

The LaSoMi Newsletter

Louisiana/Southern Mississippi Chapter

President's Message

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Greetings LaSoMi Members,

I hope this newsletter finds you well, and that you all are enjoying the cooler weather that autumn brings. Our last function, September's virtual seminar, "Becoming a Great Web Searcher" with presenter Rita Vine, was quite a success. We had 50 registered attendees for this program that was co-sponsored with the LSU Libraries and the School of Library and Information Science at LSU. The turnout was 44 percent SLA members and 56 percent non-members. We plan to use this as a recruiting opportunity by contacting all of the non-members and encouraging them to consider the benefits of joining. Thanks to Ferol Foos, our Membership Chair, for taking care of this. LaSoMi Secretary, Angela Akinniyi has written a summary of the virtual seminar, which is available in this newsletter.



Our Fall meeting is planned for December 4th at 10:45 am at the Times-Picayune in New Orleans (URL: <http://www.nola.com/tp/>). Brent Hightower has a wonderful program lined up for us, which will include a walk through of the news room, photo department and observation deck (with Times Picayune history/production display and view of the presses). In addition, we will



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BOOK FESTIVAL
NOVEMBER 6 2004 BATON ROUGE

*Celebrating Readers,
Writers
& their Books!*

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tour the library facility, and Brent will give an overview of the Times-Picayune library database system. Refreshments will be served from 10:45-11am, with the tour set to begin at 11. After the tour there will be a brief business meeting, and then we will adjourn for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Please e-mail me at kblessi@lsu.edu or call 225-578-8538 if you would like to attend this event. Directions and carpool information will be forthcoming.

In other news, I am happy to report that Dr. Lisl Zach has accepted the position of President-Elect for 2003-2004. Lisl is a professor with the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University. To learn more about Lisl, read the brief biography below. Lisl will become president of LaSoMi after the annual conference in June.

Be on the lookout for an electronic survey that will be sent out to analyze your thoughts on various LaSoMi topics. Some of the subjects included will be the best times/locations for meetings, opinions on the webpage and newsletter, leadership issues, and many other issues. An e-mail will be sent out to the listserv when this survey is available.

Kelly Blessinger

PRESIDENT-ELECT'S PROFILE

Lisl Zach is an assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Science at Louisiana State University. Before returning to pursue her PhD the College of Information Studies (CLIS), University of Maryland—College Park, Zach spent almost 20 years working in various areas of administration and financial management, as well as directing and conducting applied research projects to identify ways of satisfying the information needs of user groups as diverse as field artillery officers, nuclear power plant operators, and symphony orchestra managers, staff, and volunteers. Her professional career has focused on making critical information accessible to users by developing and improving presentation formats, information services, and training materials. She has carried out numerous benchmarking studies, user needs assessments, and information systems analyses. Zach holds an MBA from New York University and a MSLS from the University of North Carolina. Further professional details may be found by looking at the CV on the SLIS website <http://slis.lsu.edu/faculty/Zach/LZCV2004.pdf>.

The following article has been reprinted with permission from the author. It was originally a two-part series that appeared in the September 3 and 10 editions of *Ex Libris*. Marylaine Block is the editor of *Ex Libris*, and she can be reached at <http://marylaine.com/subscrib.html>. Thanks to Bill Strickland for recommending this interesting piece.

WHAT WORKS FOR ME: 10 TIPS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

by Steven J. Bell, Director of the Paul J. Gutman Library at Philadelphia University

Given the number of articles getting published annually in an ever-growing body of professional library journals, it seems that every librarian has contributed at least once, and some many more times, to the literature of librarianship. The reality of the situation is that many librarians have yet to publish professionally, and many desire to do so. A potential author's inability to produce a publishable article can be particularly frustrating when more library literature is being produced than ever and the number of journals has expanded to accommodate the flood of articles.

To support their colleagues in the hope of spurring more librarians into the world of publication, some libraries are sponsoring writing for authorship workshops. The idea is to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which colleagues can share ideas, outlines, manuscript drafts, and hear from speakers brought in to share experience and wisdom with the local library staff.

I recently served as a guest speaker at just such a workshop for the library staff. All I had to offer in the way of wisdom, and that in small quantities, was advice from my own experiences as a relatively consistent author, able to churn out another article every few months. In other words, I just told the group what works for me. I thought I'd share some of my pearls of wisdom with *Ex Libris* readers. I hope others will add their own "what works for me" ideas.

Tip One - Write Every Day

This may seem painfully obvious but it can't be stated often enough. Little of one's undergraduate experience is memorable, but I always remember my senior year English professor. He said "Writing is like swimming. You must practice it constantly if you expect to get better." Even if you just scribble down some thoughts, that can make a difference.

