

# THE COURIER



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## LEAH STRUDWICK

SLA Toronto President



Leah is the Reference & Outreach Librarian for the Toronto Lawyers Association. Previously, she held positions as Legal Librarian with the City of Toronto, Reference Librarian at the Bronfman Business Library at York University, and Library Assistant in a corporate pharmaceutical library. Leah earned her Master of Information from the University of Toronto in 2015, after completing her Bachelor's Degree in Sociology at the University of Alberta. She has been on the SLA Toronto Executive Board since 2016, and is thrilled to serve SLA Toronto as President in 2018.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – APRIL 2018

### Leah Strudwick – SLA Toronto President

Since our last Courier in February, SLA Toronto presented two educational programs (a seminar on Blockchain & Smart Contracts, and a webinar on Logic Models for Assessment) and one social event (a very successful pub night in collaboration with the U of T SLA student group). We have been working hard on behind-the-scenes projects, streamlining our communication and reimplementing a listserv so that we can better serve the entire Ontario information professional community. And we've been busy planning our next few months, which will feature: more webinars (we see you, non-Toronto residents!); our highly anticipated What I Wish I Knew Five Years Ago event on May 9th (this year's is on how to manage contract work as an early career info pro); and, of course, the SLA Annual Conference, happening June 9-13 in Baltimore, MD. Hopefully see a handful of you in Baltimore, and everyone stay tuned for details about our local post-conference event.

At the time of this writing, it is Volunteer Appreciation week. Did you realize that SLA has more than 400 volunteers who offer their time, energy, and skills to lead SLA forward in the information industry? Volunteers give their time to ensure that SLA units and the organization as a whole provide the best content, networking opportunities, and professional development for the info pro community. In Toronto, we have an Executive Board, a team of registrars, people who help with event planning in different capacities, a social media manager, a webmaster, an archivist, and many more, who comprise our unit. People volunteer to host resume building consultations, to present webinars and seminars, and to coordinate activities outside of the Greater Toronto Area. SLA Toronto would simply not exist without its family of dedicated volunteers.

I want to thank everyone who presently gives, or has ever given, their time to ensure that SLA Toronto is able to support its membership. Your contributions are essential to the continuation of our little local Chapter, and I'm so glad that you do what you do, so that we can keep doing what we do. Thank you, most sincerely.

However, there is still more that needs doing! Most pressingly at the moment, we have a Programming Director position that needs to be filled by an enthusiastic and engaged individual who will coordinate the delivery of events for SLA Toronto. The ideal candidate can be someone who has previous event planning experience, or someone who is interested in gaining

that type of experience. As a member of the Executive Board, you will work with a knowledgeable and supportive team of Directors to execute your duties in the Programming role. Join us in building the professional community that you want to be part of! Email me ([president@toronto.sla.org](mailto:president@toronto.sla.org)) or any member of the Board if you have questions or to apply.

Happy spring, SLA Toronto!

## MEET THE ADVISORY BOARD

In this recurring series, we asked members of our [Advisory Board](#) to introduce themselves.

### Sarah McCabe – Archivist

#### 1) Introduce yourself! Who are you, what do you do, and what is your role with SLA Toronto?

I'm Sarah McCabe, project manager and librarian at the Ontario Historical Society (OHS). My work involves research into technology for not-for-profits, digitization, and scholarly publishing. I manage the OHS reference library, which has over 5,000 Ontario-related titles, including many rare local history publications.

After two years as SLA Toronto treasurer, I'm finding my feet in the archivist role, and looking forward to some exciting projects!

#### 2) How did you get started with SLA?

Moving back to Toronto after many years away, I attended the SLA Joint Holiday Social in 2013. Everyone was so welcoming. So I joined SLA, became a registrar, then treasurer for two years (2016-17), and now archivist.

