

SLA Alignment Process Overview

Introduction

For almost 100 years, SLA has served as the leading association representing special librarians and information specialists around the world. As SLA prepares for its second century of service, it does so amid sweeping technological changes that are not only reshaping the information industry, but redefining the role that the Association and the profession will play in the future.

The need to generate a sharper focus on the perceived value of the Association and the profession is even more pressing as SLA prepares for its centennial in 2009. This significant milestone provides a unique opportunity to establish a shared vision for the future and the role of information professionals in it.

To respond effectively, SLA has embarked on a thorough examination to bring clarity and unity to the core identity and values of the Association and the profession. We are working with a multidisciplinary team of research and communication professionals, led by the international communication firm, Fleishman-Hillard, and supported by futurist Andy Hines of Social Technologies and the information analytics firm, Outsell Inc.

This alignment project will not only help refine our current positioning in the marketplace, but provide a framework for discussing the profession and the Association in a clear, compelling and cohesive voice.

Principles of Alignment

"Companies that enjoy enduring success have core values and a core purpose that remain fixed while their business strategies and practices endlessly adapt to a changing world."

– Collins & Porras (1996), *Building your Company's Vision*, Harvard Business Review

As the quote above suggests, organization alignment does not demand rigidity or inflexibility to be effective. On the contrary, successful alignment is about striking a balance between a fixed identity and a dynamic approach to stimulating progress and growth. Specifically, the discipline of alignment can be defined by the following guiding principles:

Alignment is a discipline for thinking, communicating and behaving as one enterprise connected by a unified mission

- Focus and cohesion to drive organizational outcomes
- Who you are, what you stand for, what you deliver
- Clarity, Credibility, Consistency

Alignment from the inside-out: mission, vision, values

- The essential truth of the organization and profession
- The fundamental idea – core purpose, ethos and values; essential truth of being
- A promise of value that builds a relationship with stakeholders, securing preference, loyalty and trust
- A position that is relevant, differentiated and credible

Key Objectives of Alignment Initiative

Several key objectives are guiding the alignment process, including:

- **Examine** – Conduct a thorough examination of the future roles of librarians and information professionals amidst a new and evolving information landscape
- **Explore** – Explore SLA's current position in the marketplace and define a platform—based on sound scientific research—that is relevant, differentiated and deliverable and will stand the test of time
- **Develop** – Develop a strategic framework that underscores SLA's value for existing members and enables the Association to appeal to a broad spectrum of information professionals
- **Align** – Bring alignment to SLA's diverse activities and offerings through a relevant and compelling platform that expresses the core values of the Association and the information profession as whole
- **Identify** – Identify the tools, programs and materials that uniquely express and amplify SLA's positioning to members, employers, partners, regulators and the public, and highlight the value of information professionals in today's information economy

The Alignment Process

As part of the alignment initiative, we will employ a four-step methodology, outlined below, to identify a clear positioning platform that expresses the core values of the Association and the profession. This process, which will rely heavily on primary and secondary research, will empower our members to align their skills, knowledge and experience with evolving expectations of the organizations of tomorrow, while ensuring SLA continues to provide the services and support you need to be successful.