Still, many would-be writers complain of lacking time to write regularly. If lack of time prevented librarians from authoring articles, I think every journal we know of would run dry tomorrow. Who among us ever has enough time to do all their work and publish? If your goal is to publish an article, you must come to terms with the harsh reality of carving out some time in your already busy schedule. That leads to Tip Two.



WHAT WORKS FOR ME: 10 TIPS FOR GETTING PUBLISHED

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Tip Two - Establish a Dedicated Time and Place for Writing

When I tell librarians that they need to become disciplined about their writing, whether they commit to arriving at work an hour earlier or writing for an hour before going to bed, groans are usually what I get in response. There is no escaping the fact that if time is a barrier to writing, you need to either add more time from somewhere else or make some sacrifices. But once you sit down to write at the same time on as many days as possible, it starts to become habitual. It also helps if you have a regular writing spot. I do not know the inner workings behind the process of having a routine time and place for writing. I only know that it helps. Do your best to carve out a time and place where you are least likely to be disturbed.

Tip Three - Writing That Primes The Pump

Lack of time is certainly a barrier to publication, but so is lacking something substantive to write. Now that you have a dedicated time and place, what do you do there? Well, until that great idea comes to mind almost any form of writing will help. How about writing out notes that summarize an article that you read? The keeping of a daily journal is certainly a common technique. Almost any activity that can enable you to produce a single page of text should be sufficient to get your mind and body engaged in the writing process.

What about a public blog? I don't recommend it unless you have a great idea for a thematic blog that is sustainable and will enable or force you to write everyday. Consider the many existing librarian blogs that are rarely updated and read even less. If you have no plan or desire to share your thoughts publicly, don't bother with the technology. Just go with a plain old composition book and keep your own journal. Until such time as you focus

Welcome to the new members of the LaSoMi Chapter of SLA:

Karen L. Dennison, LSU Middleton Library, Baton Rouge.

Carrie Henderson, SLIS student, Denham Springs.

James Jean, permanent residence Knoxville, works for Access Science Corp. in Bellaire (Houston), currently on a long-term assignment in Baton Rouge.

Alexia M. Sheck, Sims Memorial Library, Southeastern Louisiana University, Reference, Hammond

Linsday F. Barnes, SLIS student, Baton Rouge

Beatrice Calvert, SLIS student, New Orleans

Vitalija Svencionyte, SLIS Student, Baton Rouge



thanks to Ferol Foos for membership information

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on a topic, be it a program you are conducting at your library, an analysis of some existing research where you can add a new perspective, a survey about an issue you think we need to know more about - do your best to write regularly.

Tip Four - Generating Good Ideas

Walt Crawford perhaps said it best with the title of his book, *First Have Something To Say*. Most of us work in fairly stimulating environments so you'd think there would be plenty of grist for the mill when it comes to article ideas. But along with those other constraints another common barrier to publication is coming up with a good idea.

The essence of this tip comes from an article I found in an issue of the Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge e-newsletter. In an article titled "The Secrets of Successful Idea People" five experts gave the same piece of advice: read. But they emphasized that reading outside of one's own discipline is invaluable for generating new ideas. Establishing a regular regimen of reading need not be time consuming, especially if one selectively chooses from among the many free e-newsletters published for librarianship and peripheral fields. My "Keeping Up Web Site" <<http://staff.philau.edu/bells/keepup>> lists many of them, along with other ideas and technologies for developing a keeping up regimen.

I can't tell you how many inspirations and ideas have come from my keeping up routine. Allow 30 minutes a day for reading that leads to ideas. While you're keeping up, make sure you have a utility that you can use to capture and organize the information you find. [See Chris Sherman's article on these services at <<http://www.clickz.com/experts/search/opt/article.php/3395121>>.

Discovering a good source of inspiration won't help you if you can't find it when you want to reference it in your writing. There are a number of good utilities that will allow you to capture web pages and have the ability to retrieve them when needed - even if the page no

NEW MEMBER PROFILES

Karen L. Dennison is Louisiana State University's Engineering Librarian. She recently graduated with a Master's in Library and Information Science from San Jose State University, California. Dennison's undergraduate degree is civil engineering, and she worked for organizations such as Chevron and NASA before obtaining her MLIS. Her current interests are reference services for the sciences, open access, grey literature and institutional repositories. Karen can be reached at: kdenniso@lsu.edu

Alexia Sheck is a Reference/Instruction Librarian at Southeastern Louisiana University. She previously held positions at CIBC World Markets and Deloitte & Touche LLP in New York City. Alexia received her MLS from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. Alexia can be reached at: Alexia.Sheck@selu.edu.

