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TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Centennial Commission and 2009 Conference Planning Committee
DATE: 11 December 2009
RE: Final Report

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The Centennial Year is drawing to a close. By any standard the year-long celebration has been a great success! It was the culmination of planning begun three years ago in January 2007 when the Commission was appointed. The success reflects the foresight shown by then President Vargha in creating the Commission and the crucial and tremendous support given by 2008 President Abram and 2009 President Zamora subsequently. It also reflects the excellent and absolutely necessary support and involvement of the Association staff in providing the means to bring about the celebration. The strong support of the Boards for all three years was also critical to the success.

To recap: our vision was to use the Centennial celebration to make SLA members—and potential new members--proud to belong to this Association and to be in our profession. Our goal was to focus on our future, while at the same time commemorate our past. Another goal was to ensure that our units, especially chapters and divisions, actively participate in the celebration. We hoped to involve every single SLA member in the celebration in one way or another. The successful attainment of these goals was due not only to the hard work put in by the Commission members but also to the bright ideas and dedicated work of all the unit leaders, program planners, and the many, many members who helped in one way or another. This success was also due in no small part to the SLA vendor partners who participated in and helped sponsor many of the events.

We chose a single theme for the year and for the Annual Conference:

Information to Inspiration: Knowledge & Vision Shaping the Future

We wanted all of the events surrounding the Centennial year to promote our members and our profession to our constituents, our bosses, the professional world, and the public at large. We emphasized knowledge, vision, and leadership. From the outset we worked closely with the Board and staff to integrate the Alignment Project into our planning so that the Centennial celebration supported it and it supported the Centennial.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & INFO-EXPO

Although we scheduled various events throughout the year, clearly the major celebratory occasion was the Annual Conference in Washington, DC, 14-17 June 2009. Despite the world economic situation, the Annual Conference drew the highest attendance in six years: 5,856 registrants, representing a 16% increase over 2008. Of that number, 1,130 were new members, boding well for the future of the Association. In a press release, CEO Janice Lachance stated: "In a year when so many associations are experiencing dramatic decreases in attendance and exhibit sales, SLA broke

records. Going by the numbers, the positive feedback and the excitement I heard from attendees throughout the week, I think it is safe to say that SLA 2009 was a smashing success."

The Planning Committee worked diligently along with the division and other program planners and staff to present a fantastic schedule of speakers, classes and sessions that reflected the importance of our 100th Anniversary. General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.) was the keynote speaker at our Opening General Session. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Secretary of State addressed leadership and the importance of information technology. After the Opening Session, a Centennial reception kicked off the celebration. On Tuesday evening the Awards and Leadership reception was held in the magnificent Great Hall of the Library of Congress. Earlier in the day, the Librarian of Congress James Billington presented the President's Series seminar. The Closing General Session on Wednesday featured a panel of distinguished specialists in a variety of fields to talk about innovation and the future. They included Neil deGrasse Tyson, director of the Hayden Planetarium and NOVA science communicator; Robyn Meredith, Senior Editor, Asia, for Forbes Magazine; and John R. Patrick, "Internet visionary." Moderating the panel was Judy Woodruff, senior correspondent for PBS's "News Hour with Jim Lehrer," and editor of the show's 2008 US election coverage. Throughout the conference, division-sponsored programs focused on the future of libraries and information professionals. Spotlight sessions covered social networking and innovation, career development, transformational leadership, improving ROI, and how to "beat the pants off Google!" These programs and the 462 vendor exhibits provided our members with the knowledge and tools to take us into SLA's second century.

A number of individuals must be cited for their hard work in planning such a creative and celebratory Annual Conference: first, Lynne McCay for serving as Vice-Chair for the Annual Conference Planning. She coordinated the work of the 2009 Planning Committee and the 2009 Annual Conference Planners, all of whom need to be applauded. Justine Wheeler chaired the planning for the contributed papers sessions. Kristin Foldvik, Akisha Edogun, and DeVonne Parks on the staff side made it all happen. Other staff members who played crucial roles, especially in promoting the Conference, include Cara Schatz, Jeff Leach, Maura Kennedy, Stacey Bowers, and Linda Broussard. The Washington, DC, Chapter's Local Arrangements Committee also deserves praise for promoting the Annual Conference every chance they could at SLA conferences over the past two years.

