

[INFO VIEW]

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Headshot: Pick up from June issue

Head:

SLA at the Tipping Point

Deck:

I saw members choosing to innovate in 2008. I saw sessions that broke the mold, and served up learning and networking in a variety of ways.

I am writing these columns while on the plane home from our conference in Seattle. And what a conference it was! I was hopeful that I would see signs of change throughout the conference—in sessions, in divisions, indeed in members. Was SLA changing and adapting to the environment around us? Were we preparing for the new economy? Was our SLA value proposition increasing and aligning with member needs? Were our member colleagues ready to adapt to the biggest changes happening in information and library land—possibly ever?

I am happy to report that I saw good things. I even found a few things to change in myself! (Amazingly, I actually got to attend a few sessions!) Just a few things that delighted me:

- Charlie Rose interviewing Vint Cerf and Vint giving his views on the work he's doing for the development of the protocols for the inter-planetary Internet. How cool is that? I'll bet not many of us had even thought of the information applications he was studying.
- Would you have expected an SLA member produced Machinima at the Opening Session? The SLA Second Life members' avatars looked beyond cool and it was a talkie! And seeing the SLA Second Life site develop was just too exciting. Some folks were suggesting a 2009 celebration event for our SLA Centennial in Second Life, or creatively suggesting that everyone get a free membership in the Second Life Chapter.
- I got to meet Seth Godin before everyone else got to hear him. I was thrilled that he raised the tenor of the conversation about our identity in the very noisy information space.
- The debut of "The SLA 23 Things Song" from Tim DeWolf and Richard Geiger was a huge hit. I was thrilled that it drew just the right amount of attention to the 23 Things / Learning 2.0 project at SLA. Have you been to it on the website and signed up?
- One of the sessions I attended was by one of my heroes, David Snowden. He is right on the edge of cognition research and the role of stories and the things we value as librarians. I would never have expected him to

show leading-edge results from story collection in Iran and the use thereof to understand and predict anti-western sentiment and activity. Wow, I had the feeling that I was a fly on the wall at a Pentagon briefing.

- I also had lunch with LMD and Eugenie Prime. She passionately updated her No Puny Visions keynote from the last time SLA was in Seattle in 1997. She inspired me in 1997 and, as always, she was inspiring again.
- And we had fun too. Especially at the IT/LMD/PAM Dance. We tripled the size of the dance floor and rocked 'til Midnight!
- By now you will have received your e-invitation to the launch of the SLA Innovation Lab. The soft launch in Seattle was so much fun with demos, beakers, and lab rats. I was very happy to see a number of attendees signing up to learn by playing in this major new member initiative.
- All across the conference we were "Green": composting, recycling, and reducing the paper load and more. It's a start. SLA planted a few acres of trees as a result of purchasing carbon credits. Who could be against trees? And besides, libraries are the greenest institutions of all—getting multiple uses of books and periodicals and more.
- Lastly, I was very excited that there were over 200 attendees signed up for the SLA 2008 Twitter at the conference from the SLA Innovation Lab. They did hundreds of tweets and were tweeting day in and day out. They learned by playing. And that's cool *and* fun.

Who would have thought that this sort of stuff would have happened at an SLA conference, even a few years ago?

I think (actually, hope) that what I saw was a tipping point. I saw members choosing to innovate in 2008. I saw sessions that broke the mold, and served up learning and networking in a variety of ways. I saw a more diverse membership at this meeting—a healthier mosaic. I saw people playing again with new tools, and thinking about how they would improve their services and organizations. And I definitely saw people having fun again. The professional malaise of the past seems to be lifting.

Anyway, I will continue this column in my regular *Info Tech* column further along in this issue of the magazine. I haven't even addressed the great value of SLA membership initiatives that were launched or enhanced at SLA in Seattle.

PICK-UP SIGNATURE