

The Confluence

Newsletter of the Special Libraries Association - Pittsburgh Chapter

Volume 79, Issue 2

Summer/Fall 2014

President's Message ~ Margarete Bower

It's been a busy summer here and hard to believe it's almost over. As I write this, I've already met with the new graduate students of one department for orientation, and fall term classes are only two weeks away.

One of the big summer events, of course, was the SLA annual conference in Vancouver, with local chapter members both attending and presenting. Leslie organized a nice chapter get-together on the harbor that was well attended, and you can get her take on the conference elsewhere in this issue.

As we start to think about moving from summer into fall, though, there are some other transitions to think about, too. SLA would like to have officers for 2015 identified during October, so incoming officers can work with the incumbents to gain some experience before taking office in January. I will be putting together a nominating committee shortly, so if you are interested in participating, please let me know. If you are interested in one of the offices or in nominating someone for an office, please contact Eve Wider. We are looking for a President-elect, a secretary, and a director. We would also like to know if you are interested in working on the chapter bulletin, assisting with the web site, or getting involved in any other aspect of the chapter's activities.

Chris has gotten a head start on the fall schedule, so look for her announcements about the annual awards & business meeting in this issue. As the fall programs develop, watch for those announcements, too.

Enjoy the remaining part of summer, and I look forward to seeing you at our meetings in the fall.



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Chapter Member News

Angela Pollis received the “The 2014 Longevity Award” from the Science-Technology Division of the Special Libraries Association for 40 years (1974) of membership. She was an active member and taught several courses for the division. She highly recommends being a member of this division for information specialists in technical and research information centers.



Welcome ! New Chapter Members

William Jakub

Wendy Edwards

Christie Kliewer

Susan Ermlick

Sarah Young

John Barnett

Rebecca Swanger

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Association-108118](https://linkedin.com/groups/Special-Libraries-Association-108118)

2014 Conference Highlights ~ Leslie Eibl

This year's SLA Vancouver conference chapter meet up was on Sunday, June 8 at the Mill Marine Bistro & Bar. 14 SLA Pittsburgh chapter members, former members, and friends of members shared food and drinks after the first full day of conference activities. After the meet-up, some went for desert at an award-winning gelato shop, Bella Gelateria.

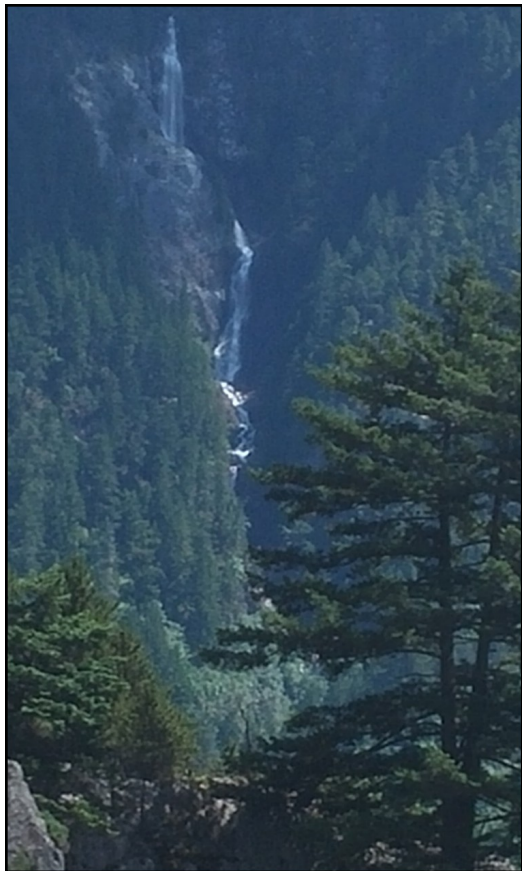
In addition to the great company at the chapter meet up and the delicious Vancouver cuisine, some conference highlights for me included a Quick Take session highlighting tools for library instruction, a few general sessions highlighting topics including altmetrics and digital humanities, and the closing session which presented 4 Ted-talk like presentations. These sessions offered practical approaches and resources that I can utilize to understand, improve, and better communicate in my work. More importantly, I appreciated these and other sessions because they created an outlet and allowed for discussions between a diverse group of librarians to share and explore new ideas. These sharing opportunities, whether formal or informal, continually make me appreciate my involvement in SLA and made the conference experience positive.



