



From the Chair



A few days ago I received a gentle reminder from our dedicated Newsletter editor informing me that it is a well established tradition for the SLIS chairperson to write a homily for each new issue. Being new to the job, I went in search of a few previous editions to get some idea of what is expected and was impressed by my predecessors' enthusiasm and encouragements to their peers (OK, there were a few hard questions asked as well, but we need that too!).

The one theme that popped up again and again is mentoring and sharing what we know with our colleagues. It made me think of George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) who expressed his opinion on sharing knowledge very well:

"If you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange these apples then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange these ideas, then each of us will have two ideas".

This is what I would like to see happening more and more amongst SLIS members in the coming year. Our first workshop in 2009, "**From master to apprentice: how do you know what you should know**" addresses the exchange of knowledge and skills as its key theme, especially how experienced information professionals can pass on what they know to their younger colleagues. I am privileged to work for an organisation that considers mentoring and preparing a new generation of information specialists for more responsible roles, an imperative. Let us make it our goal to be generous with our knowledge and pass on what we have learnt so that our profession will continue to thrive in enabling our clients to excel in theirs.

The October 2008 SLIS members workshop "**Positioning Yourself as a Leader within your Organization**" was probably one of the most interactive meetings ever. A recording of one of the SLA's Click University webinars was played (sponsored by the SLA's Sub-Saharan Africa Chapter) and during the course of the event regular opportunities were given to share own experiences and ideas or ask the panel questions.



"Never lend books, for no one ever returns them; the only books I have in my library are books that other people have lent me. " Anatole France.





The image of the librarian, sitting in her corner, waiting to be asked for assistance, has long since disappeared and we can confidently take a leadership role in our organisations.

This boldness was so well demonstrated by our American colleagues at the SLA conference last year when they published a double page advertisement in the Wall Street Journal (no less!) stating "Behind every good business decision is information professional!" We are planning to illustrate this in a workshop close to Boss' Day later this year.

The new committee is looking forward to getting to know and interacting with many of you during 2009. But there is no need to wait for a meeting to communicate. Please share your ideas either directly with the committee or post any useful articles/information/comments on the SLIS Listserv.

From master to apprentice - how do you know what you should know? SLIS members' workshop, 31 March 2009, Sasol Auditorium

Have you ever started a new job, was given a manual and told to get on with it? Or worse, gave a young, new employee a standard operating procedure and expected a productive staff member from day one? There are better ways to learn and teach – storytelling! Yes, that's right – imparting your knowledge by means of anecdotes and recalling specific learning experiences in your day to day professional activities.

The presenter, Elmi Bester from Indicato, is passionate about new ways of conducting business, new forms of organization and new ways of working and relating in the knowledge age. She introduced us to the concept of "Deep Smarts", essentially practical wisdom learned through experience and shaped by internal and external influences. Transferring these skills to others is most successful when it is done in the context of anecdote circles, or storytelling. Anecdotes are naturally occurring stories about a single incident. They are usually more unguarded and practical than basic instructions and can answer many questions. They allow people to disclose sensitive information without attribution or blame. Thus hidden knowledge surfaces and becomes available in ways it could not otherwise have done.

The 30 attendees were divided into groups of approximately six and had to answer some questions by telling stories from their own experiences. Some prompts were given to get us going. These included:

- You meet a colleague at a conference who has just been appointed in a similar position as you. He asks you what was the most significant situation you were faced with during your first 100-days in your position?
- What course would you recommend to a potential successor? Tell how this course helped you in your job?



A story is generally more interesting than a manual so it is easier to keep someone's attention and it puts the learning into a practical context i.e. it shows what this instruction looks like in a real life situation, or why and how a course would benefit you. The narrator also reveals more than what he/she may have written in a manual so tacit knowledge is shared and everyone benefits.

It was a very interesting new angle to knowledge sharing and we went away feeling better equipped to mentor those taking over from us.

Kansas Public Library – Gives new meaning to the term large print!



Picture submitted by Amanda Franken (PWC)



INTRODUCING OUR NEW SLIS COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2009/10

Yvonne Halland Strategic Information Resources Coordinator CSIR Information Services

As a new Library Science graduate from the University of Pretoria, I started my career in the Serials Division of the CSIR Library in 1973. In 1976 I decided to broaden my horizons and went to London where I did an 18-month stint in a small theological library, being everything from cataloguer to tea lady! I was awed when I first touched a book published in the nineteenth century until I discovered they had some eighteen and seventeenth century ones as well! But, having been offered a good job back in South Africa, I returned to the CSIR where I worked as head of the Serials Division until 1981.

Then followed a period of fifteen years during which I gained valuable experience in time management, human resource management and getting the most out of a limited budget – being a full-time mother to two lively boys! However, during this time I kept the proverbial “finger in the pie” through regular part-time, contract work for the CSIR in various capacities.

In 1997 I returned to full time employment as head of the Document Delivery Services, and in 2005 was appointed as Strategic Information Resources Coordinator, charged with the implementation of an expanded electronic information resources programme for the CSIR’s fledgling virtual library. (I am so enthusiastic about my job that I’ve been called “E-vonne”!)

Professionally I have served on the LIASA ILL interest Group committee and am currently a member of the committee of the Sub-Saharan Africa Chapter of the Special Libraries Association (SLA). In 2008 I was appointed to the board of, WorldWideScience.org a very exciting new joint venture between the British Library and the US Dept of Energy’s Office for Scientific and Technical Information (OSTI), linking national and international scientific resources through one portal. When I’m not busy in the “virtual” world, I enjoy the real world out there through cycling, photography and doing interior decorating.



