

President's Message

By Dave Majka

The hoopla regarding the end of the year and the millennium affords all of us a chance to reflect upon our accomplishments and shortcomings of the year past and of our hopes for the year ahead. I find it somewhat hard to believe that my term as your President is half over. So far I have been able to get a number of my objectives off to a good start, with the hope of seeing them accomplished by June 2000.

If it has not already preceded the Pointer to your mailbox, one item that you will soon receive is a letter from me containing a ballot and a fundraising appeal in support of SLA's Global 2000 fellowship program. This initiative is one of SLA's highest priorities for the year ahead and I want to see our Chapter make a meaningful contribution. We have a reputation for innovation that will be bolstered if this campaign is successful. Please consider voting for the initiative and contributing to this very worthy cause.

The new year will also see the launch of new membership outreach and mentorship programs that Judy Lesso and Ange Pollis will discuss in more detail in this issue of the Pointer. Please support us in these volunteer efforts. The outreach program is an effort to better understand activities that will appeal to and benefit you, and the mentorship program can be a mutually rewarding opportunity for you to share your knowledge with a student member.

The Pittsburgh Chapter has formally petitioned SLA for territorial jurisdiction for the state of West Virginia, which is neither presently assigned to any Chapter nor hosts its own Chapter. The Pittsburgh Chapter has about a dozen members who reside in West Virginia and who have independently chosen to affiliate with our Chapter. I would like to see this opportunity afforded to all members there who are not affiliated with any Chapter. The Cincinnati Chapter has also claimed part of West Virginia so some Solomonian decision will have to be made by SLA as to the best course of action for its members there.

I have enjoyed all of our programs this year and wish to thank our President-Elect, Denise Callihan, for undertaking the prodigious amount of work necessary to organize and execute them. Each program has been a wonderful opportunity to learn, share knowledge, and network with the best group of librarians in this area. I look forward to the balance of the year and hope to see or correspond with each of you during its course. Happy New Year!

From the Editor

By Earl Mounts

Well, here we are at the end of the 1000's—the millennium that saw the invention of the book, the computer, Cabbage Patch Dolls, and Pokémon. What unthought of developments will the new millennium see? Please, no calls and email about this not being the end of the millennium. Bill Clinton says it is, so it has to be.

No summing up of the millennium would be complete without thanking all of the editors and contributors who have made the Pointer an exemplary publication. I have the good fortune to

personally know some of them - Lynn Labun, Barb Spiegelman, Nancy Carlson, Mary Grace Desiderio. And these are no one-hit wonders; they all continue to provide leadership to the Chapter in other functions.

Special recognition goes to Diane Eldridge, our Business Manager, who expended a great deal of energy in calling advertisers and making sure that we had financial support and copy to fill in the spaces when the editor had burned out. Over the five years that she held this assignment, she was the Pointer's darling who always had copy ready well ahead of the deadline. If there's someone out there who can match this dedication, please come forward.

This issue of the Pointer highlights student contributions with a lead article by Hillary Stevenson, President of the Pitt Student Chapter. Ange Pollis discusses competencies, Lynn Labun summarizes the student pizza party, and Missy Harvey talks about the course she has been teaching at SIS.

Marge Sroka contributes another great article in her Spotlight series, this time focusing on Megan Dennis, who has made a very successful transition from public librarian to solo corporate librarian. Talk about flexibility!

Looking forward into the next millennium is Dave Majka's appeal on behalf of Global 2000, Nancy Carlson's hints on how to toot your own horn and get an award, and Judy Lesso's encouraging membership news.

The 2000's are going to be a lot of fun! --

Spotlight On . . . Megan Dennis

By Marge Sroka

Librarian in Transition - From Public Librarian to Corporate Solo

Megan Dennis has made the successful transition from being one of many reference librarians at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) in the Science and Technology Department that covers many subject areas, to being a solo librarian in a very specialized technical library at USX, US Steel Group. With only a couple of weeks of training, she learned a lot on her own-- and very quickly. From CLP she brought knowledge of technical references, standards and specifications, and patents. Other valuable skills she brought to USX include Web page development and computer instruction.

