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WELCOME.

Celebrating 115 years of Legacy, Innovation, and Impact!

I am thrilled to extend a warm welcome to you as we proudly announce the 115th anniversary of The Special Libraries Association, and the re-launch of *Information Outlook*. This momentous occasion marks over a century of unwavering commitment to our mission and the communities we passionately serve.

Founded in 1909, SLA has evolved dynamically, embracing change, and pioneering innovative solutions to address the evolving needs of our community. It's with great pride that we share this milestone, and we are excited to embark on the next chapter of our journey.

As we reflect on the past 115 years, our commitment to research, information professionals, and special libraries, has remained steadfast. We have weathered challenges, celebrated victories, and above all, remained dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

In the spirit of this celebration, we are thrilled to revitalize *Information Outlook* just in time to celebrate this milestone! This edition will not only showcase our rich history, but will also highlight the innovative programs, partnerships, and initiatives that have defined our legacy.

We invite you to join us on this exciting journey of exploration and discovery. All SLA members are welcome to submit content for this magazine and all subject matter is accepted. The goal of this magazine is to showcase the power, relevance, and expertise within our association and the impact our members have on our society.

Your continued support has been instrumental in our success, and we are grateful for the enduring partnerships that have propelled us forward. We look forward to sharing this significant milestone with you and the broader community through the pages of *Information Outlook* 2.0.

Thank you for being an essential part of our history and for contributing to the innovative world of the information professional. Here's to 115 years of impact, and to many more years of collaboration, innovation, and community building.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Steele".

Leslie Steele

SLA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR

from SLA Past President Seema Rampersad 2022-2024

As I look back on 2023 for my term as President of SLA, it would be remembered as a year of change and transition, as well as a time for foundational activities for re-building new relationships and work plans with a new association management company, partners and our communities. At the start of January, we saw our new Board of Directors take up their places, who included **John DiGiglio** (President-Elect 2023), **Eugene Giudice** (Treasurer), **Christine Pelosi** (Director), and **James Manasco** (Director).

It was time for our board to implement the new committee charges, with the primary task of appointing all our new volunteer leaders to the restructured committees and subcommittees. This enabled us to begin addressing many important aspects of our mission and goals. I appreciate and thank all the committee and subcommittee members for their dedication and innovative efforts as we renew our purpose and focus.

Some of the achievements over the year included celebrating this year's Awards and Honors recipients, our Annual Conference programming, successful bylaws review with passed amendments, a Membership Committee survey and SWOT analysis for engagement, Students and New Information Professional (SNIPS) events, Technology Support Committee, and Finance Committee advice. New financial priorities were needed which led to the establishment of two working groups: 1. Partners Support and 2. Investment Review. These working groups focused on expanding sponsorship opportunities from our business partners and reviewing our current investment company accounts while brainstorming ideas for generating revenue. Due to time constraints and priorities, not all of the roles outlined in the revised committee charges have been completed or assigned, but we hope to complete or review these new charges and roles as we continue moving forward.

2023 was a year for drawing upon the expertise of our experienced members for working groups as well. The Bylaws Subcommittee, consisting of **Richard Huffine** (Chair), **Barbara Kern**, **Brent Mai**, and **Steve Kramer**, hosted a Town Hall meeting in January 2023. This group kept us engaged and informed on the bylaw petitions and the implications for

their proposed changes through the September vote. I also would like to thank the **Bylaws Subcommittee** and **John DiGiglio** (Chair of Strategy & Culture Committee) for the support they provided with this process. The vote on the proposed bylaws changes was completed in September 2023, and I thank you all for your time and efforts on this task. The Board of Directors is in the process of developing the new policy governing the Executive Committee as required by these bylaws changes.

The Partners Support Working Group consisted of **John Kromer**, **Janet Weiss**, **Jay Bhatt**, **Parveen Babbar**, **Sharon Lenius**, and **Simon Burton**, who were tasked to work with both MCI and AH to coordinate SLA's strategy for sponsorship support between communities and sponsors. They are planning to share a toolkit of outreach strategies and sample messages with sponsors to help support our many communities. We have since also agreed to an Industry Partners Agreement with AH, and therefore this working group has sunset. It is likely we will revisit a full-fledged Sponsorship Committee in the near future.