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longer accessible. Among them are FURL <<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3311191>>, Onfolio <<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3325721>>, and Catch-The-Web <<http://www.catchtheweb.com/>>.

Finally a word about well-covered ideas, or what I might refer to as "done to death" or "jumping on the bandwagon" ideas. You know them - information literacy, blogging in the library, digitization projects, virtual reference. I don't think these are off limits, but you need to bring a different perspective to any of these topics.

A good example is an article from the last issue of Portal: the Library and the Academy. An author wrote about teaching students to evaluate web sites. There are dozens of articles on this topic. But this author turned the topic on its head, and questioned if the traditional advice we give to students really makes any sense. The article suggested an alternate way of helping students learn how to evaluate web sites. So common topics can make for good ideas, but you need to bring a truly unique approach.

Tip Five - Listen To What Librarians Are Grousing About

Who hasn't been to a library conference or followed an e-discussion list where librarians are heard complaining about something that needs fixing or improvement, or some need that is going unfulfilled. But did you LISTEN? If you listen carefully you will hear them, and these complaints are calls for research that leads to publication.

At a past ALA mid-winter meeting I heard a librarian ask "What are people using to help keep up with all of the change in the profession?" There was silence. I knew right then that providing information about good sources for keeping up would fill an unmet need. So far, that has led to three publications, several conference presentations, and a website that's visited about 400 times a week. Not bad for perking up for that one question. Think this was a fluke? I don't think so.

Tip Six—Finding a Mentor

Finding a mentor is easier said than done, but if you can find one it just might be your ticket to getting published. Breaking the ice with publication is a challenge, and having someone experienced to guide you through the process can offer innumerable tangible and intangible benefits.

A mentor can be the person to help you shape your vague idea into a more concrete proposal for an article. A mentor can be a proofreader, someone to steer you towards the right publication, or just the person who does what your mom used to do - let you know that if anyone can get the job done, you're it.

Most of us are fortunate enough to discover a mentor, naturally, in our workplace.

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Those "Research and Writing Workshops" that larger academic libraries are organizing may connect mentors and protégés. Others may find one through a local or national association. If you're bold enough you might even send an email to a librarian whose work you admire, asking for some advice. Who knows what might develop?

Tip Seven—Try a Co-Authoring Relationship

This is related to Tip Six. Most of us discover our first mentor by getting involved in a co-authoring relationship. My first such relationship came about because I wanted to write about a topic I knew would require some statistical crosstabulation, which I didn't know how to do. So I presented the idea to my future co-author, who I knew had these skills, and the rest is history. I got the first author credit - well it was my idea - and my co-author helped me learn a few tricks of the publication process along the way.

Co-authoring, however, requires you to give up some of your independence as an author. Your co-author may ask you to delete some of your writing, or heavily edit your wonderful writing. The relationship will require you to see it someone else's way, and be willing to give and take. If sacrificing some authoring autonomy is going to present a problem, then co-authoring may not be for you. But you may be passing up on one of the great pleasures of professional publication - teaming up with one or more colleagues to create one great thing from two (or more) minds.

Tip Eight—Try a Conference Presentation First

If you have had some good ideas but found it difficult turning them into articles, you may get better results by first presenting your idea at a conference. If you can create an outline, add a few key points about your idea to each main outline item, add an audience awakening beginning and end, then you're practically there. As a result of preparing your presentation, afterwards you will find it forced you to really think through your ideas and develop a more structured approach to sharing it with others. Attendee responses can also be helpful in forming an article, and giving you confidence that your idea is a good one.

In March of 2002 I was profiled in Library Journal's Movers & Shakers issue. I'm not bragging - there's a point here. The tagline they gave my profile was "passion for the profession". A librarian read that and asked me to give a talk on this topic at a state library association conference.

I had never written about my passion for the profession and never contemplated doing so. I didn't even come up with that idea. But I didn't have to write an article - I only need to prepare a 50 minute keynote presentation. That made it much easier to organize some key ideas - four areas where passion is concentrated. I got some quotes, came up with some anecdotes to share, found a few web sites that gave examples of what passionate librarians are doing, and the presentation was done in October of 2002.

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After that, I realized I had all of this material and thought I could probably write an article about this. And it was much easier because I spent so much time thinking about it for the conference. The resulting manuscript was accepted and eventually was published in *Portal: The Library and The Academy* in October, 2003. But if I hadn't done that presentation first, it would never have been written.

