



23 October 2007

Dr. Thomas O. Hunter
President and Director
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Dr. Hunter:

I am the CEO of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), an international library and information organization with over 11,000 members worldwide. It has recently been brought to my attention that Sandia National Laboratories is planning to close their research library due to budget reductions. SLA strongly opposes the closing, or diminution, of library services at Sandia until a detailed plan is produced and vetted by qualified information and policy experts who understand the critical nature of maintaining valuable services and access to information for current and future needs by your researchers.

Has such a plan been created? If so, has this plan been made available for review and comment by those most directly, and indirectly, affected? What systems have been developed to receive comments to surface alternative solutions, unanticipated outcomes, or recommendations to maximize the success of Sandia's researchers—researchers who so heavily rely on accurate, timely, and precise information from the library and its staff to contribute to the continued success of Sandia, and Sandia's obligation to the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration?

I understand that for over fifty years Sandia has been a leading institution in the engineering of nuclear weapons and more recently over the past twenty-five years has diversified its mission to encompass homeland security, intelligence, energy and non-proliferation issues; issues that are vital and contribute to the well-being of this nation. I also have been told that the Sandia information center was one of the most innovative centers and a leader in the utilization of new technologies for the benefit of the Sandia scientists and engineers since its inception.

All employees must rely on the services of this library to effectively conduct their work to produce accurate and timely products to meet the mission of Sandia. From what little I have seen, it seems that your library will be closed or services will be diminished for a

significant amount of time. What plans and procedures, if any, have been developed to bridge any possible change? Providing access to online journals is certainly a poor, at best, solution to the extensive collections and librarians' intellectual capital.

With this proposal to reduce library services, Sandia's leadership is making it more difficult for the organizations' policymakers to leverage the extensive knowledge found in high quality, accurate information. This information is critical to make important decisions on our nation's National Nuclear Security, and has the potential of significantly compromising the public's health and safety.

The information professionals employed at Sandia are explorers and guides who open a world of information to the researchers. It is a grave mistake to believe that a library is no longer necessary because we each have internet tools at our fingertips. The huge world of information is not refereed, it is not gauged, and it is not interpreted. This is where library and the information professionals add value to the organization they serve. I would like to call your attention to the findings of an Accenture survey released on January 4, 2007. The survey identified wide-ranging insights about the way information is gathered, used and analyzed. The report found that middle managers spend more than a quarter of their time searching for information necessary to their jobs, and when they find it, it is frequently wrong. The survey also found that managers spend up to two hours a day searching for information, and more than 50 percent of the information they obtain has little or no value to them. Forty-two percent of respondents said they accidentally use wrong information at least once a week. I have attached a link to the Accenture study for your review. http://newsroom.accenture.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=4484. I shudder to think what could happen if Sandia researchers accidentally used wrong, or even not the most accurate, information on a weekly basis.

Short-sighted budget savings like this will give way to increased costs for Sandia that aren't apparent right now. If Sandia is investigating a revamp of its current library services, it is imperative to use an innovative information management strategy that leverages technology to its fullest extent while employing full-time information professionals who understand how information should be selected, organized, analyzed, and disseminated.

Information professionals are the first to hear of innovations in information retrieval and in the newest breakthroughs in particular disciplines. They can and do weigh the sites and they know how to dig below the surface of information. They work side-by-side with the researchers as part of a team; contributing their knowledge of the scientific and engineering issues combined with the ability to research relevant information while weeding out the erroneous and irrelevant. It is this competitive intelligence that significantly contributes to success or failure.

I realize that these proposed changes are a result of budget cuts, but it is essential to carefully review the return on investment at the Sandia research library. Take for example an Environmental Protection Agency report. The report conservatively calculated the benefit-to-cost ratio for EPA library services to range between 2:1 and 5.7:1. The report

noted that EPA libraries save professional staff \$7.5 million, and that one-third of the libraries' work gave the EPA \$22 million in benefits. Sandia's library too is integral to the pursuit of science and research. The Sandia research library, by maintaining materials and making them available, saves the institution dollars overall by making shared resources available. Without the library, each researcher or individual department must make duplicate efforts in locating and researching. This certainly increases the overall cost of information to the laboratory and has done nothing but switch the costs from one area to multiple areas, while not providing the guidance and knowledge of trained information professionals or retaining the intellectual capital.

I ask that you and your executive team re-examine this decision to close your research library. If you look closely, I believe you will see that this move will not save money in the long run, and may cause irreparable damage in the future. A distinguished research institution like Sandia should maintain an information center, run efficiently with qualified staff for the benefit of the institution. I find it hard to believe that you could continue to claim to be a leader in science and technology with innovative ideas and creative scientists and engineers without the benefit of a leading research library.

I have studies that show the importance of the library and can share much evidence with you on the standing of a research institution and the size of its collection and the number of information professionals staffing that library.

Please feel free to call me and I can offer my research staff to assist you with studies and data that prove the worth of the library to a laboratory the size of Sandia National Laboratories—an organization that hopes to make great contributions to advancements in science and engineering to better this country and protect our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janice R. Lachance".

Janice R. Lachance
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