The Investment Company Review Working Group was also instrumental in gaining an understanding of our restricted investment funds and how to best utilize these SLA funds for their originally created purpose. This working group consisted of **Barbara Coffey**, **Dan Bostrom**, **Scott Davidson**, and **Ty Webb** with our treasurer **Eugene Giudice** as the board liaison. This group reviewed our previous scholarship programs (still very strong with our student communities) and were able to create a new focus on an updated framework for restarting scholarships with the support of both the Board as well as the Finance Committee. The Investment Company Review Working Group has also been sunset, but a new Scholarship Program Working Group has started, which will work to support all scholarships including any community scholarship program. I would like to thank all our volunteers for their work on these important tasks and advisory roles for SLA. We appreciate your time and insights.

continued

REVIEW OF THE YEAR continued

We have kept you up to date on many activities of the Board of Directors via our open board meetings as well as through my regular Presidential Updates. When we started 2023, we were searching for a new association management company and had published a Request for Proposals (RFP). This process was completed in March, and we were able to sign a contract with Association Headquarter (AH) in April for a contract to begin in July 2023. MCI continued to manage SLA for the first half of the year while working on planning a joint conference in May 2023 with the Medical Library Association (MLA) in Detroit, Michigan, USA.

The MLA|SLA Conference in Detroit was a great opportunity for us to participate in a conference without incurring the costs of hosting such a large conference on our own. MLA, who was celebrating their 125th anniversary, was a great host and welcomed us to their conference with programming that reflected both our differences as well as our areas of complementary and common interests. We were able to showcase what makes us “special,” such as our programs for Leadership and Management Development (LMD), some innovative panelists, industry variety and specialism, our local communities, and even our signature social event, the SLA Dance Party. We were able to participate, meet, and network in the exhibition hall with our sponsors and partners together with those of MLA. I do want to thank MLA, and our staff at the time, for bringing us together for a great conference in Detroit.

In June and July 2023, we were in transition, planning, and implementation, which required us to wrap up business with MCI and to prepare for our new management relationship with AH. We started working with AH in May during the MLA|SLA conference with focus groups and with the Board of Directors discussions on tasks such as our operational assessments, SOARs analysis, and direct relationship building with focus groups. We were also introduced to AH’s 30-60-90-Day plans for SLA, which helped us navigate these new arrangements. The handover process went ahead from MCI to AH in a smooth transition apart from some retrospective support for financial records and filing requirements. Here too, we thanked MCI for the years we worked with their staff, the relationship we had with them, and sincerely wished them all the best for the future.

The first three months with AH entailed working with key staff contacts including our new Executive Director Leslie Steele, Relationship Manager Beth Mauro, Membership Coordinator Joel Colon, and all their expert colleagues who

helped us with our priorities, goals, and ambitions. We were able to brainstorm some creative ideas to our challenges to include: financial revenue generation, better technology and communication, the need to continue with an annual conference meeting, partnership and sponsorship agreements, a culture change with new perspectives for streamlining operations to help us cope with less staff while increasing the impact and benefit of being an SLA Member.

We are still working through a lot of these challenges and hope that in the next 4-6 months we will be able to see the results of these new initiatives by retaining the many great aspects of SLA that we have come to love and expanding the benefits offered to our members, partners, and supporters.

Throughout the year, our communities hosted many events and meetings as they continued to educate, network, and make us value SLA. Our in-person or online events ranged from symposia, conferences, meet-ups, virtual, and walking tours. We also welcomed many new leaders to our communities but continue to face the challenge of finding new recruitments and volunteer leaders. Our communities are the heartbeat of SLA, and we were pleased to share their activities during the Community Leader Forum in September 2023. We recognise the need to continue to develop new leaders and will continue to encourage and offer support to our members in these endeavors. The Board of Directors created a series of Leadership Training webinars last year and we hope to continue this series in 2024.

Being from Europe, I was proud to represent SLA as an international community in 45 countries of specialised library and information professionals. I was able to represent my employer, The British Library, and SLA in India with an invitation to Delhi by our own SLA Asia Community, with special thanks to **Dr. Debal C. Kar** and **Dr. P. K. Jain**. The changes in the last few years had disrupted our ability to meet and travel, but last year we were able to meet online and in-person to build these professional relationships and networks, near and far.