OTHER CENTENNIAL YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

1. The Centennial Year got underway with the **Leadership Summit**, 14-16 January in Savannah, which served as the kick-off for our celebrations, as President Gloria Zamora welcomed this auspicious year. There was even a guest of honor—John Cotton Dana himself! In addition to the many programs and discussions about the Centennial and the Alignment Project, there was leadership training and program planning for next year. Guy St. Clair gave an entertaining and enlightening luncheon speech with highlights from his book, *SLA at 100*, published by SLA for the Centennial. The Georgia Chapter sponsored a wonderful reception with a magnificent 100th Anniversary cake at a hundred-year-old automobile dealership. Dav Robertson offered up a humorous champagne toast for the celebration.
2. A **video contest** on the information profession/professional of the future was conducted from 31 October 2008 to 31 March 2009. It was quite a success with 16 entries! The winners were:
[Student Category Winner: *The More Things Change....*](#)

Video Produced by Noni Vidal, Clarion University

[View Video](#)

[Professional Category Winner: *I Am SLA.*](#)

Video Produced by Lisa Wolfe, Geri Heberlie and Paula Martin, St. Louis Metro Area Chapter

[View Video](#)

View the winners and all of the submitted videos on the **[SLA group YouTube page.](#)**

The makers of each of the winning videos received \$1,500 cash; \$1,500 to attend the 2009 Annual Conference; and \$1,000 for Chapter and Division programming.

What made the video contest new and different was the use of Web 2.0 tools to open the judging up to all SLA members. The videos were on YouTube and the voting was done on SurveyMonkey. Each video was viewed from about 500 to 1,500 times. Some of the videos were made by individuals and some were made by groups. Every single one was entertaining and representative of our Centennial. What a fun way to get our membership involved!

3. The **Centennial Website**, launched in November 2008, served as the focal point for information about the Centennial. There were stories about info pros, visionary statements by leaders, several lists of 100 (influential librarians, innovations, etc.), a timeline, a map of conference sites, links to member-contributed photos on Flickr, and much more. There were audio and video components such as the winning videos, oral histories, and Guy St. Clair reading excerpts from his *SLA at 100*. President Zamora recorded a special video greeting. There was a way for chapters and divisions to submit content about their celebrations, as well. A feature of the Website that became fully developed at and after the Annual Conference was a group of commendations and testimonials by international and local dignitaries, such as the Prime Minister of Canada, former US First Lady Laura Bush, and former US President Bill Clinton. Mayors of Washington, DC, New York, Chicago, and Pittsburgh proclaimed SLA Day, and many other leaders added their congratulations.

4. The **Centennial Showcase exhibit** had its premier at the Leadership Summit in Savannah. It's a fascinating blend of history and art, approximately 3' x 4' and 3-dimensional, like a collage with artifacts, photos and text attached. An engaging feature is a digital screen in the middle where photos rotate in and out. Units can have their own photos loaded into it for a local touch. All of the photos will be archived for the permanent exhibit. There is an accompanying key to explain the artifacts. The Showcase was featured at chapter meetings and the Annual Conference. Eventually, the Showcase will find its home at Headquarters, where it will be on permanent display and serve as a kind of time capsule and permanent legacy of the Centennial. You can also view it virtually on the Website. John Latham deserves much of the credit for ensuring that this project was successful.

5. The **oral history** project, "Voices of SLA," is well underway in conjunction with the SLA Fellows. Susan DiMattia and Jean Scanlan managed the project and they conducted an information meeting at the Leadership Summit and a training session at the Annual Conference for those interested in preparing oral histories. They developed the goals and procedures, lists of questions and interviewees. Four of the oral histories are already available on the Centennial website. This project will be on-going beyond 2009 and will be a lasting and important extension of the Centennial.

6. In addition to these activities, the Commission cast a **Centennial Spotlight** on the past, present, and future leaders and others who have played a role in shaping our Association into the organization it is today. They were recognized by inclusion on lists posted each month on the Website. The Spotlight lists recognized the following groups: charter members, vice-presidents, treasurers, directors, staff and exhibitors, advisory councils and 40-year members, cabinet chairs, chapter presidents, division chairs, fellows, John Cotton Dana Award winners, and Hall of Fame Award winners. Bill Fisher deserves most of the credit for putting these lists together.

7. Staff members contacted various international dignitaries for words of greeting and commendations, and they worked on various other **promotional** ideas. Chapters and divisions were urged to seek additional commendations from their local dignitaries or subject association heads. As these written or spoken testimonials were received, they were added to the Website for all to see. A template was added to the Public Relations Toolkit developed for the units by the PR Advisory Council and introduced in Savannah. Several Centennial articles appeared in *Information Outlook*, particularly the January issue. Stamps, shirts, posters and other memorabilia were sold at the Annual Conference and online.

8. Towards the end of the summer, members of the Commission worked with representatives of the Leadership and Management Division to inaugurate **The Reading Club**, a blog to generate discussion about designated books and articles. This is another initiative that will continue beyond 2009.

9. The final Centennial-related event of the year was an initiative in December after the name-change vote to present a **forum for "Up-and-Comers"** to discuss the future of SLA and the information profession. It started in the form of a blog with the idea that it might be followed by a Web conference. The participants were the "rising stars" of SLA and members recommended by unit leaders. After they had a chance to be engaged in the discussions, some of the past SLA presidents and other leaders were brought in on the conversation. In this way it was hoped that innovative ideas would be generated to help guide the Association's steps into our second century.

SOME LESSONS LEARNED

1. The Commission was active for three years. That was a long time, but it was useful because it gave time early-on to canvas the membership, gather an exhaustive list of ideas, give them full consideration, and narrow them down to a manageable number. Also, it gave us time to make plans for events other than the Annual Conference before we had to start focusing on the planning for the Conference itself. We conclude that the time was about right.
2. It was very useful to expand the commission in the second year by adding the Division Chair (Tom Rink), the staff person responsible for the Website (Jeff Leach), and someone to concentrate on events beyond the Annual Conference (Bill Fisher). It was also valuable to have a Commission member--in addition to the chair--take on responsibility for coordinating the program planning for the Annual Conference (Lynne McCay). These members added new viewpoints and allowed the work to be spread out so that more could be done without resulting in "burn out." The total number of Commission members was about right.
3. We relied on monthly telephone conference calls and an email discussion list as our major means of communication, and that worked well. We tried a blog and a wiki but found that their chief benefit was to serve as a means for sharing documents rather than for discussing plans.
4. The lack of funding support was a major problem. We were able to accomplish a lot with the funds we had, but we felt like we could have done so much more. For instance, we had hoped to co-sponsor an event at Bretton Woods, the birthplace of SLA, with the Boston Chapter and others, but funds could not be found. We made plans to have a Centennial Ball at the Annual Conference, but funds could not be obtained from vendor partners so we turned to the divisions and chapters for sponsorship. That plan met with little support from the units and we had to downscale that event to a much smaller reception. Another example was that after the beautiful Centennial Showcase exhibit was created there was no money to pay for shipping it to and from the chapters. The economy is certainly to blame for the lack of financial support, as our vendor partners were severely affected. They used their funds, fortunately, to help sponsor other parts of the Annual Conference. The economic situation also compelled the units to be more conservative with their funds—perhaps if we had started involving them earlier in the process for funding the Ball and incorporated their suggestions, we might have been more successful in getting their buy-in. We conclude that it was essential that we had the "nest egg" funds from the prior year to accomplish all that we did. Further, we conclude that a call for units to provide funding should come from the units and the grassroots rather than from the top down. In hindsight, it might have been productive to have interacted more with our vendor partners to bring in more ideas from them as to what kinds of events they would be willing to sponsor.
5. As always in SLA, the Commission was composed of volunteer members who also had other jobs. It has to be recognized that in an undertaking of this importance, the members have only a certain amount of time they can spend, so accommodations must be made. Some things didn't get accomplished as quickly as hoped, some wonderful project ideas did not get pursued. While it appears that more subcommittees could have been formed with members from outside the Commission, the members of the Commission had their hands full with the projects we did plan and carry out.
6. The success of the Centennial Year celebrations was due to the work and involvement of many, many people. Besides the Commission members, many other SLA members, especially including staff, helped with Centennial plans through serving on subcommittees or offering suggestions. Chapters and divisions recruited many members to help with Centennial celebrations in their units. The Chapter and Division Cabinet officers played major roles in promoting the Centennial and motivating and informing the unit leaders so they could

be successful. Presidents Vargha, Abram and Zamora, and CEO Lachance and COO Sansalone had the vision and provided the support to make these plans and carry them out. The Centennial Commission members have been remarkable for their sustained energy and creativity over the past three years. The successful celebration of the Centennial Year can be attributed to the effective and powerful synergy created by all of these people working together.

On behalf of all of the members of the Commission, I'd like to express our thanks to the Board for the opportunity to have served as the planning team for such a grand and significant occasion.

Prepared by: Dav Robertson

Respectfully submitted:

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