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# My Experience Attending the SLA 2009 Annual Conference in DC: A Report from the Asian Student Award Winner

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More significant than any one thing I learned at a workshop, in conversation with my colleagues, or at a poster session, however, is the overall sense of perspective that I gained from the conference.. As the individual pieces of information and the knowledge of nifty technologies fade into my general understanding of the field, I am left most strongly with this sense of perspective. It is so easy to become wrapped up in the details of the mundane activities required to make a library function day-to-day. I find that sometimes it can be difficult to keep in mind the broader scope of the profession. The annual conference reminded me that we do not work in isolation and that we are not facing unique dilemmas. The camaraderie and sense of connection I encountered at the conference helped renew and reinvigorate my interest and excitement in the library and information profession.

I feel lucky to have attended the SLA Annual Conference and INFO-EXPO as a student. I now know what to expect from future conferences and have begun to create a professional network. Being a student allowed me to choose my activities and schedule more freely than I might otherwise have been able to do. I was able to absorb the conference experience as a spectator without the pressures to negotiate with vendors, etc. I welcomed, too, the opportunities to learn more about what types of work other SLA members are engaged in and what their jobs entail. The knowledge, connections and perspective I found at the annual conference continue to inform my thoughts and work. I am looking forward to future SLA conferences. ❖

## **My Experience Attending the SLA 2009 Annual Conference in DC: A Report from the Asian Student Award Winner**

by Xiang "Cindy" Yuanyuan  
Fudan University, Shanghai, China

Last year I received a forwarded email from the Information Center of the U.S. Embassy in Shanghai, China, which was the 2009 Asian Student Awards announcement that offered an award for Library and Information Science students to attend the Special Libraries Association (SLA) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. Although I applied and submitted the required resume, essay and recommendation letter on the last day of 2008, by the deadline, which seemed like making a New Year's wish, I actually never dreamed of winning the award. In early April of this year, I received an email that was to not only offer me a great surprise, but also definitely gave me a chance to change my life. I could not believe that I won the award and would travel to America in June!

I could strongly feel the culture shock. Although Washington, D.C. is the capital of America, it strikes me as an atypical American city since there are no skyscrapers, which indeed are prohibited by law. However, I can still feel the city is full of culture, history and memorial when I was visiting some famous attractions. The Washington Monument at night with reflection was so impressive and stunning; the National World War II Memorial shows the great honor to the people who have devoted their lives to the peace and freedom of the world. I also learned about the symbolic art and architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building at the Library of Congress.

After two months of preparation and logistics for attending the conference, the month of June was coming. Excitement and also butterflies set in as the serious countdown began towards the final days. June 12<sup>th</sup> was a big day for me. I took the flight from Shanghai Pudong International Airport to Detroit to D.C., fortunately, everything went well according to the plan and after an eighteen-hour-flight, I finally felt my feet firmly on the American soil.

I was very happy that I got the chance to attend the SLA Centennial conference. At the Opening Session and Awards Presentation, I felt inspired by a series of awards that recognized professionals in various fields for their numerous contributions. The highlight at the opening session was the opening keynote address by General Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State. Although Gen. Powell did not speak about librarians directly, I still found the speech quite amazing which also proved it was possible to deliver a very interesting speech without any slides or any other visual aids. He covered everything from his many pursuits, his views on leadership and his efforts to modernize the

U.S. Department of State. Some words by Mr. Powell left a deep impression on my mind, for example, "We had to change because we are in a new world- in a world of information explosion- information that needed to be turned into knowledge, and it was time to catch up with technology." Yes, when change happens, (and when does it not?) information professionals and future librarians must remember to think about how to adjust their new roles in a time of great opportunities.

The INFO-EXPO in the exhibit hall was the place where I experienced the latest technologies, tools, and services from the top companies in the information industry. Many databases of exhibitors like Dialog&ProQuest, EBSCO, ERIC, JSTOR, OCLC, Springer and IEEE are commonly purchased by most libraries of universities and institutes in China to support academic research. Walking among the booths I noticed that an increased focus on real-time and near-real-time information which indicated that eventually all kinds of information will need to be updated instantly. Therefore, the information professionals should also be prepared to be at any inflection point right now.

The four days' trip in DC was interesting and

meaningful for me as it was not only my first time to visit the U.S. but also to attend such a big conference. It was wonderful to talk with the nice people at both the Science & Technology Division Business and Awards Breakfast and the Asian Chapter Breakfast Meeting. I was proud of being part of this great organization and the excellent information professionals helped me gain the confidence that librarians are charming, knowledgeable, helpful and important.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the SLA Science & Technology Division and the Asian Chapter for giving me this great honor and for making this trip possible, even in the tough economic climate. Thanks to all these people who looked after me so kindly, especially to Sheila Rosenthal and her husband, with whom I enjoyed interesting sightseeing and delicious western meals, and to Scott Davidson, who helped me with the arrangement of the trip and also gave me valuable advice for my future career.

This experience of attending the SLA Centennial Conference in Washington, D.C. will become an invaluable treasure of memory to be cherished in my life. I am looking forward to meeting you in China some day in the future! ❖

## Asian Chapter Award Winner Conference Report

by P.K. Jain

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Special Libraries Association (SLA) organizes an annual conference every year in different parts of the world since 1909. This year was the 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration of SLA. It is a great opportunity for library and information science professionals to attend this wonderful conference and network among professionals.

I am thankful to all who supported me to attend the SLA conference. I first got an opportunity to attend an SLA conference in 2000 in Brighton, UK and this is the fourth SLA conference which I attended. I would like to attend more SLA conferences in the future.

### Inaugural Session

The keynote address was delivered by Mr. Colin Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State, during the inaugural session. Many awards were also given during this session.

### Science-Technology Division Breakfast Business Meeting

This is the first time I got the chance to attend the Science-Technology Division breakfast business meeting on 15 June 2009 at 7:30 am. I never saw such a wonderful division in my life. This was a great opportunity for me to interact with the division board members and other distinguished members.

I am very much thankful to the Science-Technology Division, Special Libraries Association to award me the Bonnie Hilditch International Librarian Award and give me a chance to attend the 100<sup>th</sup> SLA conference in Washington DC, USA. Special thanks to Pam Enrici Chair, Sci-Tech Division and Sheila L. Rosenthal, