA inspired me to contribute to the ongoing evolution of library science. This experience not only enhanced my knowledge but also motivated me to take on leadership roles that promote innovation and inclusivity in the library community.

The energy in the session halls was palpable, everyone was eager to connect, share ideas, and learn from one another. The agenda was filled with engaging sessions, workshops, and networking opportunities, all aimed at enhancing our skills and broadening our perspectives. From the moment I registered, I felt like I was boarding on an exciting journey of inspiration and growth.

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## 2024 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES REFLECTIONS *continued*

The conference kicked off with a thought-provoking keynote address by Brian Pichman titled “Uncharted Together: Navigating AI’s New Frontiers in Libraries.” He skillfully explored the vital relationship between information professionals and technologists, highlighting the importance of collaboration in fully leveraging artificial intelligence (AI). His insights on innovation and adaptability struck a chord with me, emphasizing how we, as librarians and information specialists, must embrace change and utilize technology to improve our services.

Every session I attended was a gold mine of knowledge and practical skills. One of the highlights was “Using Web Scraper to Create a Customized Database.” The speaker walked us through how to use web scraping tools to build personalized databases, and I was particularly struck by the importance of data accuracy and the ethical considerations involved in these practices. The step-by-step demonstration was not just informative; it felt empowering, giving me new skills I could actually apply in my own work.

Another session that really resonated with me was “Data Mining Conference Proceedings for Competitive Intelligence Insights.” It opened my eyes to the hidden potential of conference proceedings as a valuable source of competitive intelligence. By analyzing technical program abstracts and using analytic software, we can uncover insights that can significantly inform decision-making within our organizations. The practical applications of what we learned are extensive, and I left the session feeling inspired and eager to explore these methods further.

Effective communication is truly at the core of our work, and the session “Maximizing Your Skills in Effective Communication,” hit the mark perfectly. This interactive workshop offered practical tips for structuring presentations and engaging audiences. What made it especially impactful was the personalized feedback from the facilitators, which helped me refine my elevator pitch and presentation style. I could really see how these skills would enhance my interactions with stakeholders and colleagues, making my communication more effective.

Equally enlightening was the case study session titled “Leveraging User Data to Increase & Improve Engagement.” This presentation showcased how a research department

successfully used technology to plan outreach efforts, allowing them to better understand their internal clients’ needs. The challenges they faced—like time constraints, management pushback, and budget limitations—felt all too familiar. However, the innovative strategies they shared inspired me to think creatively about how I could tackle similar issues in my own work.

The conference also offered a range of workshops and interactive sessions that were incredibly enriching. One workshop focused on transcription and summarization tools, like Sembly, and I was really struck by how these tools can boost productivity by accurately transcribing meetings. This felt like a game-changer for managing information flow within organizations.

Another standout discussion was titled “What Library and Information Science Students Learn Today.” This session provided a fascinating comparison of current curricula with past standards, featuring insights from a student, a recent graduate, and an experienced librarian. It really opened my eyes to the evolving landscape of library education. The conversation about the skills and competencies needed for future professionals was enlightening and underscored the importance of continuous learning in our field.

One of the highlights of the conference was the International Welcome Reception, which celebrated SLA’s 115th anniversary. This event was more than just a party; it was a fantastic opportunity to connect with attendees from around the world and share our experiences. The warm atmosphere made it easy to forge genuine connections, reminding me of the global nature of our profession and the common challenges we all face.

In addition to the reception, the exhibits and networking sessions offered even more chances to engage with vendors and discover the latest products and services tailored for our field. I took full advantage of these moments to ask questions, explore new technologies, and gather resources that could enhance my practice.

As the conference wrapped up, the final remarks beautifully captured the key themes and takeaways from our time together. The focus on professional development, technology integration, and effective communication resonated with me

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# 2024 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES REFLECTIONS *continued*

on a personal level. I left feeling not just informed but also reinvigorated, with a renewed sense of purpose and a stronger connection to my professional community.

The SLA 2024 Conference & Expo was a tremendous success, offering a rich mix of educational sessions, practical workshops, and invaluable networking opportunities. I'm truly grateful for the chance to attend as a Scholar and excited to apply the insights I gained to advance my career and make a positive impact in my organization. As we navigate the ever-changing landscape of information management and library science, I feel inspired to continue this journey of discovery and collaboration, fully embracing all the possibilities that lie ahead.



**Bryan Boy C. Cortez**  
*Head Librarian, Office of the  
Government Corporate Counsel  
(Philippines)*

## Congratulations to the **2025 Scholarship Awardees**

**Shaden Al Dada**  
*University of Pittsburgh*

**Catherine Dinh**  
*San José State University*

**Annie Duckworth**  
*City St. George's, University of London*

**Emilie Ducourneau**  
*San Jose State University*

**Justin Gaynor**  
*San José State University*

**Bailey Hart**  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

**Zoe Hiscutt**  
*University College London*

**Alex Kessler**  
*Dominican University*

**Katherine Knight**  
*University College London*

**Melissa Krause**  
*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Sarah Lancaster**  
*University of Michigan*

**Kimberly Lin**  
*San José State University*

**Adrienn Mendonca-Jones**  
*Indiana University*

**Craig Moore**  
*Florida State University*

**Christine Nguyen**  
*University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*

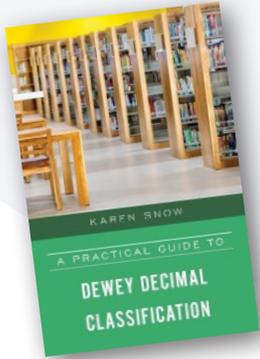
**Benjamin Smith**  
*University of South Florida*

CONFERENCE REIMBURSEMENT WINNERS  
**Brandy King and Melissa James**



# Book Reviews

Reviewed by Lesley Farmer



Snow, Karen. (2024).

*A Practical Guide to Dewey Decimal Classification.*

Rowman & Littlefield. 147 p. ISBN: 978-0-5381-2720-9

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system remains the most popular classification system in the world, particularly for public and smaller libraries. Many library/information schools do not require cataloguing and classification courses, so librarians may find DDC challenging – or may make mistakes out of ignorance. To help library workers start out well using DDC, Snow provides both the basics as well as more advanced features. Particular attention is paid to advanced class building using tables (the unabridged edition). Snow also spends two chapters explaining WebDewey. The book is easy to read, and it has several examples to help the beginning cataloguer, including exercises for each chapter (with correct answers in the appendix). A glossary and index conclude the volume. This guide would be useful for library technicians as well as beginning professionals.

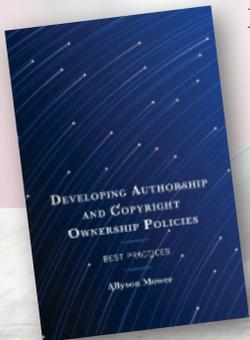


Curzon, Susan. (2023).

*What Every Library Director Should Know* (2d ed.).

Rowman & Littlefield. 179 p. ISBN: 978-1-5381-7269-8

Too often, the job of director is learned in situ, with little pre-training. This book serves as a “wise woman” guide to managing and directing libraries; author Dr. Curzon has decades of librarian leadership experience in both public and academic settings. Curzon starts at full speed, giving eight keys strategies to use from the start. Next, she details how to assess the current library situation in order to determine the resources for direction. She then explains how to engage with staff, clientele, library boards, community stakeholders, and the media. Money matters gets its own important chapter. Curzon also devotes a chapter to deaths in the library, a delicate circumstance that is seldom addressed. The next two chapters deal with changing times and changing positions. The last chapter asks: “Do you want to be a director?” Now that the reader has a solid foundation to make that decision wisely. Each chapter is rich with practical advice quotations from other successful directors. Readers can take advantage of the end index to find quick answers to a director issue, but may benefit best by reading the book from cover to cover—and are likely to gain greater appreciation for directors.



Mower, Allyson. (2024).

*Developing Authorship and Copyright Ownership Policies: Best Practices.*

Rowman & Littlefield. 103 p. ISBN: 978-1-5381-7385-5.