Although it has been quite a challenge to assume total responsibility for a technical library, Megan has done it. In fact, like any solo, she does it all. She answers engineering/metallurgy technical questions as well as business reference questions for the Technical Center, Headquarters, 3 plants, and corporate clients. The library's collection includes more than 25,000 books, just over 200 journals, dissertations, translations, and government reports. Critical to her success is prioritizing the work load. Reference questions definitely come before shelving journals. Becoming familiar with steelmaking terminology has been a challenge. When asked to do a literature search, she doesn't hesitate to call and interview engineers, in case she's definitely stumped.

Megan draws upon her well-rounded scientific background. After accomplishing a BS in biochemistry from Virginia Tech, she worked in laboratories for several years, first in quality control for a company in Virginia, and then in research in the Department of Ophthalmology at the University of Pittsburgh. These positions gave her firsthand experience in the process of scientific research--a definite plus for a sci/tech librarian. While working at the University of Pittsburgh, she attended graduate school at SLIS and completed the MLS in December 1995.

Megan has been an active member of SLA since 1995, first as a student, and later as Chapter Archivist for several years. She attended her first SLA

Annual Conference this year just before starting her position at USX. In Minneapolis, she sat in on most of the Solo Division sessions, and these prepared and inspired her for her role as a solo librarian. She has also attended several of the local teleconferences. The last one on negotiating licenses has already proven useful. As for the future, Megan wants to become more involved with the Solo Librarians Division. Since there are a lot of solos in the Pittsburgh area, she would especially like to see a local solo group become a reality.

Megan lives in Shadyside with her two cats. She keeps physically active with aerobics or walking. Travel and gardening are other interests. This year she is learning to swing dance.

And the Winner Is . . .

If you have always wanted to bask in the limelight afforded to winners of the Chapter's Leadership Award, here are 12 important steps to help make the decision process much easier for the Awards Committee.

1. Reflect on the fact that when someone wants to nominate someone else for an award, the thing that usually stops them is the effort to gather the information needed to justify the award.
2. Update your resume.
3. List your SLA basic history which includes:
4. Member since what year.
5. Chapter/Divison/Association activities, committees, offices, awards, achievements.
6. Reflect on the fact that the Chapter Awards Committee receives as few as ZERO nominations some years, and most years only one or two.
7. Then brag about something you did in the past year for SLA.
8. Then brag about something you did in the past year in your job or at school.
9. While bragging, specify how your achievement meets the award criteria [The Awards Committee is in the process of revising the criteria. We'll publish it later in the year, so this gives you the extra time needed to work on Steps 1-8 and 10-12!]
10. Save this document and plan to update it once a year.
11. Mail, email, or fax this information about yourself to the Leader of the Awards Committee, who will put it in the special file called "Awards Resource Information".
12. Think of someone else in the Chapter who deserves an award, and send them this article to remind them to get their information together.

The 1999-2000 Pittsburgh Chapter Award Committee members are Ange Pollis, Bill Buchanan, and Nancy Flury Carlson. Contact any of the Committee members with questions, and send your information to Nancy Flury Carlson at carlsonf@westinghouse.com, Fax: 412-374-4042.

Welcome to New Members!

Rori Kuhns is an account executive for Factiva, a Dow Jones Reuters company. She is based in Stow, Ohio near Akron and covers the Pittsburgh Region.

Linda Oliver is currently living in Colorado Springs, Colorado but is interested in returning to the Pittsburgh area.

Membership Outreach Project - Volunteers Needed

The Membership Committee will launch a major membership outreach initiative in January 2000. Our goal is to contact all of you who have not attended more than one Chapter event in the past year. Our main objective is to encourage comments and suggestions regarding the relevance, attractiveness, and convenience of Chapter events. We also want to update email addresses for you so that we can improve the timeliness and reach of Chapter communications. We value you highly as members even though we may not see you often!

