Chapter 7
The Role of the Special Libraries Association in Promoting Library Professionals on a Global Scale

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ABSTRACT

Since World War II, the library profession has grown worldwide both extensively and at an impressively rapid rate, resulting in an increase in international librarians and international library associations. Several possible reasons for this growth are emphasized in Baldwin (1997, 392-393): "Our shrinking world has caused increasing awareness of other parts of the world with accompanying demands for access to information from those areas; growth of information and publishing throughout the world; awareness through increased automation of resources in other parts of the world; growth of international business interests in the second half of the twentieth century after the war; more sophisticated users who demand specialized services and increased knowledge of the access to information resources by their librarians." This chapter focuses on one particular international library association, the Special Libraries Association (SLA), and its role as the outstanding voice for the world's information professionals. It shows that this association has consistently developed numerous initiatives and programs promoting library professionals worldwide with an emphasis on librarians outside of the United States. Although some SLA programs may no longer be active in the capacity they had when first introduced, their influence has had an impact on many SLA chapters and divisions, inspiring them to continue the practices by adopting similar programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information in this literature review, as well as throughout this chapter, supports the position that since the inception of the Special Libraries Association (SLA), its role has been as an international organization devoted to encouraging the participation of its members worldwide. The benefits provided by this Association are numerous and serve to support and, therefore, promote the career advancement of its members throughout the world. In his book review of SLA's publication, *Global Ties through Information,* Gathegi(1990-1991) describes the collection of papers in this monograph, which covers two perspectives on information management: information as a national resource to be guarded jealously and information as a global resource, the access to which is an inalienable right of every individual. These perspectives often result in conflicting agendas. In his conclusion, Gathegi emphasizes that this monograph is essential reading for anyone interested in the global aspects of information policy and telecommunications issues, and notes,"It manages to address many pertinent problems and opportunities that will result from the inevitable global interdependence in the information resources management arena."

The SLA journal,*Information Outlook,*has published journal articles describing SLA's commitment to its international members, most notably, "Info pros at the global crossroads: gathering of the world's bestpromises to highlight the future of the profession" (InformationOutlook, 2000); "Going Global: Creating the SLA Network of the Future" (Spiegelman and Massoud, 2004); "Always International: A Brief History of SLA'sGlobalFocus" (St. Clair, 2004); and "SLA's Response to Natural Disasters" (Robertson, 2005).

INSPEL, a professional journal primarily for the dissemination of papers written or proposed for publication by members of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Division of Special Libraries, contains papers presented at the SLA-sponsored Global 2000 Conference in Brighton, UK, 16-19 October 2000. The INSPEL editorial by Doug Newcomb and Hans-ChristophHobohm (2000), "Editorial: Special Issue on the Global 2000 Conference" states that this Second World-wide Conference on Special Librarianship was attended by 700 delegates from 56 nations, all of whom were carefully optimistic about the promise of greater global sharing and networking with their colleagues. Many of the papers presented at this conference reflect this optimism.

Another noteworthy literary publication that shows the international cooperation between special libraries is the Winter 1990 issue of *Special Libraries*(SLA, 1990), whichfocuses on SLA's internationalrole, with position papers prepared by key SLA international librarians, (Scheeder, 1990; Spaulding, 1990). Theeditor's introduction notes,

The articles in this issue deal with examples of the activities of special libraries abroad and the existence of international cooperative efforts at different levels. They range from discussing the emerging international role of SLA, particularly as it focuses on participation in IFLA, to how a special library is designed abroad to make its foreign visitors feel at home while also showcasing the best of American special librarianship. Special library networks, bilateral cooperation, and international networks are all highlighted in these articles. The Internationalism of SLA, by former SLA president Frank Spaulding, gives an overview of the development of an international role for SLA. It outlines actions taken in the 1990s by the SLA Board of Directors to increase SLA's international activities and involvement. This includes a charge for SLA to participate more actively in IFLA. Spaulding summarizes actions taken by the IFLA council and reports on programs

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