

THE COURIER



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LEAH STRUDWICK

SLA Toronto President



Leah is a Research Consultant at Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP. Previously, she held positions as Reference & Outreach Librarian for the Toronto Lawyers Association, Legal Librarian with the City of Toronto, and Reference Librarian at the Bronfman Business Library at York University. 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 – JULY 2018

Leah Strudwick – SLA Toronto President

Hello and happy summer, SLA Toronto. I don't know about you, but I'm grateful to be settling into something resembling a relaxed summer rhythm after what seemed like a hectic spring. Bring on the late sunsets and beach weather.

In May, the First Five Years Committee (Jessica Hanley and Emily Deere, in close collaboration with interim Programming Director Mary Gu) reprised our Unit's annual What I Wish I Knew Five Years Ago event. Panelists Kate Johnson, Ariana Ferrone, Jessica Samuels, Hilary Barlow, and First Five Years Director Jessica Hanley shared their thoughts on such questions as how they got their first break in the profession, and what their most memorable professional experience has been so far. We had such a great conversation happening that we had to vacate the room before we were even close to finished talking. My sincere thanks to the panelists, the organizers, and especially to the folks who attended.

In June, the Board (with special thanks to Membership Director Kathryn Kingston for coordinating) held a Volunteer Appreciation event for all of our beloved SLA Toronto volunteers. We decided to change the format significantly from previous years by holding it on a weekend afternoon, and instead of a pub night, doing an Urban Scavenger Hunt on the Secrets of St. Lawrence. Intrigued? You should be! We explored the roots of Toronto in and around the St. Lawrence Market, with stops at a hanging square, Toronto's first post office (my favourite!), and a vaudeville theatre. The group that was able to attend was smallish, so we were all able to play on a single team, solving clues and learning about the city. I loved it, for what that's worth, and highly recommend it as a wholesome date or group activity (the company who hosts the one we did is [Urban Capers Scavenger Hunts](#)). It was, regrettably, only after the fact that I realized that the activity we selected was not accessible to all our volunteers. While I haven't received any feedback about this, I'd like to extend an apology to any who may have been dissuaded from joining us on account of that fact, and a promise that we take the accessibility of our programs seriously. If you have feelings about the format of this or any of our events, please send them to me or any Board member.

And, of course, the Conference happened, with Bmore (a new nickname of host city Baltimore, which also sounds like the words "be more") as this year's theme. I was there, along with 20+ other SLA Torontonians, and 1700

total registrants from around the world. Highlights for me included the keynote talk by Dr. Carla Hayden, and two very good sessions by Mary Ellen Bates entitled [The Accidental INTRAprenneur](#) and [New Approaches to ROI: How to Talk About the Value of Information](#). I also attended Unit Leader Training while I was there, where I found myself ruminating on the meaning of community and the value of collaboration. How can SLA generally, and SLA Toronto specifically, foster and sustain connections within a demographically diverse membership base? How can info pros in the GTA and across Canada support one another so that we all thrive? I don't know the answers to these questions, but it sure felt good to be immersed in a crowd of others who were thinking about them, too. The conference was excellent, overall, but you don't have to take my word for it – check out the other reviews by SLA Torontonians, in upcoming pages.

BMORE REVIEWS BY SLA TORONTONIANS

Mary Gu

I had the opportunity to attend my first SLA conference in Baltimore, Maryland this past June! I had a really great time exploring a bit of the city and attending a variety of sessions. One of my coworkers was also able to attend this year, so we sat down prior to the conference and did a bit of "divide and conquer" strategizing for the panels we wanted to attend. We each chose panels that worked with our library's and our personal goals. I found some sessions too foundational for where I am in my career, but I also attended a couple very interesting sessions. One of the highlights for me this year was the "Best Practices and Strategies for Negotiation" session. It was very interesting to hear from both library folks and those who have worked for vendors.



I also made it a point of exploring a bit of Baltimore in between sessions and in the evenings. I chose to book an Airbnb for my stay so I was already taking a 15 minute or so walk to and from the convention center. Baltimore is rich in red brick buildings and good food. The convention center was near the Inner Harbour and a short walk took me to docks with busy dockside restaurants, shops, and the aquarium.

Baltimore is also home to the lovely George Peabody Library. I made a point to walk the 15 minutes from the convention center north to the library.

The library is a 19th century research library that is part of the John Hopkins University and it is open to the public though the rest of the campus is not open (to curious tourists...aka me). After spending hours at the conference, the time I took to see the city was completely restorative. I definitely recommend to anyone who is able to attend a professional conference to take some time for your own rest and recovery.

Anonymous

Highlights for me, in no particular order, were: Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden's keynote address; the Canadian reception; meeting library professionals from other industries/fields; the Baltimore Orioles game; Luna del Sea crab cakes; diverse programming sessions.