I do realize that for some librarians the fear of a conference presentation may be far greater than the inability to turn an idea into an article. The good news is that there are many conference opportunities, and few of them carry high-pressure stakes or attract hundreds of attendees. Start with a local or regional conference, and work through any presentation fears. Keep your eye on the ultimate goal - turning your presentation into an article.

Tip Nine—Where to Publish

If you are being aggressive about keeping up with the journal literature, either by creating your own Table of Contents alerts (you'll find most of the e-journal collections to which we subscribe allow you to create alerts) or with a subscription to *Informed Librarian* (a library and information science journal TOC service) you will begin to get a good sense of the journal literature, and become more aware of what is being published.

That will also tell you what isn't getting published - and that's where you want to be heading. If you're just getting started you can certainly aim for the stars (e.g., the most selective peer review journals) but you may want to consider other options. Publishers such as Haworth and Information Today offer quite a few journals, and the barriers to getting published are less considerable than most scholarly journals, particularly if your article is more of a case study than a quantitative analysis. If you have an article idea and you're not sure what publications might be appropriate, that's where a more experienced mentor can help.

Finally, don't limit yourself to library journals. Depending on your idea, give some thought to publishing in the information technology, instructional technology, or the higher education area. I've published in *TechTrends* and *Educause Quarterly*.

Sometimes you can just re-work an existing idea into a new paper geared to a different audience. More than once I've published a similar paper into the publications of two different fields. It will require some re-writing and re-focusing on the new audience. If you've got a crossover message, make sure it reaches all of its possible readers.

Finally, when thinking about where to submit one's first publication, setting the sights too high may only serve as an impediment to getting published. Instead of the established, mainstream library journals, consider some alternate possibilities. My first choice for this article was *Ex Libris*. I know that the editor, Marylaine Block, is open to publishing the works of other authors, the style is flexible, you can get published fairly quickly, and most importantly, you'll reach a good audience looking for both practical ideas and challenging opinions.

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Other library e-newsletter, such as LLRX.com and LISjobs.com (and their Info Career Trends newsletter), are looking for author contributions. Sure, they aren't prestigious library journals, but people actually read them, and you'll enjoy seeing yourself published in any of these publications just as much. [editor's note: And your articles will show up in search engine results!]

You can also publish much shorter pieces in case you haven't yet developed that great idea into a full length journal article. I'd also recommend that you subscribe to two weblogs that provide news and information about publishing and conference opportunities. One is The Library Writer's Blog <<http://librarywriting.blogspot.com/>>, which has a companion web site called Resources For Library Writers <<http://library.utoledo.edu/userhomes/cseeman/writers/>>. The other is Beyond The Job <<http://librarycareers.blogspot.com/>>, which provides news on all sorts of extracurricular activities for librarians.

Tip Ten—As You Travel the Road to Submission

If you haven't already done so it may be a good idea to exchange a note with the editor of the journal to which you plan to send the article manuscript. Just confirming that the editor is interested in seeing your manuscript can save time for everyone and give you an added incentive to get the article written. I've found most editors are willing to provide this information. Depending on the journal an editor may even be open to giving a manuscript a quick review. If things don't work out, an editor may be able to suggest a publication that is appropriate for your article.

I can't say enough about the importance of getting your manuscript proofread before submitting it to any journal. A good reviewer can make all types of suggestions, from the significant substantial matters to correct spelling and grammar. If you can find more than one person to proofread your article, that's even better. My advice is to avoid worrying about word limits when writing. The critical thing is to get the words down. You may write 5,000 words and then realize that 500 of them deliver the core of your article - and that the rest can be discarded or re-worked for another project. That makes cutting text necessary, and it can be quite difficult to cut your own writing. That's where a good proofreader is invaluable.

Conclusion

If some or most of this seemed like common sense, you are probably right. I have no special tricks or tips that will get you published. Just some advice about what seems to have worked for me. Perhaps the tough news I relate is that writing for publication is hard work. It takes considerable effort, even when you are excited about a topic, and the words just flow. In the end, it has to be readable, only hard work will get it there, and there's no escaping that it takes away from what little valuable time you have. I realize that what works for me may not work for you. But if you are able to take advantage of any one of these tips and it helps you to get published, then this was time well spent.

Becoming a Great Web Searcher, SLA Virtual Seminar with Rita Vine
Notes from Teleconference, Hill Memorial Library, Sept. 14, 2004

**Sponsored by LaSoMi, Louisiana State University Libraries,
And the School of Library and Information Science at LSU
by Angela Akinniyi**

As a result of taking Rita's 8 week long course, I have learned not to quickly search the Google and MSN search engines to perform research. The teleconference served as a means to reinforce a "healthier" habit of searching different search portals and tools. Many of us sometimes try to take an easy way out by using search engines for quick answers.