#### 3) What does "Special Libraries" mean to you?

In the broad sense, "special libraries" could mean not academic nor public, but other ... likely with a focused collections mandate (like Ontario history), and a specific user group (like people interested in the preservation, promotion, and protection of Ontario's history).

The special librarians I've met through SLA work in some amazing and sometimes surprising places. For instance, I work in a former bedroom of the 1913 John McKenzie House in North York, and the OHS's library is in the residence's former coach house.

#### 4) What is one thing you wish you could have told yourself when you started your schooling or career?

There are plenty of opportunities to keep learning after your MLIS, so don't worry that can't take every single course that interests you.

#### 5) What is the absolute most interesting thing about you?

The topic of my MA in Historical Research dissertation was underground public conveniences (toilets) in London, England.

#### 6) Any final words?

The benefit of getting to know other special librarians through SLA has been priceless. I'm glad to belong to such a supportive community. Sharing information is what we do best!

## WHAT IS THE ADVISORY BOARD?

The Advisory Board of SLA Toronto consists of appointed committee chairs and members, such as the Archivist, Social Media Manager, and Registrars. Advisory Board members report to a member of the Executive Board, and are essential to the smooth and successful functioning of SLA Toronto.

## AMRA POROBIC



Amra is the Manager, Library Services at the Insurance Bureau of Canada. She is a one person librarian with expertise in special, legal and business environments, and know-how in property/casualty insurance industry research. She is currently serving 500+ staff and association members, and 1000+ industry stakeholders and members of the public. Amra spearheaded the Toronto Solos Group from 2008 to 2014. Her focus is on managing complexity and constant change while sustaining a healthy balance.

You can reach out to her at [librarian at ibc dot ca](mailto:librarian@ibc.ca), on [LinkedIn](#), or on Twitter [@porobica](#).

## ARE YOU READY TO TALK ABOUT THE FUTURE?

### Amra Porobic

Solos rarely get a chance to talk about their services at the executive management level.

Out of the blue, I got an invitation to give a presentation on library services at a two-day senior management meeting. On very short notice (six days), I had to prepare a backgrounder, a presentation and a 15-minute speech.

Would you be able to create those three documents from scratch in six days? I wouldn't.

Had I not been prepared for this assignment, the outcome would have been rather insignificant. As a result of several years of preparing a framework on the future of library services, I was able to demonstrate that strategic thinking is my forte, and I was able to position myself as a key player in enterprise-wide information projects in the future. In addition, I delivered a passionate and insightful speech, which was greeted with applause and many positive comments.

I started writing an outline for the future of library services in 2010. That was the year in which a few of my solo colleagues lost their jobs. Each year, as the new strategic and operational goals were established at my company, Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC), I revised the objectives, risks and opportunities set in my framework document.

As new technology platforms have been implemented on the organizational level, my focus has shifted toward supporting those platforms. I have revised my framework several times, incorporating ideas and suggestions from professional articles, blogs and presentations.

A few IBC colleagues read my paper and approved of my ideas and intentions, and encouraged me to push my agenda to the senior management. However, the most valuable input I received was from the local (and international) info pro “guru,” Steve Abram, after an iSchool course I took. In

a way, this article is a tribute to his support and words of wisdom. Steve took the time to revise my paper to make it more marketable. He laid out detailed steps for how to get proper attention from senior management. I followed his advice very closely and my framework turned into a “green paper for discussion.”

That paper became the backgrounder for my presentation, both of which were included in the agenda package for IBC's senior managers.

The presentation slides had to be short and sweet, so they were easy to formulate. But the speech required lots of creativity and thoughtfulness (and a few sleepless nights). I had to tell a simple story and avoid library jargon. I am ever so grateful to my colleague, Azan, who helped me avoid modesty traps and enforce a positive impact.

Here is my presentation (delivered in 2016), edited and shortened to fit into this article. (Editor's Note: If you are interested in the Green paper, please contact Amra at [librarian at ibc dot ca](mailto:librarian@ibc.ca).)