I do feel optimistic with all the work the Board of Directors, our staff, and our communities achieved in 2023. I know there is still much work to do, and we are not “out of the woods” with our current challenges. However, we have worked on several new streams of change and some culture

continued

REVIEW OF THE YEAR continued

shifts which I hope will help us thrive in the years to come. I would like to express my immense thanks and appreciation to our departed SLA Directors: **Catherine Lavallee-Welch, Julie Synder, Dr. P. K. Jain, and Ty Webb.** They have contributed so much in the last few years to SLA, and we will miss them dearly.

Lastly, I am so pleased to see the re-launch of *SLA Information Outlook*, as this is where I first found out about our great association decades ago. My role in leadership, and as a member, for SLA is not yet finished. There is still so much to do and to look forward to in 2024 and the future. I have learnt many leadership skills and have gained a lot of experience that I can continue to use in my work and profession, including Robert's Rules of Order. It has been a

great honor to serve as President of SLA and I certainly look forward to celebrating our 115th anniversary year and all future endeavours with you and our great association.

Thank you all.



Seema Rampersad

Seema Rampersad
SLA PAST PRESIDENT
2022 – 2024

INFORMATION OUTLOOK

**Do you
have a story
to tell?**

**Have you
read a book you
cannot stop
thinking about
lately?**

**Do you
have new
research to
share?**

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**Submit your work to SLA's
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MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Transferable Skills Belong to the SLA Member

By Lorene Kennard

I grew up in SLA in the Illinois chapter. My first job after library school was in a corporate library. I left that job to start a freelance research business. While I was doing that, I started working part-time in a public library at a reference desk for steady income. Eventually, I decided I wanted to be a public library director. A director job was not easy to get because public library Boards of Trustees did not understand that my skills I used as a corporate librarian and as a leader in SLA IL were transferable to a leadership role in a public library. I did ultimately have three public library director jobs. I worked for some pretty terrible boards, though, which is a whole other article.

I started looking around to see what else can I do with my skills. Why should being a director be the end of my career path? (And, I mean academic, public, museum etc. director.) As I was talking to recruiters for jobs outside of libraries, they were not making the skills connection.

I started The Librarian Linkover podcast to interview librarians who left libraries to use their skills in other fields. Some of my guests went to library school never planning to work in a library. Here are a few examples of the kinds of work my guests are doing:

- CEO
- Managing Director
- Business Owner
- Community College President
- Bookstore Owner
- State Library Director
- Content Curator
- Content Acquisition Specialist
- Business and Process Analyst
- Implementation Consultant
- Security Researcher
- Corporate Accounts Manager
- UX Researcher

I do not have to list all the skills required to do these jobs because you have those skills. It is a matter of converting them from library speak to outside of library speak. One of my guests was working with metadata and had contract jobs in academic libraries. A friend told her about a metadata job open in her company. She applied for it and got it.

She doubled her pay doing the exact same thing for an organization outside of libraries that she was doing in libraries. Here are some of the questions I ask my guests and the trends I am seeing in their answers.

I ask about professional associations and try to link in the show notes to the ones they mention that may not be as common. I often get the typical library professional associations, including SLA. But sometimes I also get a subject specific association. Or one that is more regional, that has been very helpful to them.

“For librarians who want to do the work you are doing, what suggestions do you have?” I have gotten some really good answers to this question, and they are quite varied. But most of the answers include joining and getting involved with professional associations.

“Why did you go to library school and does the reasoning still hold?” Almost everyone is still glad they went to library school. Almost everyone says the education they got set them up well for their careers and they pull from library school in their current jobs. One person said they would have gotten the job without the library background. My response was “but they did not hire you because of your library degree.”

I use air quotes on my podcast. “What traditional library skills do you use in your current position?” Virtually everyone has said the reference interview. If you can determine what someone is really looking for based on what they ask for you have a skill that most people do not have. No matter what kind of job you have, if you have internal users or external customers or clients, or a boss and they are asking you for things, you are conducting a reference interview when you are trying to figure out what exactly they want. This is the answer that surprised me the most. I thought research or cataloging would be the most popular answer. Research is also an answer a lot of the time. But the reference interview is really a skill that we learn that most other fields do not address in their education.

continued

MEMBER HIGHLIGHT continued

I used to ask, “How are you more qualified for your position with your library education and background than someone who does not have a library education and background?”

