

SLA Asian Chapter Closing Remarks



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Closing Remarks SLA Asian Conference

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

It has been an honor and a privilege to be with you this week. It has been exciting to watch so much information being shared among so many committed professionals. You work in many different locations, for many different kinds of organizations. But with all of your differences, you share an important set of goals.

You want to find the best ways to get the right information to the right people. You want to harness the change around us and use it to turn information into knowledge. You want to find the most effective ways to get that knowledge to the people who need it so your organization can make the best possible decisions. And you know that when we gather together and learn from one another, our profession, our organization, and we as individuals benefit mightily.

Each of us is an important link in a chain of knowledge that encircles the globe . . . and when we gather together, we strengthen those links.

It was not so long ago that most organizations viewed librarians and information professionals as gatekeepers. How times have changed!

Now we know that information that sits alone, locked away in isolation, is information stripped of power. Nearly everything we have discussed at this conference has a common thread--how we can empower information . . . how we can efficiently and effectively get information out and bring more information in. Technology has allowed us to use information as the force to break down borders and leap over boundaries . . . all from our desktops.

Imagine reading this conference program [hold up program] 10 or 20 years ago. How very confused we would be! Now imagine looking at it 10 or 20 years in the future. How quaint it will seem!

Technology surrounds us with so much information that it can be difficult to see the way forward. Accenture concluded that middle managers spend more than a quarter of their time looking for the information they need to do their jobs--and that when they find it, it is often wrong. That means that valuable human capital is being squandered--and that critical corporate decisions are being made on the basis of bad information.

Good decisions can only be made from sound knowledge. And that is where humans beat technology every time--because only humans can transform information into the knowledge that organizations need to compete successfully in the 21st Century marketplace. In these economic times, no organization can afford to act without the justification of properly vetted knowledge.

That means that librarians and information professionals still hold the keys to knowledge. You are the key to your organization's ability to quickly . . . constantly . . . and successfully gather reliable information, analyze it, and turn it into knowledge. To do so, however, means committing yourself to constant learning. And the best way to learn is from each other--from other people in your profession, across the continent and around the globe.

At SLA, we link together information professionals from all over the world so you can learn from one another--and learn to change together. In this way, each member of SLA truly becomes a citizen of the world--the world of knowledge. That's our job, and it's been our job for 100 years. That's why SLA is proud to support ICoSLA and the SLA Asian Chapter with funding and speakers so that we could all come together here and learn from each other.

SLA is the only global organization for information professionals and their strategic partners. We have some 11,000 members in 75 countries. But we want to increase that number. Thanks to our new dues structure--which we put in place after discussions during SLA's Annual Conference in Seattle with members from Australia, Hong Kong, India, and Japan--we will grow. You asked for it, and we listened. We expect many positive results--including increased membership here in Asia, which will benefit you and all of SLA.

One of SLA's most important roles is helping information professionals demonstrate the value they bring to their organizations--and the high price organizations pay for acting without the knowledge information professionals make possible.

By joining SLA, each member is part of a local network but also connects to something much larger. SLA members have unparalleled opportunities to connect with other information professionals around the world . . . to share ideas and experiences, learn new skills and harness today's technology, just as we have done here.

When I think about the past few days...[Janice, here I hope you can ad lib a bit about the important learning opportunities you have witnessed and other impressions from the conference.]

Continuous learning is critical to our ability to make change our asset. You have heard a great deal at this meeting about SLA's online Click University, which offers an amazing array of professional development opportunities. Right now, we have:

- o Self-paced certificate programs in Competitive Intelligence and Knowledge Management.

- o Individual courses to learn new skills and gain new insights, online seminars, even a quarterly review of the newest in Internet tools.
- o Access to more than a thousand books in special e-libraries on leadership, management and knowledge management.

SLA's online Innovation Laboratory lets our members try out the newest Web 2.0 technologies in a safe place.

- o We even have a self-paced program called "23 Things," where our members can commit just one hour a week to learn and practice 23 new technology tools.

SLA has important career tools, too, such as our list of "Competencies for Information Professionals," which will help you define your value within your organization by outlining the specific skill sets of information professionals.

Most important, SLA connects thousands of information professionals around the globe, in person and online.

- o SLA's annual conference and INFO-EXPO is one of the most content-rich professional gatherings you will find anywhere. In 2008, more than 5,000 attended from 6 continents. And even if you cannot join us in person, much of the conference is available to you online. This is a wonderful way to keep up with professional developments around the world.

- o SLA's network of chapters--like our wonderful Asian Chapter--creates regional opportunities for learning and networking. This conference is an excellent example.

- o SLA's subject- or practice-specific groups bring together like individuals to learn and network in depth.

- o SLA's discussion lists, wikis, blogs, and other social networking tools bring members together to learn and network in various media of their choice.

SLA provides you with all the network and information you need to embrace change and make it yours. We have heard a lot this week about the importance of change . . . about the new doors open to all of us. I would like to end with some words from Barack Obama, the President-elect of the United States whose campaign theme was Change.

"Change," says Obama, "will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."

And you, ladies and gentlemen, are the ones we at SLA have been waiting for. We need you to be part of us so we can learn from you and you can learn from us.

Thank you.