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And They Were There -- Reports of Meetings -- MLA, and SLA

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values clarification techniques, which involve open discussion to determine values more fundamental than those first voiced, which tend to be more hackneyed, socially approved, and socially expected.

values theory techniques, which stem from operations research, employ quantitative valuations of the qualitative values used in decision-making.

shared values techniques, which try to identify common, overlapping values among groups of employees.

Group process valuation techniques—examples include:

organizational development, which is an entire discipline devoted to values-based organization transformation.

support groups, which should be centered on specific values.

valuing in group decision-making, which involves the verbalization, identification, and prioritization of conflicting values within an organization.

discussion groups, which involve the discussion of controversial books, articles, advertisements, and/or events. The discussion can be couched as an academic exercise, though most employees will openly furnish significant information on the values that they hold most strongly.

Values monitoring techniques—examples include:

individual self-monitoring of performance against specific values.

group self-monitoring of performance against specific values.

manager monitoring of employees' performance against specific values.

It is in a manager's interest to test and/or monitor certain behavior, because it identifies and measures convergence and divergence of values. For example, team members who consistently choose to eat lunch alone or with outsiders rather than with their co-workers or team members may not place team values sufficiently high in times of crisis. Alternatively, staff members who consistently choose not to share information with their managers and/or peers may not place organizational values sufficiently high even in normal times.

Values training techniques—effective values training should approach values in the following ways:

cognitive, which involves understanding the variety and priorities of values at work in any specific situation.

affective, which involves understanding how values affect different players and the consequences of choosing alternative valuing in decision-making.

Values feedback techniques—an example is values analysis, which involves the reporting of observable values in decision-making to the decision-makers.

Values recognition techniques—recognition systems should be timely, behavior-based, situation-specific, and public. When recognition is behavior-based, colleagues easily accept and readily acknowledge the recognition given others. Some values recognition techniques are:

immediate value-based recognition systems.

annual value-based reviews, which should reflect the accumulation of immediate value-based recognition systems (the prior point), so that nothing is forgotten and nothing is discounted because of potential later disfavor.

career value-based planning systems, which allow employees to know which values to develop and/or emphasize so that their resultant performances will be given significant recognition in the future.

Techniques to reward values—these include:

value-based reward systems.

competence-based work-learning progression systems, which tie compensation and title to progression through quantifiable levels in various, selected valued competencies.

Techniques to assist valuing in dry runs—these techniques allow employees to practice applying organizationally approved values, in the expectation that repetition will familiarize them with these values and that they will integrate them within their own value systems.

Techniques to assist in the maturation and change of values—these values-based techniques help younger employees move from an arena where individual performance is all that matters, to an arena where the quality of total organizational performance is of paramount importance.

And They Were There

Report of Meetings—MLA, and SLA

Column Editor: Sever Bordeianu (University of New Mexico) <sbordeia@unm.edu>


Report by Ramune Kubilius (Collection Development / Special Projects Librarian, Galter Health Sciences Library, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL) <r-kubilius@northwestern.edu>

The theme of the annual MLA meeting, held May 19-24 in Phoenix, AZ, was "Transformations A-Z." There were 2,292 attendees registered for the meeting (as of May 22nd). An entry in the online "Phoenix Diaries" of 2005/2006 MLA President, M.J. Tooley on April 24th may have predicted the sentiments of many attendees "In my almost 20 years in MLA, I have groused with the best of them about program overlap and the many things that occur at the same time. But never like this year." The MLA sections' sponsored programming was color coded by theme: Collections/Resources, Health and Healing, Research Methods, Education and Outreach, Leadership and Professional Development. Contributed papers varied across tracks with potential interest: scholarly publishing

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ing and the role of institutional repositories; dealing with archives and gifts; patient safety (and the role of libraries); knowledge management; transforming skills in a perpetually changing information landscape; ontologies, taxonomies, classifications, thesauri and terminologies; evidence-based x (public health, nursing, etc.); bioinformatics...

Dr. Atul Gawande, academic surgeon, New Yorker and New England Journal of Medicine columnist, and author of Complications, in his McGovern lecture keynote on Sunday, addressed the uncertainties of medicine. The Janet Doe lecturer on Monday, Dr. Julie McGowan, talked about “Swimming with the Sharks” (taking risks), using her scuba diving hobby as the backdrop. The National Library of Medicine’s annual online users meeting and its update session, as usual, were very well attended. News “tidbits” about NLM’s many activities and accomplishments were highlighted, including: the latest PubMed Central statistics, the dailymed.nlm.nih.gov alert of new FDA approved drugs, and news that in 2006, NLM has converted from microform to digital preservation. The lively dialog (first begun virtually prior to the MLA meeting) continues between librarians and NLM, concerning proposed changes in the subheading schemes used in MEDLINE.