After asking that a few times I found that librarians do not like to say they are more qualified than other candidates. Even though they are and that is the whole point of my podcast. We have value that people outside of libraries do not bring.

Having said all of that....

I recently realized something after doing almost 100 interviews. For a long time, I have been going on and on that our library skills are transferable skills. However, now I am realizing we do not have library skills. We have skills that we are using in libraries. **We do not have library skills. We are using our skills in a library setting.** This might take a second to sink in.

I have gotten feedback from listeners that my podcast has helped them get jobs outside libraries or has helped them reframe their skills to get a promotion because some librarians want to stay in libraries. Listeners are connecting with my guests. They are buying their products. Listeners have hired my guests. I see them commenting on posts on LinkedIn. My listeners, guests and I have created a wonderful community around our skills. Not our library skills... the skills we are using in libraries. I am going to keep saying it. We do not have library skills.

We must keep saying it because nobody else is going to. We must advocate for ourselves because no one else is going to.

thank you...

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CONFESSIONS OF A NEW MANAGER

By Dan Bostrom

I have a secret: I don't consider myself to be a person born to be a manager.

When I think of a person born to be a manager, I think of someone confidently leading organizations, making big decisions with relative ease, and dispensing directions with a calm air of authority. Dedication. Inspiration. Visionary.

Honestly, that's not really me. Yes, I can make decisions. Yes, I can play a leader. But I have often had a hard time imagining myself in that role. I don't know that I cut a very inspiring figure.

Let me tell you another secret: I have very little actual experience as a manager.

Up until now, I've never managed more than an intern in a professional setting. In some ways, I feel fortunate to have gotten where I am in my career without having to manage other employees. I didn't feel like I had the cachet to do so. A lot of my colleagues have been managing others for years. In the academic and public library spheres, a lot of library workers are moved up quickly. Especially if they work in big institutions where there are a lot of part-time or student workers. I've heard horror stories of managing schedules and trying to hire for part-time positions where pay is low.

In my own path, I've always been a part of smaller teams. For the first ten years of my library career, I was often the junior person on my team. People looked to me for new ideas or help with projects or just to chat about my perspective. They did not come to me for mentoring or career guidance.

But when change comes to being a leader in an organization, sometimes you have to step into that role. In October, I accepted a new position where I am now responsible for managing a small team.

When I first took the job, I immediately thought of what my previous managers would have done. I've been fortunate to have had some great managers over the years. These were managers who encouraged me to shape my own job to fit my

skills and interests. The same people were the managers who allowed me to make my own mistakes and learn from them. They gave me the confidence to grow into my job and take on projects as I saw fit.

I've been lucky in other arenas as well. In late 2022, my boss encouraged me to sign up for a leadership cohort program that is run locally. It is a two-year commitment. The first year requires us to attend webinars on leadership topics and discuss issues with a small group of other participants. I've learned a lot of great lessons from the webinars and it has been fun to put the suggestions into practice with our cohort discussion team. The second year will be more regular discussions, but this time with a larger group.

I've also had my experiences with SLA. I've always considered SLA to be a great sandbox for leadership. It allows you to practice things like leading meetings, creating plans, and making decisions. In the past two years, I've been President of two SLA communities – Illinois and Leadership & Management Development – and I can firmly say that the experiences have been all positive. It has given me confidence that I can be inspiring and visionary (to some extent!).

I don't know that I have all of the answers yet. The jury is still out on me as a manager. Maybe you can ask the people that I manage how I'm doing in a year. I hope it's all positive.

I'm not a born manager, but maybe I'm the next best thing: someone who's trying to get better.

Dan Bostrom is the 2023 President of the Leadership & Management Development (LMD) Community of SLA. He is also the Director of Marketing & Communications for the Reaching Across Illinois Library System (RAILS) in Burr Ridge, Illinois.



SLA AT 115: Welcoming Our Future



As much as I love history—conducting research to bring the past alive—and writing about the past, this essay of necessity concerns itself with the future. At this time in SLA’s history, we must give attention to how we, as members and participants in one of the most important professional organizations in our field, can rebuild and reframe the Special Libraries Association. What we have been until now is our past, and if SLA is anything, it is an organization of the future. So we must continue to build our future, bringing again the best of what we have brought to the library and information profession during our many years, but we must also do more.