“To move ahead you need to believe in yourself...have conviction in your beliefs and the confidence to execute those beliefs.” Author unknown





MAUREEN RUSSELL
Account Manager
DOWJONES

I am Scottish and have been living and working in South Africa for 13.5 years. I was born in Edinburgh and educated at Perth High School and later Perth Technical College where I studied Economics, Tax, Law and Management Accounting.

I worked for the Bank of Scotland, later HOBS and now Lloyds TSB, for a number of years and when I left to make South Africa my home I was in the position of Regional Manager New Business Development and

Manil Kanniappen
Head: Mintek Library

I am currently employed as Head of Mintek's Library. I obtained a B.A. and Higher Diploma in Library Science at the University of KZN and a B.Bibl Honours Degree from the University of Johannesburg. I have been in the information industry for nineteen years. My experience spans around all areas of library work from information searching to library management.

Nico Harmse
Sasol Infonet Consultant.

I am currently working at Sasol Technology as Sasol Infonet Consultant.

I completed my National Diploma in Library and Information Practice at Technicon Pretoria now TUT in 1994, followed by a BTECH Library and Information Science in 1997. I have completed course work for MTECH Library and Information Science with UNISA and I am currently studying BTECH Knowledge Management with TUT.

I have worked at various institutions within the information industry. I worked as an Information Specialist at the University of Pretoria, Manager: Document Delivery at the

Marketing. In 1996 I joined Reuters the new agency as an Account Manager involved with new media products and solutions. In 1999 I moved to Factiva and subsequently to Dow Jones in 2006 as an Account Manager for Dow Jones Solutions in Africa.

My hobbies are travelling, socialising with friends, reading, and last year I visited the Arctic to see Polar bears and to Kosi Bay to see turtles. I live in Lonehills, Fourways.

My work experience has been mainly in the mining and metallurgical sectors. I am currently attempting an M.Phil Degree in Information Management. Special projects include the SARIMS project, I also serve on the SANRIC consortium as leader of the Skills Development Task Team, and I have been newly appointed to Mintek's Diversity Forum and Mintek's Grading Committee.

HSRC, Gauteng Provincial Government as a Library assistant and acting librarian and the Department of Education and Training Media Services.

My achievements to date include: the Factiva project team of the year award 2006, Sasol Infonet Operations team of the year 2006/2007, a certificate of recognition for excellence in all we do in 2007 and 2008 respectively.

My fields of interest are digitisation, webpage design, information management and knowledge management. My hobbies include movies, art, reading and floral arrangement.



IMPORTANT DATES TO DIARISE SLIS MEMBERS MEETINGS 2009

- 24th June 2009
- 26th August 2009
- 29th October 2009

Venues for the meetings will be communicated to members in due course.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2009/10

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Your contributions are very important to us and you are welcome to send them to the editor: Maphefo @ maphefom@mintek.co.za



To move ahead you need to believe in yourself...have conviction in your beliefs and the confidence to execute those beliefs." Author unknown





THE CAUSE YOU SERVE VERSUS GREENER PASTURES

Opinion piece by Mthetheli Baqwa.

According to former Director General (DG) of the Department of Communications Ms. Lyndall Shope-Mafole, "*The cause you serve*" is the title of a book based on the Second World War. It is an old book that I could not find in the Johannesburg Public Library's catalogue. During the PNC on ISAD's (Presidential National Commission on Information Society and Development) strategic planning workshop earlier this year, Lyndall, at the time still the DG, was sharing her insights on serving the people of South Africa. She also recommended a book titled "*Who will cry when you die*" by Robin S. Sharma. Amazon.com reviews the book as follows:-

"Offering 101 simple solutions to life's most frustrating challenges, best selling author and life leadership guru Robin Sharma will show you exactly how to recreate your life so that you feel strikingly happy, beautifully fulfilled and deeply peaceful. Specific lessons include how to discover your calling, see your troubles as blessings, enjoy the path, not just the rewards and live fully so you can die happy. This is a truly remarkable book that you will treasure for a lifetime"

Lyndall's insights opened my eyes regarding so many of my efforts in searching for so-called greener pastures. Since all the efforts were in vain and after hearing from Lyndall, I immediately adopted "the cause you serve" as an attitude to career development. When I searched for the meaning of "greener pastures" on the World Wide Web, one site defined it as "any place or condition that is more favourable or beneficial". TheFreeDictionary.com defines greener pastures as "a better or more exciting job or place." In my view, an exciting job can be determined by money matters and exciting place by the culture of the organisation, its people and infrastructure such as an open plan office.

In my opinion, greener pastures determine the cause one would like to serve. Often when I chat to my friends and previous colleagues, they would say "My friend, I need a new job". To me that is always a clue that their current jobs does not entail greener pastures. I have personally learnt some lessons about the "greener pastures" approach to career development such as closing of the library or liquidation of the company.

A few days ago when I took my car for a service, I was chatting to a certain young car sales consultant who was not happy about the cause he is serving. He described the cause he is serving as awful. He mentioned that new car prices will be increased next month and that he would prefer to be deployed to second-hand cars division because new cars would not sell well. Librarians too could be facing similar challenges if the level of reading and request for information drops down. It's the battles that a librarian is always fighting.

Some of my friends who are working for the private sector always argue that government is not delivering and hence they hold government jobholders in contempt. In obedience to the cause I serve, I feel at home when delivering government projects related to Information Society Development.

Ladies and gentlemen, please lend me a copy of "*The cause you serve*".



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