Attendees were welcomed on Saturday evening into the exhibits space by Native American Hoop Dancers. Vendors mentioned that they liked the exhibit hall hours, since, following MLA tradition, the hall was not open when official MLA programs (keynotes, the business meetings, etc.) were taking place. A librarian from Dubai who was starting a medical library from the ground up, indicated he would have liked longer exhibit hours. Many vendors and publishers in the exhibit hall were familiar faces from their active participation in Charleston Conferences — some already have made reservations for Nov. 2006 at their favorite boutique hotels in Charleston! Some MLA exhibitors were first-timers, some companies have taken over smaller companies’ products, and a few companies have ventured into the biomedical arena relatively recently — e.g., ProQuest (now a global distributor for Evidence Matters); Protein Lounge; Visual Histology.

One end of the exhibit hall served as a very large poster display area. Sessions were allotted only two one-hour program segments, so many attendees visited and viewed the posters on their own time. Collection-related topics (often tied to outreach and public services) abounded: book club electives for medical students; core nursing resources for point of care; library and curriculum e-resources; electronic content, journal management and access systems; integrating and promoting medical podcasts into the library collection; virtual medical libraries, to name just a few. The Technology Showcase highlighted new technologies/products, such as PsycARTICLES’ Historical Content; Enduser: Athens and others.

The conference newsletter, Daily Transformer, paid tribute to many well-known MLA members who passed away in 2005/2006. About 50% of MLA’s members are now 50-59 years of age, and plans are already underway to recruit “new blood” to the profession. 68 students registered for the conference, and it was gratifying to see that the health sciences library profession is not all “gray.” New attendees enthusiastically attended the First Timers/Newcomers breakfast and seemed very adept at networking, with or without the aid of the Membership Committee’s “Colleague Connection.” MLA has produced a DVD extolling the virtues of medical librarianship, a New Members SIG has been approved, a Web-based toolkit, MLA 101 was created, the Virtual Student listerv is extremely active (many students seek job listings there).

MLA and section committees annually select recipients for awards, and core lists were popular in 2006. The Louise Darling Medal for Distinguished Achievement in Collection Development in the Health Sciences was awarded for the “Core Public Health Journals Project” compiled by many members of the Public Health / Health Administration Section. The Collection Development Section’s Daniel T. Richards Prize in Collection Development went for the “Core Videos in Dementia” list, compiled by staffs at the Alzheimer’s Association Green-Field Library in Chicago.

The MLA conference ended mid-day Wednesday after a three-hour plenary session, “Integrating Reference Information into the Electronic Health Record: Practice and Standards.” The 2007 MLA annual meeting will take place in Philadelphia, home to many U.S. historical events and publishing houses. MLA has converted to an online meeting evaluation survey form in 2006. It would be interesting to know what most drew attendees — meeting location, keynote speakers, continuing education classes, committee/association responsibilities, contributed papers, posters, exhibit hall or social and networking opportunities.

"SLA's 2006 Annual Conference Explored How Tradition and Transformation Converge to Create a New State of the Information Profession"
Baltimore Conference Center, June 11-14, 2006.

Report by Ramune Kubilius (Collection Development / Special Projects Librarian, Galter Health Sciences Library, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL) rkubilius@northwestern.edu

There were 5,844 attendees that gathered at the Baltimore Conference Center for the Special Libraries Association (SLA) conference, held June 11-14. SLA members accounted for 2,519 of the attendees, while 1,060 were non-members and 1,919 were exhibitors. INFO-EXPO exhibitors also were up this year from 235 last year to 305.

The exhibiting companies bought 480 booth spaces this year, compared to 441 last year. SLA advertised locally in business publications and on city buses, celebrated the first birthday of its online continuing education system “Click U” and announced a new CI certificate program.

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Conference keynote speakers were the well-rounded political journalist Gwen Ifill (opening session) and WSJ technology writer, Walter Mossberg (closing session), in which the speaker boldly talked about the “Soviet ministries” monopolizing technology industries and the simple fact that “The Internet is a grid...into which a great number of devices will be plugged — and people will take from it however they need”). INFO-EXPO (exhibit hall) hours were generous (there were exhibitors from North America, Europe and even China). Evening receptions and tours took attendees to the Baltimore Aquarium, Westminster Hall (where Edgar Allan Poe is buried), and to various libraries from Baltimore as far as Washington, D.C.

The proximity of the meeting to Washington, D.C. and major cities in the Northeast ensure highly qualified speakers from government, academic, trade, publishing and other sectors. As usual, attendees had many choices of sessions to attend (and new catch phrases to learn) on diverse topics: digitization, open access (one session was sponsored by the new SLA Government Information Division), RSS and collaborative applications, millennials (and Wake Forest University Library’s involvement with avatars, got game, instant messaging...), negative clinical trial results (reasons they aren’t published and workaround solutions to find information), ontologies, taxonomies & search, touch down suits (digital and physical, as defined by Johns Hopkins University libraries), content buying business models, systems that are “vendor neutral” or even “agnosti-,” competencies, new leadership challenges.

