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TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Public Relations Advisory Council

DATE: 8 June 2009

RE: PR Advisory Council Suggestions for How to Gain Member Support for and Promote External Messages of Strategic Alignment Initiative

Membership:

Jill Strand, Chair
Liz Blankson-Hemans (2007-09)
Shira Kavon (2007-09)
Heather O'Daniel (2008-2009)
David Shumaker (2008-09)
Libby Trudell (2009-2010)
Cara Schatz, SLA Staff
Ann Sweeny, Board Liaison

The Public Relations Advisory Council (PRAC) presented a report to the Board in May 2009 which detailed our progress over the last six months and suggested a new direction for an event replacing International Special Librarians Day (ISLD) to be held in October 2009. We appreciate the Board's feedback regarding PRAC's proposed direction and timing for this event.

Based on the Board's May 2009 vote to table the event until the Association's Strategic Alignment Initiative has been implemented, we have taken a step back to assess our broader goal, how it best fits in with the Association's Strategic Alignment Initiative timeline, and the manner in which PRAC can support and promote the Association. To this end, we are sharing with the Board our activities for the remainder of 2009.

Background: PRAC's main goal has been, and continues to be, advising the CEO and the Association's staff on the development and communication of an external message to promote the value of the profession, and what information professionals have to offer to organizational leaders, decision makers and the general business community.

Re-thinking International Special Librarians Day was initially seen as a good way to focus this external message. Members also wanted to be a part of a more coordinated effort at the Association level promoting the value of our profession on a broader scale.

The goal was to provide a framework and international messages that would succinctly convey our value to these key audiences. Hence, we focused our efforts on evaluating and reframing a concept for a new "Day" that could do this.

We started by updating the PR Toolkit and providing more formal training for incoming PR Chairs. We moved from there into examining concepts for a new ISLD that would focus on Information Ethics.

PRAC Chair Jill Strand presented this topic and idea at the 2008 Leadership Summit in Louisville, KY. From there we launched a Global Conversation on Information Ethics and moved into a year of gathering feedback from the membership through unit Ethics Ambassadors, town hall meetings, and an ethics summit at SLA 2008 Annual Conference in Seattle.

While a lot of valuable work has come out of the Global conversation on information ethics, the Strategic Alignment process indicated that this message had more "internal" value to members and wouldn't resonate as an "external" message to our target audiences. As a result we gave a joint presentation with Anne Caputo at the 2009 Leadership Summit in Savannah, GA which included a brainstorming session to help generate alternative language and give members a chance to participate in the process.

A New PR Model: Incorporating the feedback from members, the Board of Directors and the Alignment research, we've since realized that a "Day" to promote the profession to an external audience is perhaps premature, and may not be the best model for success at this point in time. The PR Advisory Council is well-positioned to support the alignment initiatives and bring this important work to the wider membership and then to external audiences through a more comprehensive PR campaign.

Short-Term/Internal Message (June –December 2009): In order for any external messages to succeed, we need to make sure our members have a chance to understand the information coming out of the Strategic Alignment and how it may direct where the Association is going. SLA leaders and members have been encouraged to review the research findings of the Alignment, but there is still an opportunity to take this a step farther to the broader membership. Going forward, PRAC would like to get to work brainstorming and creating tools and programs that will get members thinking about and speaking the new language of "Alignment" – some initial ideas include:

- PRAC members serving as Alignment Ambassadors training and communicating with PR Chairs about how to embrace this change.
- We could start and make regular posts to a blog about Alignment findings to help members understand its goals and build support for its initiatives.
- For the remainder of 2009 we will also continue to support PR efforts surrounding the Centennial and also offer support to the Information Ethics Advisory Council as they get started on their charge.

Long-Term/External Message (2010): Once the Association leadership and Strategic Alignment Team have agreed upon their messages, PRAC can assist with outlining and implementing a strategy for getting the word out to external audiences. This could include:

- Brainstorming ideas for how to reach specific audiences with specific messages.
- Drafting a timeline for rolling out messages.
- Discuss which models work best for which messages.
- Revisit the concepts of Information Ethics and Strategic Knowledge as the focus of a "Day" in relation to a larger framework
- Communicating regularly with Association and Alignment Leadership about possible ideas to ensure they fit in with the larger Association goals.

Prepared by: Jill Strand, Cara Schatz

Respectfully submitted: Public Relations Advisory Council