## IBC Library and Information Management Services

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about library services. (I think I owe someone lunch!) The library is an area of low priority in the IBC scheme of things, but for me, it's a matter of life or death – and I mean literally, as I've seen a few librarians lose their jobs after many years of service. My theory is that they stopped being relevant to their organizations.

To that point, I've been developing a framework for the future of the library for quite some time. That's what you have in your packages and what serves as a background report for my presentation. It's a "Green paper for discussion" on which I welcome your comments – if not today, then sometime this month.

Before I continue, I should mention that the library at IBC has been an integral part of the company for almost 35 years. The first person doing library duties was a committee coordinator. In 1986, IBC engaged an external consultant, who recommended establishing a library and creating a full-time librarian position. Since then, the library has been a go-to place for information.

- Green paper - framework for the future of the library
- Library as a Service (LaaS)
- Four Ws and one H
- Building relationships
- Future - near and beyond

Here are the main points I want to cover:

- Library as a service – A bit about the changing role of libraries and a shift from library to information services
- Four Ws and one H is how I define "library" in business terms
- Building relationships – My approach to customers/library users
- And last, what's in store for 2016 and beyond.

Have you noticed that the concept of the library has changed? There was a time when you had to physically come in to a library to get a piece of information. Now you can get it virtually, wherever you are, while the librarian is working from home.

Information used to be in books and journals, and now it's on the internet, on Google, on shared drives, in applications and in portals. Library as a service has shifted from physical collection management to information management, wherever that information is. I don't organize a shelf of books; I organize pieces of electronic content.

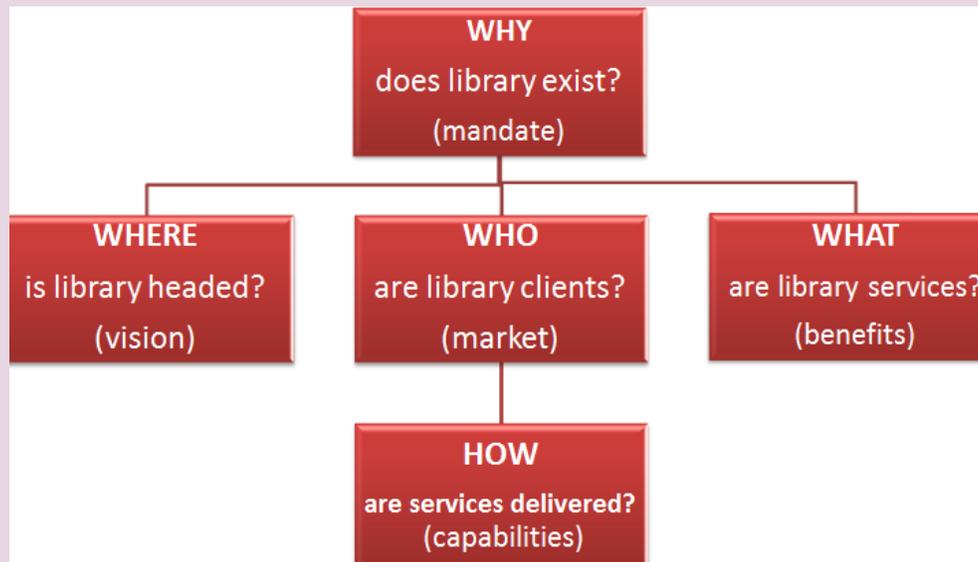
Today, libraries have to compete with Google. Luckily for me, Google crawls only a small percentage of the entire internet. Besides, Google has too many ads, too much irrelevant information and tonnes of error pages.

Librarians want people to spend time applying information, not looking for it. Several years ago, the *Financial Times* published a report on the evolving value of information management. They identified an interesting gap: What information professionals thought they could provide as added value was different from what executives thought adds value. That is why I pay attention to IBC's goals with these five values in mind: Be timely, be relevant, improve the quality of answers, understand the business and be proactive.