In a way, this article is a continuation of *SLA at 100: From “Putting Knowledge to Work” to Building the Knowledge Culture*, the association’s centenary history published in 2009. The epilogue of that book recommends that we members embrace the strengths of specialized librarianship, capturing what we have learned about our organization, our profession, and our societal role since SLA’s founding in 1909.

Now, in 2024, we must review what we are and attempt to identify what we can become. For that, our first step is to build a clearly defined purpose that will take our association to new heights of success. We will build into that purpose the commitment that specialist librarians will continue to provide the highest levels of service to their employers, to their users, and to the industries and communities of which they are a part.

It won’t be a sad story. Your author—even at this stage of the game—is not shy about expressing his good thoughts about our much-appreciated professional association which has been so important to so many of us for so long.

Indeed, and possibly because I am by nature an optimist, I wasn’t shy about expressing my positive outlook about SLA. Here’s another quote from the association’s history: “At the beginning of its new century, SLA is strong, and specialist librarians have now arrived at the critical juncture of their ambition, if—as a professional discipline—they choose to embrace this splendid opportunity as their destiny and their responsibility.”

continued

SLA AT 115 continued

Writing those words, I was seeking to connect our history to our organization's famous motto—"putting knowledge to work"—and to how it linked to our work in 2009. And I deliberately used it in the subtitle of the book because the motto described exactly what we specialist librarians had been doing throughout our history. Our members used it—and adhered to it—for many years, even though the motto eventually fell by the wayside (apparently having been discarded at some point in recent years). Nevertheless, it had been an important feature of SLA's "big picture" for a long time, and those words expressed a solid part of our association's overall character.

Remembering that motto and its long connection with our association can still be an effective exercise. Simply put, the idea of putting knowledge to work gives us a framework for understanding that in the fifteen years since the publication of the centennial history, we've been left not only with our history. We are now also challenged with many new issues, situations, and ways of working that many of us might not have expected. So the motto—straight-forward as it is—takes on new relevance for those professionally engaged in specialized librarianship.

Our former motto also connects directly with the second section of the book's subtitle: "building the knowledge culture." It describes quite clearly the natural result of how specialist librarians work, because as we manage information, knowledge, and strategic learning, we are bringing all the elements of our work together in what I like to call "knowledge sharing."

Ergo: a knowledge culture.

So our goal with this exercise is to look forward, to think about how our association might move into a future that will incorporate its fine history and at the same time continue to provide excellence of service for both its members and the institutions and organizations which engage with our members for their professional expertise. It is an opportunity to look at how we—individually and collectively—think about ourselves and our association. And it enables us to put into our thinking ideas that our members, leaders, and staff might include in creating a specific statement of purpose.

The idea isn't new. Indeed, it goes back to Seneca, in one of his most quoted statements: "If a man knows not to which



port he sails, no wind is favorable." OK. That makes sense, but what was Seneca saying that applies to SLA's future?

It's not hard to figure out, for Seneca, being a philosopher, was (according to most who write about him) interested in recognizing that philosophy is meant to be used, not just undertaken for idle intellectual entertainment. For us in SLA, the idea of knowing "which port" we're sailing to is simply another way of thinking about how we will deal with the vagaries of history. Seneca is telling us that, no matter what we're trying to do, to succeed we must have a purpose. We must know what we want the end result to be before we attempt to plan for how we'll get there.

And how do we do that? We ask a simple question: what do we want the Special Libraries Association to be?

It's an approach we can take up with two specific examples I've come across, both—it seems to me—worth sharing. In the first, we go back 100 years. I found it in the archives of the Century Association, an organization in New York City, now 175 years old. The club's members are authors, poets, artists, and amateurs of letters and fine arts, and in 1922 they were celebrating the club's 75th anniversary.

In his remarks for the occasion, the club's president, lawyer, statesman, and Nobel Peace Prize Recipient Elihu Root (1845-1937) referred to the club's original purpose in a commemorative address for the occasion. As I read his words, they reflect the very direction we need to consider today for SLA. The club's founders, Root said, "formed an association not for the purpose of doing something, but for the purpose of being something."

continued

It's an idea that connects to leadership, and one that—in our focus—might permeate throughout SLA, and not just to the association's elected leaders. All of us—members, officers, staff, vendors, and all others who support SLA's goals—are positioned to think “big picture” about SLA. And in doing so, we subscribe to the famous leadership recommendation of McKinsey and Company, admonishing us to “continually renew [the] organization.”