I would like to thank Tim Gaus, Nancy Alstadt and Dave Majka for volunteering to work on this project. We still need at least four more volunteers to help us make about 10 calls each. If you would like to join us please contact me at judy.lesso@highmark.com or 412-544-8027.

Looking for Leaders

Are you a born leader or do you know someone who is? The 2000 election is just around the corner (not THAT one, the one in May). We will be electing a President-Elect, Secretary, and Director. If you would like to be considered for one of these leadership roles or want to put a colleague's name in the hat, please contact Betsy Schlueter at betsy.schlueter.b@bayer.com. Speaking from experience, this will be one of the most rewarding opportunities of your professional career.

Go! Pitt!

As the fall term draws to a close at the University of Pittsburgh, the Student Chapter of the Special Libraries Association would be amiss not to express a debt of gratitude to the Pittsburgh Chapter for its support and guidance. During these past few months, we have benefited greatly from the efforts of the Pittsburgh Chapter, in particular, those put forth by Dave Majka, Denise Callihan, and Kim Gregory.

Most activities sponsored by the Pittsburgh Chapter saw a usually small, but strong, attendance from Pitt's LIS students. Events such as dinner meetings, the annual student pizza party, and, most recently, the organization's holiday party, present a great opportunity for current students to mingle with their future peers. It is terrific to see such a warm exchange between students and practitioners. I can think of hardly any other field in which such successful exchanges occur. The annual pizza party provided an especially good turnout of students. Denise Callihan's idea to raffle off lunches with librarians means that several of my peers will have a chance to learn

about librarianship and continue to build professional networks in another light. My sincerest thanks to all who volunteered to be a part of this worthwhile event and to spend some one-on-one time with my peers.

In addition to being a part of Pittsburgh Chapter activities, our Student Chapter also held a meeting in October to introduce interested students to the world of special librarianship. SLA member and Pitt adjunct faculty member Ange Pollis kindly agreed to give up a Saturday morning to enlighten nearly a dozen students on the world of special libraries and to address the competencies necessary in this ever-changing field. It is my hope to have more talks like this throughout the spring term.

As we all look to the new year, I foresee stronger ties between the Pittsburgh Chapter and the Pitt Chapter. I also see the Pitt Chapter taking off on its own and having a variety of activities which will inspire students to enter the field of special librarianship and for those committed to the field, activities that will further their commitment.

Pollis on Competencies

The fall meeting of the Student Chapter of the Special Libraries Association at the University of Pittsburgh was held on Saturday, October 16, 1999. Approximately sixteen students attended the meeting to hear the featured speaker, Angela Pollis, discuss: Introduction to SLA, SLA's Competencies Report, Career Opportunities, Courses for the Special Librarian-To-Be, and Networking Possibilities.

According to SLA statistics, 13% of librarians do not work in a traditional library setting. Instead, they are functioning throughout business in roles that command salaries much higher than the profession has ever recorded.

It's an exciting time for information professionals! Our titles are changing rapidly--we are being called Knowledge Managers, Information Specialists, Chief Answerers, Navigators, Information Architects (a friend of mine in Sweden told me that this her new title; she is designing pages on the Intranet). But no matter what the name--the skills are those of a trained Librarian.

Job opportunities exist in major corporate centers--Atlanta, Washington, Chicago, New York, and LA.

A major phenomenon that corporations are experiencing is "Data Smog". They are overwhelmed and want to hire someone who can manage and access information from the desktop—a perfect fit for new librarians.

Our role as a trainer in the organization has also become important again: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him to use the Net and he won't bother you for weeks!!!

Kim Gregory, Student Liaison, also described her position as a corporate librarian at Federated Investors. We had a lively and interesting discussion. Based on the latest job postings, this is an exciting time to be in the field of information!!!!

Mellon Library Hosts SLA Party

On November 17, Lynn Labun hosted a pizza party at the Mellon Institute Library. Each November, the Pittsburgh Chapter fêtes the graduate students of Pitt's School of Information Sciences.