To be all of these things, I have to screen, sift through, extract, analyze, compare, validate, summarize, organize, classify and so on. That's how I fight "information overload" and save my users time.

What does this hybrid approach to information resources and delivery of information mean?

Some readers like print, others like digital. Library as a service must serve both types of users. There is a big portion of IBC's history that only the library knows. (This reality came in handy for IBC's 50th anniversary promotion.) There is a lot of content we cannot digitize – because it's costly and it's not a priority. The priority is the content borne digitally. Therefore, the library has to be flexible and adopt new technologies, while maintaining traditional formats.



### Why does a library exist, or what's its mandate?

Why? Because information is fuel for all that IBC has ever achieved. Because information resides with and in the library. The library's mandate is to support decision-making by addressing research and information needs, and by ensuring that information is easily available.

### Where is the library headed?

I could paraphrase our organization's vision and say that IBC staff and stakeholders trust, value and support library and information services. But I also want the library to be a hub of the IBC community, where information and knowledge are shared and created. Which one do you like better?

### Who are the library clients?

At IBC, about three-quarters of our library services are delivered to four large departments: legal, policy, communications and the Ontario regional office. And I think that makes sense, since that's where the company's strategic priorities are. It's also where an important user group is hiding – the Board of Directors. The rest of the pie is divided between three groups: other IBC departments, IBC members and external requestors.

### What are the core library services?

I'll mention four:

1. **Research** is the oxygen of the library. Big or small, research projects are built into IBC's submissions, communication with members, committee work and numerous publications. To be good at research means knowing and using lots of resources and understanding what drives the business.
2. **Trend monitoring** is a crucial part of what I do because it leads to better research. It helps to get ahead of issues and think beyond the insurance industry. I do legislation tracking for our legal group. I monitor global regulatory trends for our policy group.
3. **Web content support** is another part of my work. I update and create content for IBC's public and internal sites as well as its site for members. Those three sites have different audience and different purpose, but too frequently get mixed up.

4. **Training** is popular because that's how I help my colleagues acquire new skills and become more self-sufficient. I do hands-on sessions for staff at IBC's Bay Street location in Toronto, and webinars for those far away. I've given talks on a general overview of resources and talks on specific topics, such as how to run a report on consumer inquiries in our customer relationship management software.

Aside from these services, I also run the library, pay invoices, maintain subscriptions, renew licenses and stay on budget – which was, for the first time ever, cut last year.

### **How are services delivered?**

This is an area where there is always room for improvement, despite the fact that I get tonnes of praise for my work. There are many directions I could take, and I touch on them in my paper. I need your input in this area – and your support, because all those enhancements imply team work and technology.

IBC's library is a one-person band. I do not have any professional peers at IBC. I don't go to too many meetings (which is great, because I get more work done). So I focus on my clients and their diverse needs and styles. With each client, I move closer to the action. Some clients see me on a daily basis. With others, I have one good experience per month, or per year. Frequency doesn't matter; it's the experience of remembering that I was helpful when they needed help.

Sometimes I get questions that have little to do with library services. But I help anyway, because that's who I am, and that's how I build my relationships: one person at a time.

And then there might be projects coming down the pipe that allow me to do something I've never done before, such as the implementation of our customer relationship management software and SharePoint. These opportunities enabled me to learn new things and help IBC organize information on an enterprise level. On the other hand, such projects are so huge and complex that my core services may suffer. I have to maintain a healthy balance between all of those tasks.

What's knowledge translation? When we started working on a customer relationship management platform, I acted as the facilitator between IBC's business units and IT. Because I know my users, I know a lot about processes and workflows, and who does what. That is why I was able to translate the business needs of consumer centres into system requirements. You cannot expect that user group to think in concepts and abstract database terms.

What's in the plan for IBC's library this year? Next month, I will present a lunch-and-learn session on Google search tips for IBC staff. It should be fun. I plan to do it for other regions as a webinar.

