



PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLKIT FOR CHAPTERS AND DIVISIONS

INTRODUCTION

SLA's Public Relations Toolkit is designed to provide chapter and division PR chairs with practical and ready-to-use information. It is also designed to provide real-life examples of PR success stories from chapters and divisions for you to imitate or use as a launching pad for your own efforts.

Your connection with PR at SLA headquarters should be:

- 1) The Association PR Chair
- 2) Cara Schatz, Director, Public Relations

Public Relations for your chapter should be informed of and reflect the values espoused by the Association. In 2003, the SLA Board of Directors adopted the following mission, vision, and core values, which are part of all Association activities and practices.

Vision

The Special Libraries Association is the global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners.

Mission

The Special Libraries Association promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives.

Core Values

Leadership: Strengthening our roles as information leaders in our organizations and in our communities, including shaping information policy.

Service: Responding to our clients' needs, adding qualitative and quantitative value to information services and products.

Innovation and Continuous Learning: Embracing innovative solutions for the enhancement of services and intellectual advancement within the profession.

Results and Accountability: Delivering measurable results in the information economy and our organizations. The Association and its members are expected to operate with the highest level of ethics and honesty.

Collaboration and Partnering: Providing opportunities to meet, communicate, collaborate, and partner within the information industry and the business community.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PLANNING

Below are some basic steps to help you get started:

- Establish a PR Chair and/or Committee to oversee PR efforts. Consider having a minimum term of two years to ensure consistency and follow-through.
- Define your objectives: For example, you may want to promote a better understanding of the profession or the contributions of information professionals.
- Define the message: What do you want to say? If you had to say it in less than 30 seconds, what would it be?
- Define the target audience: Who are you trying to reach? Is it business professionals, media or professional associations with the same industry focus as your division?
- Define the medium: What media do these people read for news and information? Chapters may want to focus on regional newspapers, business papers, and radio while divisions may target more heavily on trade association publications and discussion lists.
- Develop a strategy: What are the steps you need to take? For example, you would need to develop a list of media contacts and task chart with deadlines for getting things done. Position the chapter/division leadership as spokespersons, including the Association President and Executive Director.
- Identify a spokesperson: Ideally this should be the chapter/division president, division chair or other Executive Board member. Select someone who is well-spoken and can think on their feet. They will be responsible for keeping up with association news and positions on developing issues within the industry.
- Coordinate with your employer: It is always a good idea to check with your organization's PR or Marketing dept. re: any policies for communicating with the media, particularly if the event or story involves or takes place at your company. If so, it may be worth partnering with them to gain positive publicity.
- Coordinate with chapter/division: Make sure you know what is happening within your unit and watch for events/awards, etc., that are newsworthy. Examples include awards/scholarships, workshops, and visits of association leadership.
- Report results to Association: For SLA to keep track of public relations successes, please send a summary of your PR event or campaign and the outcome, including copies of or links to placements (i.e., the news clippings). This information should be emailed to the attention of SLA Communications Director Cara Battaglini at cbattaglini@sla.org.

KEY PR TOOLS

There are many interlocking public relations tools for promoting events, awards, and other milestones. Additionally, there are other effective ways to promote your chapter and division activities, member achievements and the value of information professionals.

Brochures

Design a brochure or flyer highlighting key information about your chapter/division. You can also use the SLA brochure and design an insert with information on how to join and who to contact about programs, membership, mentoring, awards, scholarships, etc. Convert it to a PDF that can be posted to and printed from your website so people will have key information at their fingertips should they decide to join or want to learn more.

FOR EXAMPLE: [Social Science Division \(DSOC\) brochure](#).

Professional Partnerships

Contact the leadership of other information associations and share information about events and workshops. Provide links to one another's websites and event calendars. You could also work together on larger programs that might require several speakers. Divisions can also partner with trade associations related to their industry. For example, the News Division might want to invite members of the Society of Professional Journalists to a workshop or event that has a speaker they may find interesting.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Share event announcements and press releases with your local chapters of the American Society of Information Science & Technology (ASIST), Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP), and the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL).
- Other related associations might also include Women in Communications, American Society for Training and Development, and human resource associations. As key people in crafting job descriptions and making initial hiring decisions, they are key target audience for communicating the value of our profession.

Continuing Education

Information professionals are not the only ones who want to keep up to date on the latest search tools, techniques, and trends. Such courses are often popular in community education programs. Chapters could plan a basic "Search Engine Savvy" workshop and promote it to anyone in the local area who wants to attend, while a division could develop an industry-focused pathfinder that could be

emailed to professional clients as a marketing piece. We teach new skills and develop tools to help internal clients. Other professionals could also learn from us.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- The Architecture, Engineering, Construction and Design Caucus could poll their membership to collect a list of helpful websites related to the industry and create list which could be sent to trade publications such as the American Institute of Architects or the American Society of Civil Engineers. Lists could be tailored to each publication and audience.
- Chapters could develop a panel of three or four Web searching experts (culled from their own members) to develop a half day workshop or evening class on effective internet searching for business people. This could be offered directly to the public (maybe held at a public library) or through a community education program.

Press Releases

Because of the visibility and opportunity that press releases provide, we will cover these in depth below.

PRESS RELEASES / CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE

Basics

A press release should relate genuine news and tie into local and industry angles whenever possible. Use facts, not hype. Weave your chapter or division or the association into the body of what you write.

Editors cut from the bottom of a story so write in inverted pyramid style: the most important information should appear in the first paragraph. Be sure to include Who, What, Where, When, and Why.