Photo Credits: Leslie Eibl

Vancouver in Pictures

If you had to miss the annual conference in Vancouver, you can still take in its beauty thanks to these photos **Lynn Berard** has shared. Photos/captions credited to Lynn Berard.



One of many BC waterfalls!



Harrison Hot Springs, 60 miles out of the City of Vancouver

Vancouver in Pictures (continued)



Okanagan Valley Vineyards

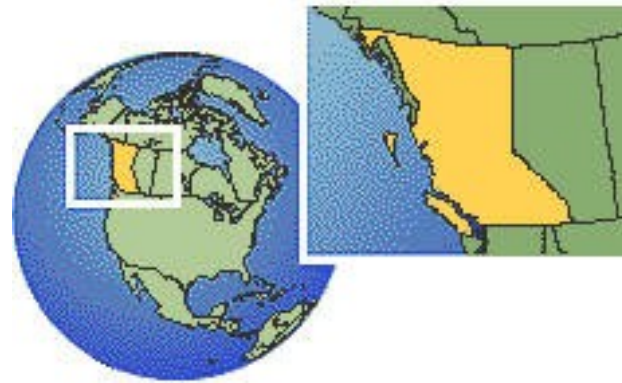


Stanley Park, Vancouver (along the coast near the convention center)

Vancouver in Pictures (continued)



Gastown Steam Clock



Gastown Street corner

What do **YOU** need from your professional association?—Lynn Berard

The annual SLA June conference was, in a word, disappointing. Several months later I find myself reflecting on why I came away empty-handed and let down from an event that usually provides me with new ideas, inspiration, and tools I can use. So I decided to ask myself the question that I now pose to each of you:

What do you need from your professional association?

A search for inspiration led me to an article identifying the five key values needed in growing trust: **Competence, Consistency, Connection, Candor and Concern**. I offer my conference reflections and personal value propositions below along with my ideas for positive steps to remedy known issues. After all, didn't our parents teach us that for every complaint we made, it was important to propose a solution?



- **Competence:** I wrestle with the following questions: In these rocky budget times, can our association truly sustain a management structure that includes 3 CEO positions? Many large successful corporations are making due with only one. The Board continues to provide CEO salary increases while staff positions have been cut dramatically to pay the bills. Did you know that our association staff pays for their own health insurance? How many other library associations have had a membership decline like ours? (Down to below 8000 from a high of 16,000+). A conference fee of \$590.00 for a dues paying member makes conference attendance unattainable for many, including this fellow.

SOLUTION: I'm not against change and fully understand that our elected board is also wrestling with those same questions and realities. Here's an idea that was put forward in Vancouver: consider joining with ALA, MLA, and other info-pro associations to create a central office to manage membership needs, conference planning, travel arrangements, budgeting, information technology needs, etc. Each association would benefit from sharing those services and having the option to reduce the need for a building or a full complement of staff.

- **Consistency:** As a Fellow of the Association I am honored to work toward positive experiences for all at conference. For a great number of years the Fellows have hosted the popular "First Timers Event", the premier meeting designed to welcome and mentor our next generation of members. Thirsty newbies arrive and are introduced to friendly helpers, and ideally, their thirst is quenched. Ironically, no refreshments were made available. The Fellows were reminded that we are not an "official group", so no monies can come our way to host the First Timers event. It seemed that no one from HQ was there to meet 'n greet potential new members and, due to the hard work of the Fellows who were there, over 400 First Timers showed up to learn BUT not to get any refreshments. Memo to HQ: your job is to recruit members.

SOLUTION: Consider budgeting annual monies to support this highly successful and well regarded event. The labor and good will it engenders is free; providing refreshment along with good fellowship is priceless.

(Continued on page 8)

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- **Connection:** The final number for attendance at conference seemed to be a well-guarded secret. On the last day of conference a whisper made the rounds but you had to have your ear to the ground to catch it. Reported at 2400 (a record breaking low), I was advised that this number included the vendors in attendance (700 -1000 perhaps?) as well as paying attendees. I made an effort to spend time in the vendor hall to shop and track down old friends and managed to speak with one at his booth for over 1.5 hours during which time not even one customer strolled through the premier aisle we inhabited. I have never seen the vendor hall so deserted. I remember fondly the days of 8,000+ in attendance; and that was when we held conferences in far less spectacular venues than the stunningly beautiful city of Vancouver. Not much opportunity to network or connect with either members or association staff, as the halls were empty.

