

**Information Outlook**  
**President's Column: Info View**  
**March 2008**

(Due Feb. 19, 2008 – strict 750 word limit)

**Putting Meat on the Bones of Innovation Ideas**

**by Stephen Abram, SLA President 2008**

Well, we've returned from our successful annual SLA Leadership Summit in Louisville Kentucky. It was a wonderful exercise in lubricating the gears of SLA. We talked; we networked; we listed; we trained; we learned. SLA is strong and the momentum is building.

Innovation is essential to a dynamic organization. As Ranganathan famously write, "Libraries are growing organisms." Library associations are too. *We will 'Innovate in 2008'*. Despite our great members, I believe that it's clear we will face many challenges as profession and association in the future. In order to remain successful we must become more flexible and adaptable. This means embracing innovation, pilots and experimentation and learning together.

SLA members need to be empowered to educate themselves in as many ways as possible. To that end I am encouraging a few exciting initiatives in 2008 to complement our dynamic and traditional chapter/division/unit, conference, newsletter, and website learning opportunities. We need to become an advanced learning organization in the best sense of our vision where all members look to SLA as a place to learn physically and virtually. SLA has made great strides, especially with CLICK University and our conferences. Now we need to turn up the heat a little.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce the following groups will be working on your behalf:

1. Cindy Romaine is leading a large team of SLA volunteers and staff to build and promote the **SLA Innovation Laboratory**. This will be free to members on the SLA website. Our vision is of a virtual space that will have dozens of licensed and free software as well as thousands of video tutorials for SLA members to engage in learning useful technology, management and leadership skills. This will be a cost free 'sandbox' to play with the technologies that will have an impact on the success of our careers and our organizations. You will be able to build tools for your unit or yourself, learning by doing.
2. Jill Hurst-Wahl is leading a small team of SLA volunteers to create a play area in **Second Life for SLA**. This is a little 'out there' but it allows us to meet the needs of our members who want to find, indeed experiment with the future for

special libraries in that 3.0 virtual world environment. I expect it will be fun too which is another one of my goals for my fellow members. It's exciting and you'll be able join I soon.

3. Deb Hunt is leading our **SLA Learning 2.0** team of SLA volunteers. The goal is to launch an international SLA version of the successful and innovative 23 Things, 15 minutes-a-day learning strategy at our annual conference in Seattle in June. It will be adapted to meet the needs of specialized information professionals. When as many members as possible participate we can even more confidently state that *all* of our members give informed advice about the information and technology challenges facing our users and enterprises.

4. Gayle Gossen and Christina de Castell are leading the **SLA First Five Years** Task Force to survey and offer great learning and networking opportunities for new information professionals. It is essential to the long term success of SLA as an organization that we fine tune our value proposition to the emerging SLA leaders of tomorrow. It seems a cliché to say they're our future but it's true. Research shows that we have to engage them in the first five years to retain their talent in our association.

We also need to spend time in 2008 reinforcing to all members the wonderful progress SLA has made in developing a modern learning suite of services available **exclusively** to SLA members, including the eBrary collection of over 1000 management and leadership e-books, CLICK University and the free course of the month, the SLA IRC Factiva alerts as well as the SLA NewsGator information pro RSS feeds. There's a lot more but this is enough to prove that there's a ton of value in our SLA membership and what you get for your member ID and password.

Like all presidents before me, I'd like to cap off 2008 with happy members, more members and members better prepared for a widening range of exciting opportunities available to special librarians and information professionals. I know you're up to it. Let's innovate and play.

**Stephen**