Which leads to the second (and similar) concept I mentioned, as we seek to find our purpose for SLA. It was promulgated by the late and world-renowned leadership expert Frances Hesselbein (1915-2022). Often referred to as the “dean of leadership development,” Hesselbein became well known for her skill in teaching those of us interested in understanding and managing our leadership skills.

One example of how Hesselbein thought about leadership fits neatly into place here, whether we occupy “official” leadership positions or not, and it links directly to Root's example. In a Q&A session following a presentation for cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point, Hesselbein was asked what she thought was the key point of leadership. Her response:

“Leadership,” she said, “is a matter of how to be, not how to do.”

So what is it we want the Special Libraries Association to be? Can we define our organization's purpose?

Obviously, at this point in my life, I am not positioned to tell you what to do, what to propose, or, indeed, what to be. I can, though, if you will permit, return to my remarks when you presented me with the association's John Cotton Dana award. In fact, I cannot say it any better or any clearer now than what I said then, and I ask you to read over, ruminate, and discuss what I said.

In that presentation, I referred to members of SLA as knowledge services professionals. As such, you are building and implementing the prototype and inspiration for the knowledge culture in your parent organizations and—as I see it—in society at large.

And that knowledge culture will lead us, I predict, to a “golden age” in the management of information, knowledge, and strategic learning in the organizations, businesses, institutions, communities, and in any other situation in which our knowledge services expertise can be of benefit. That and, yes, in society itself.

continued



It's now recognized that coal and oil fueled the advances of the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Computers and microprocessors fueled the advances of the Technical Revolution in the second half of the twentieth century. And knowledge—and those of us who understand the importance of knowledge sharing—will fuel the advances of our own time, now and into the future. It will be a time that I predict will come to be looked on as our new—and thrilling—Knowledge Revolution.

And it will be the knowledge strategists and the knowledge thought leaders—that's you, the members of SLA—who will be managing and leading this effort.

No one knows better than you how to develop knowledge, how to share knowledge, and how to use knowledge. And you delight in—for it is your professional calling—playing a leading role in ensuring that the Knowledge Revolution is every bit as significant and as critical for all our citizens as were its predecessors.

And I believe—as strongly as I have ever believed anything—that it is through you that the Golden Age of Knowledge Sharing will be achieved. It's not me. It's not my generation. We're just those who came before you and, we hope, helped inspire you to move in this direction.

So that's our challenge: to put us on the road to finding a purpose for our association.

And bringing to a conclusion our thoughts about how we in SLA might create our organization's own future, for ourselves, for our employers, for our professional colleagues, and for anyone else who comes to us to benefit from learning about knowledge sharing—then to go forward and advance their own success, in whatever goal they are seeking.

That's what SLA can be. Not what it can do. That will come later, of its own accord, as you decide what specialized librarianship can be. And once you decide on the Special Libraries Association's purpose, you will succeed. And do what you need to do.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Guy St. Clair is a writer and editor living in New York City. He is the Series Editor for Knowledge Services with De Gruyter Saur in Munich and Berlin.

A member of SLA since 1972, Guy St. Clair speaks affectionately about how he “would not have had a career” if it had not been for his many years of volunteer work with the association. He was given SLA's Professional Award in 1989. The citation for the award reads: “Guy St. Clair is credited in the information profession with recognizing the role of one-person libraries in the library community.” He was recognized with SLA's John Cotton Dana Award in 2019, being cited for his lifetime achievement and for “exceptional service to the association and to the library and information profession.”

As an author, Guy St. Clair has written fourteen books on various subjects relating to library and information science, information management, knowledge management, and knowledge services. He has also written two organizational histories, including SLA at 100: From “Putting Knowledge to Work” to Building the Knowledge Culture—A Centennial History of SLA (1909-2009). During his years as an SLA member, Guy St. Clair's professional articles have been published in both Special Libraries and Information Outlook.