SOLUTION: Re-envision the conference and make it affordable. If that means shorter days and less appealing cities, okay. Plan smaller regional conferences (we can help you!). Most members attend in pursuit of networking opportunities afforded at conference as well as the synergy and fellowship we get from one another. Create SLA Ambassadors in each country/state/province and ask them to check in with members. Communicate, communicate, communicate.....

- **Candor:** The Fellows business meeting was stressful for me and I left it feeling as though a gag order had been issued that I missed. We were informed how “really bad off” the Association has become and how they are working with staff to stop the bleed. Yes, we do understand. The sale of the headquarters building in Virginia was brought up, but the explanations offered left me wondering why the sale of the building is a positive thing. I learned from a friend who lives in Virginia that the location of the building is not an ideal one for a sale but heard nothing that concrete from conference discussions. I left the meeting unsatisfied (except for the hugs received from my fellow fellows :-).

As Kermit would say: It isn't easy being green (a fellow).

SOLUTION: Open up discussion and governance. We are a member driven association – let us help.

- **Concern:** It is time to show the flag. As a leader I enjoyed and appreciated my time serving as a Board member but it is most important to remember that we are all, first and foremost, members. How can we learn from the amazing turnouts at the First-Timers event (400 this year) and put that energy to work for SLA's future?

SOLUTION: Be member-focused, not leadership-focused. Fund working groups “good ideas” regardless of their “official” status. Find ways to demonstrate that we are a members-first association. Hold a new members reception at each conference and have representatives from all divisions/chapters and the board there to work the room. Create a welcome wagon committee that creates ideas for all geographic chapters and subject special divisions to hold welcome events, wherever they are! By way of example, the Rose Vormelker winners met up at this conference for the first time and within a short period of time came up with ideas for programs and projects we could engage in, discussions that included creative solutions to association issues, and just plain ole great fun - heck, if we did that in an hour, just think of the possibilities!

In closing, let me challenge you again to answer the question: **What do YOU need from your professional association?**and feel free to share it with other SLA members. Thanks for listening.

2014 Pittsburgh Chapter Awards—Chris Heil

Nominations for the 2014 Chapter Awards will open after Labor Day. Nominations will be due November 8. The awards will be presented at the Annual Business Meeting and Awards Dinner on Wednesday evening, December 3 at the Mellon Institute Library in Oakland.

Consider your SLA colleagues who contribute to the success of our chapter and to our profession. You might be one of those people - self nominations are welcome!

This year's awards:

- **Promising Professional Award (up to \$1,000)** - recognizes a new information professional (less than 5 years in the profession) to encourage participation in SLA and Chapter activities. Award is to be used to defray costs associated with attending either the Annual (summer) or Leadership (winter) Conference of the Special Libraries Association. See detailed Nomination Criteria on the Chapter web site.
- **Catalyst Award (\$50)** – recognizes a member who has provided innovative solutions to issues that significantly affect the mission and values of the Chapter.
- **Leadership: Merit / Service (\$150)** – recognizes a Chapter member who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and service to the Chapter over the past year.
- **Innovations in Technology Award (\$50)** – given to a member who has developed methods or tools to streamline and simplify information tasks through the use of advanced technology so as to achieve actionable results.
- **Lifetime Achievement (\$100)** – honors a professional librarian for outstanding achievement and accomplishments reflecting the goals of the library profession. The honoree will have shown extended and sustained periods of distinguished commitment to the Pittsburgh Chapter and SLA.
- **Mentoring (\$50)** – presented to a Chapter member in recognition of exceptional contributions in the area of mentoring students and/or practicing professionals in the field.
- **Publications / Authorship (\$50)** – presented to a Chapter member who has made a significant contribution to the published literature or created an important electronic document or tool.



For more information about the awards see page 24 of the SLA Pittsburgh Chapter Procedure [Manual](#) or the Chapter Awards [webpage](#).

SAVE THE DATE

*Wednesday evening
December 3, 2014*

At the Mellon Institute Library

*Annual Business Meeting
and Awards Dinner*

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pittsburgh.sla.org

The Confluence is the newsletter of the *Special Libraries Association - Pittsburgh Chapter*. The next issue will be published in **Winter 2014**. Article submission deadline is **DECEMBER 8, 2014**. Please contact Amy Raimondi, editor, at araimondi@lecom.edu with any submissions, issues or concerns relating to the newsletter.



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