IBC's member site redesign is another big goal this year. My role is to organize the content and classify all the documents we create for our members. IBC creates a lot of content. So when it comes to finding what we've created, we could do much better.

- Access
- Expectations
- Collaboration and knowledge sharing
- Digital assets management

Any planning for future services has to address these four items.

I constantly strive to make information easily accessible. If we have great access to information, we'll have the speed and relevance and cutting-edge impact.

User expectations are very high. They want instant answers. Consumers and stakeholders expect answers on the first page of their Google search. Members want the same from IBC's member site. Remember, our members do not have libraries. They pay third parties to do the work for them, and those third parties likely don't have libraries like ours. How do we meet those expectations?

Collaboration and knowledge sharing is the bread and butter of our organizational effectiveness. We need to plan for tools that will enable better collaboration.

And last, we can't be successful in any of these three things without developing a proper digital asset management strategy. It doesn't matter what we call it: knowledge, information, Miracle Shelf (the name we use for the file management system at IBC), assets or records. In essence, information management should be central to our strategy.

Thank you.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO KIMBERLY SILK!

A huge congratulations to Kimberly Silk, who was named a 2018 SLA Fellow! Details [here](#).

Kimberly is a fixture in the Toronto information field. She's a Past President (2013) of SLA Toronto, an active volunteer with the Ontario Library Association, and Principal Consultant for BrightSail Research. Check out her impressive bio [here](#).

We're so proud of you, and there isn't a better recipient SLA could have chosen as an ambassador of our profession. Cheers from SLA Toronto!

## EVENTS UPDATES

### Blockchain Technology & Smart Contracts – Feb. 27, 2018

On February 27, Stephen Sawyer, a Design Researcher for Narrativ, introduced participants to the concepts of blockchain and cryptocurrencies. He also gave some interesting examples of how blockchain and smart contracts are being used in the world.

Allison Smith, who attended the session, describes an exercise Stephen used to illustrate:

“To explain what blockchain actually is, the audience was split into four groups, and each group recorded a series of timestamped (make-believe) transactions in a ledger on a four-ply sheet of carbon paper. We then shared a carbon copy of our ledger with each of the other groups. Each group then filed all the ledgers into a folder to demonstrate a block. Then we did it again to demonstrate a chain. To show the decentralized nature of blockchain and how truth comes from consensus, one group's block of transactions was fraudulently altered – but since the majority still had the correct numbers in their ledgers, we were still able to tell what the true values were supposed to be. (This is in contrast to traditional commerce, where “truth”—e.g. your bank account balance – comes from an authority –e.g. the bank, which is vulnerable to fraud.)”

Some interesting points from the session include:

- Librarians and information professionals are very good at finding the next big thing that's coming, and we should be thinking about these things from the beginning. Tech in the 90s was mostly designed without librarians (and we were disrupted), so we should try to be on the inside of such movements.
- Blockchain and smart contracts enable digital assets to behave like physical assets: limited copies, establishing provenance, etc.
- Metadata distribution: we can track changes to metadata records authoritatively, and control who gets it for free or for a fee.

In the real world, using cryptocurrencies right now isn't super useful. It's slow and there's things that make them impractical for smaller transitions. In theory, though, it will enable all kinds of microtransactions.

## Upcoming Events

**What I Wish I Knew Five Years Ago: Contract Work Realities – May 9, 2018 ([Details here.](#))**

**Key Resources for Knowledge Management – May 16, 2018 ([Details here.](#))**

Want to know about our upcoming events?