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BOOK REVIEW

Liz Boniface

I recently read Books *Promiscuously Read: Reading as a Way of Life*, by Heather Cass White. I think this book will interest librarians because it is about the pleasure of reading and the ways of reading that most benefit people. First, Cass White details the characteristics of reading. She says that reading transports us to other places and often drives us out of our minds. She also says that reading is time consuming, that it requires self-determination, that not everyone needs to be a reader, but that readers need to read every day in a quiet place. I only agree with that statement to a certain extent. It is true that noisy places, such as concerts, may distract people from reading, and that you have to dedicate a certain amount of time for reading, but dedicating just a few minutes per day, or reading on a train, or in a car, often works for me. Cass White also focuses on the private experiences of the self while reading. She says that reading is partially private because you do it alone while reading another's words. I also agree with that statement to a further extent: readers read alone but can write book reviews and discuss books in book groups. Finally, Cass White says that reading is a morning's work and should be done after a good night's rest. I disagree with her on that statement because reading often helps me sleep at night. It is also harder for many people who work full-time to read in the morning.

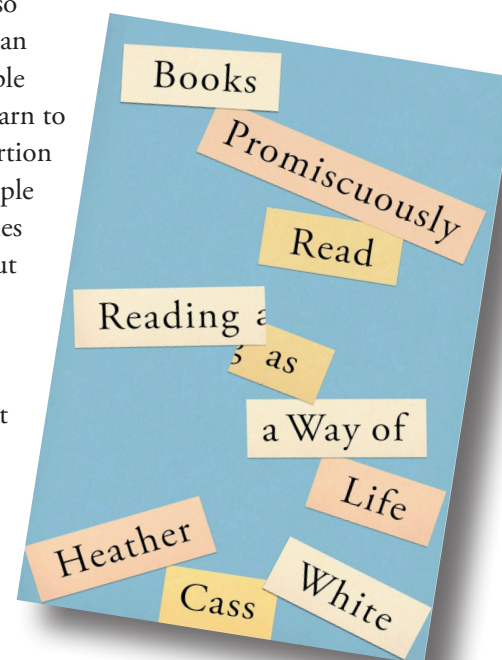
In the next section of the book, Cass White discusses the relationship between reading and play. She discusses the importance of exploration in reading, the importance of selection and finding in books, and of not being bored while reading. She says that we can sometimes select books without finding what we are looking for and that it is important to read what we find interesting rather than what others find interesting. I agree with this last statement because reading what we find interesting motivates us to read and learn more.

In both this section and the next one on transgression, Cass White discusses a number of literary characters and their relationships to reading, including Don Quixote, Frankenstein, and Dorothea from *Middlemarch*. Some passages from books I hadn't read, or had not been interested in, were confusing and felt irrelevant to the book, but I did enjoy the passage from *Middlemarch*. It discusses how Dorothea's avid reading was a transgression from what was expected of young girls

growing up and how she chose her husband, Causabon, based on his occupation as a scholar and ability to let her learn more. I enjoyed that book as a young adult and thought it tied well to this book's theme of the art of reading. I also thought that the passage on how Frederick Douglass learned to read as a slave who was forbidden from learning to read tied in well with the theme of transgression. Finally, I enjoyed the passage from Jane Austen about how continuing reading while someone of the opposite sex says hi to you is a transgression of social norms.

The fourth section of this book was on insight. This section states that reading arises from a sense of emptiness and allows for reflection. It states that readers read to fill in the parts of them that are missing. I disagree that readers necessarily feel empty inside, but I agree that reading allows for reflection of one's own experiences and increases a reader's knowledge, especially when it centers on history or the voices of marginalized populations not of one's own demographic group.

Finally, this book discusses the seriousness and disadvantage of illiteracy in the world. In previous centuries, women were prevented from learning to read at all; and women, Black and Hispanic people, and people with disabilities are still overrepresented among those lacking basic literacy skills. The conclusion of this book also describes literacy as a human right and says that all people should have the right to learn to read. I agree with this assertion because reading opens people up to a world of possibilities they would not know about had they been denied this right. Overall, I thought this book tied in well with librarianship, and I thought it might strike a chord with some avid readers in SLA.



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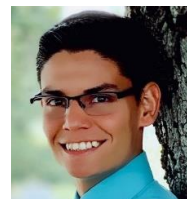
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