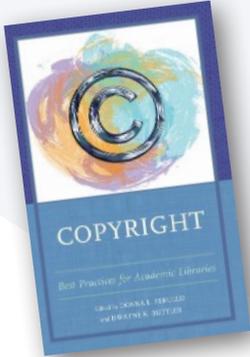
Especially with the advent of alternative academic scholarship formats, libraries need to develop appropriate intellectual property policies. Mower shares her expertise in this specific area of librarianship. She starts by explaining the concept of authorship and its importance, particularly in terms of copyright ownership as part of the scholarly communication system. Her coverage of associated policies focuses on issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Complementing authorship and copyright ownership policies are several policy examples. Further readings and a short index conclude the volume. Readers will find the examples useful to consider.

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# Book Reviews

Reviewed by Lesley Farmer

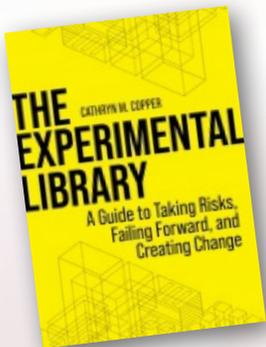


Ferullo, Donna, & Buttler, Dwayne. (Eds.). (2024).  
*Copyright: Best Practices for Academic Libraries.*  
Rowman & Littlefield. 264 p. ISBN: 978-1-5381-6821-9.

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Copyright has become more complex with new formats, and the associated legislation is hard pressed to keep up with technological advances. Furthermore, few books about copyright deal with the specific issues of academic libraries. To address this gap, this book collects the insights of 21 professional librarians and the editing of copyright experts of two academicians.

After an overview of copyright and legal ramifications, the rest of the book deals with specific issues. A group of chapters examine copyright in terms of format: audio-visual works, images, music, digital materials, software, and data sets. Another group of chapters deal with situations that might not need explicit written permission to use, such as fair use, public domain, and open access. One chapter deals with instructional modalities and their impact by copyright. A couple of chapters deal with library services such as interlibrary loan, e-reserves, digital lending. One chapter focuses on archives, and another considers international copyright. Bringing it together, a later chapter details how to establish copyright services at universities. Each chapter mentions legislation and legal cases that deal with the associated copyright focus; several examples are drawn from the contributors' own library experience. Recent developments are also mentioned, such as forthcoming cases and artificial intelligence. The book concludes with an index. The writing is straightforward, clear, and objective with practical advice. Academic librarians will find this book to be a useful course to consult.



CoPPer, Cathryn M. (2024).  
*The Experimental Library: A Guide to Taking Risks, Failing Forward, and Creating Change.* American Library Association. 254 pages. ISBN 978-0-8389-3965-9

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Special libraries are often found within technology-oriented companies and organizations, who model risk taking. This book embraces that pro-active approach in librarianship. An academic librarian in Toronto with a focus on architecture, Copper focuses on technology within a library context, leveraging the idea of the designed experience.

Her book uses the lens of a culture of intentional experimentation to discuss the IDEEA anti-method, which can be mapped to library organizations. She is quick to say that the mindset of experimentation is not tied to budget or degree of technology but rather reflects a growth mindset and builds on a sense of curiosity: "a willingness to try new ideas or introduce changes to existing initiatives" (p. 7). She also asserts that transparency and communication are vital to create a culture of experimentation. After explaining the nature of experimentation, Copper introduced the acronym IDEEA, which stands for Ideate, Design, Experiment (analogous to beta-testing), Engage, and Assess (including user feedback). This approach incorporates design thinking, especially in terms of problem-solving and prototyping, but it tends to being more systematic, looking at the library as a whole and engaging users further along the process. Copper also embraces the idea of failure, using it as a learning opportunity that can lead to greater success. Throughout the book, Copper situates the library as an experience: an environment in which to engage and interact with its space, its resources and its human entities, all of which can impact the user, the library, and the umbrella organization. Throughout the book, Copper provides examples of impactful library experimentation as well as thought exercises and supporting images. Indeed, Copper considers this book as a toolkit of ideas to experiment with. A bibliography and index complete the volume.

Cooper writes in an engaging and practical way to inspire special librarians to experiment with their libraries as an impactful change agent.