- Check our website – [toronto.sla.org](http://toronto.sla.org)
- Like our [Facebook page](#)
- Follow us on Twitter [@slatoronto](#)
- Join the Toronto group on SLA Connect

## PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

**SLA Toronto member Kim Silk recently relaunched Brightsail Research Inc., a boutique advisory firm that provides research and consulting services to public and private sector organizations including libraries, cultural institutions, universities, schools, government agencies, corporations and start-ups. Visit <http://brightsail.com/> to learn more.**

Calling all SLA Toronto members! Have you moved? Started a new job or career? Had a major life event happen? We want to know! **People on the Move** in the Courier is a feature to highlight all the exciting things that have happened to our members.

If you have a submission, please email Sarah Morrison at [courier@toronto.sla.org](mailto:courier@toronto.sla.org). If you're submitting information about someone else, please verify that you have their permission to do so. We hope to hear from you soon!

## TRENDING

### KNOWLEDGE CAPTURE PRE-RETIREMENT

Samantha Elmsley

We all have that person-- let's call her Shirley-- at our organization. Shirley's seen enough trends cycle through that old has become new again, in different packaging. She's the person you go to for information on a random decision made 15 years ago, the logic behind which has long been forgotten by everyone else. And when Shirley retires to a well-deserved life of beaches and blackjack, her knowledge is going to walk out the door with her.

While the Human Resources field is taking a keen interest in this issue (Strauss 2015), information professionals are also well-positioned to help mitigate the knowledge loss that the Shirleys of the organization represent, because we're versed in the way information works and what makes it valuable. By putting our understanding of information to use, we can harness the current zeal for knowledge management by enabling critical knowledge capture and transfer.

We would do well to act on our skills quickly: according to a 2015 Globe and Mail report (2015), the peak of the baby boom wave will hit 65 around 2025, seven years from now. While research from Statistics Canada's Perspectives on Labour and Income (2011) suggests that baby boomers are delaying retirement longer than previous generations, the fact remains that over 22% of the Canadian population is now 65 and older (Statistics Canada 2017), and it's just a matter of time until they start to leave the workforce in droves. From a knowledge management perspective, this means that many organizations in the country could be looking at 22% of their workers leaving within the next few years. If a decent number of those workers are Shirleys, that represents a lot of potential institutional knowledge loss.

Information professionals are experts in information behaviour, and well versed in strategies and tools for capturing and communicating information in a useful manner. This means that we should be at the table when Shirley's team sits down to talk about the transition plan for her retirement, to make sure someone raises the People-Process-Technology flag.

Using this lens provides a useful inroad for nailing down what "knowledge capture" actually looks like, by prompting questions like: who does Shirley talk to when she needs help on a sticky issue (Leonard 2014)? What are the critical steps Shirley takes to make her deliverables a reality? What databases does Shirley use as part of these processes? What tools could we use to capture and communicate the information from this exercise?

The process of capturing knowledge before key players retire is going to look different depending on the organization. But one thing remains constant: the ability of information professionals to help prepare their places of work for the change. Let's take advantage of the KM craze to put our unique skill sets to work on this historic challenge.

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## SAMANTHA ELMSLEY



Samantha Elmsley is a recent Master of Information graduate from the University of Toronto, with a focus in library science and knowledge management. When not in a library, you can find her at the farmer's market, in a canoe, and (of course) reading. You can find her on [LinkedIn](#).

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## ABOUT US

SLA Toronto was founded in 1940 and represents the interests of information professionals in Toronto and most of the province of Ontario, west of Kingston.

The Toronto Chapter is a dynamic and active organization with over 400 members and is part of [SLA](#), an international organization headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia.

We provide an opportunity for information professionals in our area to learn and network at [events](#) as well as engage on [social media](#) sites.

The chapter is volunteer led by an [Executive Board](#), consisting of a President, Past-President, President-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, Technology & Communications Director, Membership Director, First Five Years Director, Programming Director, and a Partner Relations Director. The chapter is also guided and supported by an [Advisory Board](#).

## WANT TO WRITE FOR THE COURIER?

We want to hear from you! Email the editor, Sarah Morrison, at [courier@toronto.sla.org](mailto:courier@toronto.sla.org) with your idea.