List contact name(s), phone number(s), and email address(es) where people can be easily located at the top of the release with the date and notation "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" and the correct release date at the top of the first page.

Releases should be limited to two pages and be clear, factual and neat. Always proofread! Read it backwards to spot grammar and punctuation errors as mistakes will distract from your message. Use active voice, subject-verb construction, and conversational language.

Define acronyms the first time they are used and abbreviate afterwards. For example: Special Libraries Association (SLA)

Polish

Make the editor's job as easy as possible. Double-space and use a wide margin for easy, clear editing.

Note if additional information such as bios, brochures and photos are available. Offer to send separately upon request as some email spam filters might otherwise block attachments.

Be sure to identify photos with the subject, news release title, and your association name. Be sure to identify all of people in the photo, along with their titles, and the event (including date and location).

Quotes from the head of the chapter/division or person responsible for the program are important and add interest to the story. Include people's SLA titles.

Opinions should be conveyed in quotes. Carefully edit your release so that all text other than attributed quotes is fact-based.

The end of the press release should always include the SLA "boilerplate" (a general statement defining the Association):

About SLA

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) is a nonprofit global organization for innovative information professionals and their strategic partners. SLA serves more than 11,000 members in 83 countries in the information profession, including corporate, academic, and government information specialists. SLA promotes and strengthens its members through learning, advocacy, and networking initiatives. For more information, visit www.sla.org.

You may also want to add the full name of your chapter/division and it's website address.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Establishing Media Contacts

Develop a list of appropriate media contacts by checking the editorial boxes of print publications, as well as TV and radio websites. Most will have contact information for submitting press releases.

Media outlets to include: local daily newspapers, local weekly newspapers, local ethnic newspapers, radio stations, TV stations,

local and regional trade publications, and related organizations with discussion lists, newsletters or other publications.

For each publication or media outlet, make note of its deadlines. Typically, releases should always go out a minimum of 2 WEEKS before an event or earlier depending on the publication's publishing schedule (i.e., "editorial calendar").

TARGETING

Identify the Best Contacts

Be sure to target an appropriate contact, such as the business editor of your local newspaper or the producer of a particular radio show. Include their titles when contacting them in writing. Maintain a current list of reporters covering information issues, as well as those that cover your specific industry (e.g., medical, legal, etc.)

Match your release to the particular news person or news outlet. For a publication, target the appropriate section, department or editor. Note how articles are written, how long they are, and what type of subject matter the publication focuses on. For example, certain publications only write about individuals, while others write only about policy, and still others focus specifically on business.

Target your article to a local or industry issue or trend. Develop a news angle that is exciting or has a local or industry impact. For instance, write about 10 trends in the industry or region and how information professionals help their organizations stay ahead.

FOLLOW UP

Deadlines and Phone Follow Up

Make sure you know a publication's / media outlet's deadlines! Allow time for the editor or writer to follow up with questions or to ask for more information. Always have a prepared "elevator speech" as to what the angle is and why the story is worth running when you call.

As a general rule, the best time of day to call is before noon. Try to avoid calling print editors in the mid-afternoon when they're busy wrapping up stories for the day. Radio is usually on more of a rolling schedule but try not to call when your contact is on the air. TV production meetings usually take place at 9 AM so try to call earlier if possible.

WHAT'S NEWS?

Newsworthy Topics About Your Chapter/Division:

Anniversaries or association milestones;

Awards to the chapter/division or members;

Outstanding contributions of chapter/division members;

Annual conference, regional conference, awards banquets or special events;

Employment, salary or other statistics related to the profession;

Training programs and workshops;

Fundraising events or receipt of scholarships;

Visits of association leadership;

Trends or success stories;

Legislation (local, state or federal) affecting the provision of information;

Also, invite media people to your events or to tour interesting facilities. Calling the day of the event with a reminder about the great food being served is a good way to encourage them to come!

Ask Yourself These Questions:

Is your idea timely, local, interesting to the general public, new or different?

Will it change the future, affect the average person or is something few people know about?

Are the people involved community leaders, personalities or high-visibility citizens?

Does it relate to a hot news item or is the media already interested in the topic?

Is it cutting-edge or something few people know about? How will it affect the average person?

FOR EXAMPLE:

Below are citations to news about special libraries in mainstream or industry publications.

Do check the latest statistics and news on the SLA Website under Professional Development - Value of the Information Professional: <http://www.sla.org/content/learn/ipvalue/index.cfm>

“Saving collections and making them better is ‘really what I’m about,’ consultant says,” *Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 2008

“More firms create CI positions,” *The National Law Journal*, June 12, 2006

“Don’t Count Them Out,” *The American Lawyer*, July 1, 2005. <http://www.law.com/jsp/tal/PubArticleFriendlyTAL.jsp?id=1118912713678> (Requires free registration.)

“Career Center: Excellent careers for 2006,” *U.S. News & World Report*, January 5, 2006. http://www.usnews.com/usnews/biztech/articles/060105/5careers_excellent.htm

“The results are in: At Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc., Collaboration and Research Deliver Proven Results,” January 2005, *MetalMag*. (Check archives at www.metalmag.com)

“Special Librarians, ‘specialized’ niche,” *The Seattle Times*, February 15, 2004. http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/business/technology/2001858102_speciallibrarians15.html

“Librarians Manage Information at Monsanto, Mallinckrodt,” *St. Louis Business Journal*, November 22, 2002. <http://stlouis.bizjournals.com/stlouis/stories/2002/11/25/focus3.html>