Rita provides ways in which we as librarians, researchers, and information professionals can have not only "good" but "great" search skills. There were fifty registered attendees for this seminar, and many of us left with improved skills in performing research. Challenges facing many of us are that we don't have the time to stay up to date with the many changes of the web; search engines are seductive, a simple and free means to information; and that we need to retain our own professional best practices for information seeking in a "free-web environment."

Five points to keep in mind while searching for information are:

1. Know what's "under the hood" of search tools. We need to understand the content behind the search box, the size of the database, and how is it organized (searchable vs. browsable). An example of a searchable database with a small database retrieval size is the Librarians' Index to the Internet, <http://www.lii.org>.
2. Great web searchers understand the business models of free search tools. In essence, how do the business models influence searching? Are the business models supporting the public good, such as lii.org and pubmed.gov? Or do the business models promote services of the sponsor/author providing the information, such as [Sitelines](http://sitelines.com) (Rita's monthly weblogs) and [Infobel/Teldir](http://infobel.com) (telephone directory)?
3. Understand the limitations of search engines. One limitation of search engines is the invisible web, information and data hidden in databases that are not picked up by search engines.

Know when to "use" and "lose" search engines.

USE SEARCH ENGINES WHEN YOU:

- Forget the web address
- Want to search a distinctive name, such as "Special Libraries Association"
- Are searching for "needle in a haystack" (e.g. Louisiana tax forms)
- Have search topics which are low in commercial value

Becoming a Great Web Searcher, SLA Virtual Seminar with Rita Vine
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LOSE SEARCH ENGINES WHEN YOU:

- Don't have a clear "aha!" moment
- Have topics with flexible/ambiguous terminology
- Have topics with spelling/language variations
- Obtain extensive results

4. Use selected power features of search engines when needed. Power features include but are not limited to providing the link and URL in each of the results; a search by filetype (.pdf); language; and the date of the link.

5. Know how to evaluate new search tools. While assessing a site like CEOexpress.com, the searcher would get some free information, but would have to subscribe to retrieve the bulk of the information. The searcher will also have to determine if the search tool has an on-hand expert; if the site has content rich information; and if it is the "best-of-breed" in its category.

Recommended starter sites from Rita's Search Portfolio

www.searchportfolio.com/searchlite.html

Infomine, Scholarly Internet Resource Collections: <http://infomine.ucr.edu/>

Librarians' Index to the Internet: <http://www.lii.org>

Find Articles: <http://www.Findarticles.com>

British Library (Business, Environmental, Health care, & Social Sciences):

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/business/bislinks.html>

Much was covered and learned in the 1 ½ hour span of the teleconference. The attendees of the seminar left with a better understanding of search engines including Google and how to determine when to use and when to lose them. In addition to her teleconference, Rita provides 8-week-long course sessions, her own search portal (with a paid subscription), and weblogs to empower web searchers and help them become great web searchers.

To visit Rita's website or for more information, go to <http://www.workingfaster.com> or rita@workingfaster.com

Elections are November 2, so remember to VOTE!
But don't forget this timely definition:

Politician — a man who will double cross that bridge when he comes to it.

Get more like this at <http://badpuns.com>. (the site where you can get your muds wordled)





LOUISIANA BOOK FESTIVAL

NOVEMBER 6 **2004** BATON ROUGE

*Celebrating Readers,
Writers
& their Books!*

The Louisiana Center for the Book in the State Library of Louisiana and the Louisiana Library Foundation are delighted to announce the 2004 Louisiana Book Festival.

Booklovers of all ages won't want to miss this third annual event featuring more than 100 distinguished poets, writers, storytellers and musicians celebrating reading, writing and books.

Admission is **FREE**, and it's open to everyone.

It all takes place from 10 - 5 on Saturday, November 6, 2004 in the heart of Baton Rouge at the State Library of Louisiana, the Louisiana State Capitol and the Louisiana State Museum.

Please enjoy browsing the LBF website (lbf.state.lib.la.us/) and make your plans to join us at the exciting third annual Louisiana Book Festival.

Volunteers are still needed. Please see the LBF website to sign up.

Thomas F. Jaques, State Librarian

Library Riddles to Prepare you for Halloween.....

What did the spider do inside the library computer? It made a web site.

When spiders go on the Internet, what do they visit first? Charlotte's web site.

Who writes invisible books? A ghost writer.

What does the mummy do when he goes to the library? He gets all wrapped up in a good book.

From the Multnomah County Library, Oregon, www.multcolib.org