There are quite a few interesting comments and insights (particularly on sessions one might not have attended) on the SLA blog site, http://slablogger.typepad.com/sla_2006_conference_blog/. Among the conference impressions one heard in talking to those trying to choose sessions to attend: “Why was there no sound recording (of sessions)?” A number of the SLA division-sponsored sessions plan to or already have links to presentations on their Websites. Post-conference impressions? One SLA blogger, Jill Hurst-Wahl, on June 21, 2006 wrote: “Well, the conference is over and everyone is probably settling back into work, sifting through piles of email, and if you’re like me, feeling like the conference was ages ago already. With the announcement that Scott Adams will be a keynote speaker at next year’s conference, I am very excited for Denver 2007! It sounds as if they’ve got lots of exciting sessions in the planning stages, including two that really captured my attention: “The Science of Beer” and “Vendor Speed Dating!”” Only 350-odd days to go!”

The SLA 2006 Annual Conference was lively and diverse, addressing the various specialties of attendees who work in many types of professional areas. Many presentations were professionally serious, while others featured at least playful or tongue-in-cheek titles or descriptions. It would be interesting to find out why several continuing education sessions cancelled — was it a case of presenter cancellations or outdated themes and topics that weren’t able to draw the registrations hoped for and expected? Although SLA overseas members have other conference choices, a number of international conference attendees travelled great distances (and probably some had to exped personal funds. It can be concluded that SLA Conference programming still fits the bill and conference registration remains solid and healthy. The global “village” may be more technological, but in-person attendance at conferences still seems to be a professional priority. 😊

Little Red Herrings — Vertigo, and a Void

by Mark Y. Herring (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herrimg@winthrop.edu>

Recently an acquaintance sent me the Friends newsletter from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (UMA). As the budget came to its close last year, the budget line called “Education and Reference Materials” (ERM), served to fund the 29 public academic libraries in Massachusetts. It supplements the budget lines at individual universities. The ERM line showed a 64% reduction, from $14 million to $5 million.

What makes this a story worth retelling is that from these funds come library materials, not equipment or salaries. In other words, this is the budget line that helps to supply the lifeblood of any library: books, serials, periodicals, and research databases. UMA’s share of the cut for the year was $3 million, reducing the overall acquisition budget for that library by 56%! Misery loves company so the entire state of Massachusetts should have been overjoyed. It sounds all too familiar. Libraries at states all over the country have attenuated state support of higher education.

As any librarian knows, a reduction of this size means having to make hard decisions about people and materials, about hours and services. For UMA it meant proposing to sell off rare books to make up the difference. In states closer to home, North Carolina and Tennessee, for example, libraries of all types are reducing, curtailing, contracting, and, in some cases, closing because of tight budgets.

These budget cuts are critical because larger libraries, particularly those that are classified as research, may be one of a half dozen institutions holding certain journals. Reducing that number means reducing the number of places where that title may be found. Not only do such cuts hamstring the research process, but buying patterns in libraries are such that what you put off this year will likely cost you twice as much next year. Furthermore, because libraries purchase materials that are revised often, one is faced with buying not one, but two or three back years when the budget situation returns to normal.

Some readers are doubtless thinking, “What about the Internet? Surely that has reduced costs.” I would be the last to argue that the Internet is not helpful. But just like the prediction thirty years ago that microfilm was going to make every library the size of a shoe box, so also the Internet has not turned out to be the panacea everyone thought. Since I have harangued on this theme more than once, I’ll limit my remarks to three points.

First, the Internet, while containing much information, has only a fraction of the overall total: about 20% of all journals, and less than 5% of all books. Bear in mind that access to most books and journals require a steep admission price. Second, the reliable, corroborated research on the Internet — for example, the very kind of information college students are really looking for — is not free by a long shot. It is, in fact, very expensive. Third, because there is no quality control on the Internet, what information is available is a mixed bag of truth, verisimilitude, outright lies and the most venomous hatred known to man (and I haven’t even mentioned pornography, the Web’s chief content). Anyone can put up a Website on any topic. Ignorance of the subject matter is no barrier. With more than eight billion pages on the ‘net, it appears we are witnessing the triumph of narcissism over information.

Scores of others reasons exist why the Internet is no substitute for a library. It’s also why when you think of good, local causes, you should consider the local libraries in your community. Obviously, I have the name of a good library in mind, but all of us who work in libraries share in this matter of budgets, and all of us need financial help. Libraries have acted as our intellectual museums, those places where the best ideas of human creativity and ingenuity are forever preserved for all present and future generations. But we cannot preserve all this information single-handedly.

Triumps are generally true: you don’t always know what you’ve got till it’s gone. Or as Yeats is said to have put it, “Things reveal themselves in their passing.” Libraries may appear to some as anachronisms, historical oddities, in our fast-food, sound-bite, cell phone world. But if they disappear, in part or in whole, the subsequent vacuum will leave a void so wide and deep only vertigo will ensue. Don’t let this happen here. Support your local libraries with more than words!

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