Sessions I got the most out of were the "Polish your Web Portal" (well organized and entertaining, good reminder for design and function) and the "Future of CI" (interesting to hear from people in other industries and the similarities we have re: information needs/concerns).

One thing I found though was that with all the programming I felt I didn't have a chance to get through the Info-Expo as thoroughly as I would have liked.



Katharine Matte

Two of the standout themes for me from BMore were risk and technology. On risk, MaryEllen Bates' INTRAprenuer panel gave me five questions to scare myself. So now instead of reaching for the most comfortable or urgent-feeling thing, I'm trying to remember to ask myself to identify the most valuable thing.

I'm also not always quick to jump on new tech and wanted to push myself into the area this conference. Nicole Hennig's Tracking Technology Trends very kindly called people like me "implementers", people whose tech strengths tend to revolve around working with and maintaining established technology. Zena Applebaum and JP Ratajczak's panel taught me that AI isn't going to replace me, but that machine learning is functionally like having built-in crowd-sourced searching and that natural language processing can be a supplement to the reference interview.



Baltimore itself was beautiful. I had a great time just wandering around the city looking for restaurants and other amenities. I have close ties to the Canadian West Coast and the gorgeous tallship docked downtown made me homesick and happy. I took extra vacation time before the conference and made detours through Philly and New York, where I ate a lot of fantastic pizza. I'm looking forward to seeing what Cleveland has to offer next year.

Anonymous

I was a panelist at the SLA conference and I had some observations.

It seemed that attendance was down and I'd love to know how many paid attendees there were. The various conference sessions I attended while interesting, did not have a lot of bums in the seats. There were exceptions to the rule, but many of the sessions I wanted to attend were triple booked.

Second the city itself left a lot to desire. There was not a lot to see in the Inner Harbor area and I did not feel safe due to the proximity of Lexington Market and the fact that there was a police car on every street corner. Philadelphia was even worse as there were panhandlers everywhere but at least there was the Reading Market. Considering our members are predominately female, has anyone addressed this concern? When you are told by hotel staff not to venture out past 9:00 pm you really wonder why you've attended.

Sharmila Mashinter

I found most of the sessions I attended to live up to my expectations – there were a few that were not what I expected/was looking for, and after the first day I got better at deciding quickly whether a session was worthwhile and heading for one of my back up choices. I liked that the conference program content was more about CI and ways to use hard data, since those are topics that interest me.

Would have liked to see even more analytical content, particularly in the context for a business library that serves investment/investment banking or consulting clients. Few of the presenters that I could see, anyway, came from that part of the business library world, and it would be nice to engage more with those librarians in the future, perhaps. As for the crab cakes, I went back a second time to Luna del Sea, since those were the best I've ever had.

TRENDING

PRIVACY AND SPECIAL LIBRARIES

Samantha Elmsley

With the Cambridge Analytica scandal still smoldering, and the General Data Protection Regulation freshly in force, privacy concerns have been getting a lot of column inches lately. This gives librarians something to celebrate. Our work sits at the nexus of managing information, finding and leveraging it, and understanding the copyright and other laws that protect it. As such, we're well-placed to play a role in making sure this conversation doesn't become a relic of yesterday's 24-hour news cycle.

Much of the conversation around privacy protection in libraries has centered on individual use of social media, mostly coming out academic and public librarianship. This is definitely a necessary conversation, but one that might be more naturally covered by whoever owns the social media policy in your organization. Taking a slightly different angle, information professionals in corporate environments might instead use training sessions to talk about protection of corporate data; many corporations delivering consumer-facing services deal with personal data at some level, and not all employees will join a company conversant in how to keep it safe.

It might be a good time to get that conversation going. As Murray (2016) notes in her assessment of the 2016 Outsell report, my fellow Millennials are quickly becoming the largest demographic in the workforce-- and we've got privacy top of mind. While this demographic is "deeply concerned about the privacy and security of their personal data", at the same time, Murray notes, Millennials "expect data to be readily accessible, wherever they are and whenever they need it" (p.190). This tension-- between privacy concerns and being accustomed to Googling everything-- means that Millennials need a champion at work to communicate their concerns to vendors. As "the interface between content providers and end users", information professionals could go to bat.

These are just a couple of means through which special librarians might engage with privacy; for others, check out Paul Pedley's article on this very topic. Among other suggestions, Pedley argues that participating in privacy audits, making privacy requirements clear to vendors, and helping the organize to understand and minimize potential data breaches all might be relevant activities for a special librarian, depending on the organization.

Pedley remarks that there are few professional or scholarly articles coming out of special librarianship that discuss librarians' role in educating or enforcing privacy in our organizations. As privacy continues to evolve and organizations adapt to new laws or societal expectations, info professionals are in a good position to get writing.

References

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SAMANTHA ELMSLEY



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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](#).

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