The program, "SLA Competencies in Action" included a panel discussion on how to use the SLA document, "Competencies for Special Librarians in the 21st Century", for both students and practitioners. A panel of experienced librarians—editor of the document Barb Spiegelman (Westinghouse), John Digilio (Kirkpatrick & Lockhart), Barb Richards (CMU), and moderator, Bob Sullivan (Reed, Smith, Shaw & McClay) brought their perspectives on competencies and how they apply in a very practical sense. This was an excellent opportunity for students as well as librarians to reflect on skills needed to bring value to the enterprise whether it is a college, university, small company, or international conglomerate. Discussion and questions from the audience followed.

Each panelist fielded the following questions:

Which competencies are more necessary for today and the future?

Answers included flexibility, clear communication, managing change, subject knowledge, service excellence, and marketing.

What changes have made your job easier or harder?

Answers included lack of technical resources and money, the need to constantly identify and filter sources, and knowing that, at the end of the day, you are a librarian pure and simple.

What are employees looking for in applicants?

Answers included specialized knowledge, good communication skills, a commitment to learning, your special skills, intelligence, responsibility, self-motivation and, arguably most importantly, a healthy sense of humor.

The highly coveted door prizes ('Lunch with a Librarian') were won by lucky information assistants Tamar Smith (CMU's Engineering & Science Library), Rich Louis (Mellon Institute Library), and Diane Covington (CMU, now a grad student at SIS).

Also Seen: Adele Barsh (CMU), Lynn Berard (CMU), Holly Harden, (CMU), Earl Mounts (formerly CMU, now Alcoa Inc.), and Dave Majka (formerly CMU, now Robert Morris College).

Everyone, students and professionals alike, oohed and ahed over the spectacular Mellon Institute Library Reading Room - and all agreed that it was a great place to have pizza and network.

Alert: Mentors Needed

In order to implement a pilot mentorship program for SIS students, Dave Majka, Kim Gregory, and Ange Pollis are recruiting candidates who would be willing to partner with a student. You

would be a "Big Sister" or "Big Brother" to answer their questions concerning curriculum choices, career opportunities and possibly host a tour of your facility. If you remember how lost you were when you first graduated from Library School, would you please volunteer to be a mentor?

Contact Ange Pollis at a.pollis@worldnet.att.net

Harvey a Hit at SIS!

Missy Harvey, Computer Science Librarian at CMU, has been teaching LIS 2600 at Pitt's School of Information Science since 1997. Originally offered only once a year, the course is now offered each semester due to Harvey's excellence as an instructor. The course was first offered early in the 80's and retains its name "Applications of Microcomputer [what in the heck is that!?!] Software". The course serves as an introduction to computers and their applications in libraries and information centers. Harvey discusses operating systems, hardware platforms, and several software applications. Harvey prepares future librarians with first-hand practical experience and a strong theoretical framework to exploit technological developments in libraries of the next millennium. You can find more information about the course at <http://www.library.cmu.edu/usr/missy/2600/>. Student Chapter members who have taken the course include Sue Weston (sweston@lis.pitt.edu), Richard Louis (ralst46+@pitt.edu), and Holly Harden(harden@andrew.cmu.edu).

Sight Bites

According to "The Laughing Librarian" (<http://www.netjunk.com/users/lafnlibn/koans.htm>): "The Zen librarian search for nothing on AltaVista and received 27,987,384 hits. Maybe so, but today, given the search string "nothing", AltaVista found 3,480,350 Web pages. Ommm." (thanks to Ange Pollis for this one)

"Toni Carbo, dean and professor of the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh, has been chosen to become an Honorary Fellow in the National Federation of Abstracting and Information Services (NFAIS). The award will be presented in the Year 2000 NFAIS Annual Conference, February 20-23, in Philadelphia. Carbo is receiving this honor because of her 'past servie and dedication to NFAIS' and her 'lifelong contribution to the information industry'."

THE POINTER, Winter 1999

Bulletin of the Pittsburgh Chapter, Special Libraries Association--Volume 65, Number 4

The Pointer is edited by Earl Mounts

Issue reformatted from html to pdf on 9/6/06: R. Callison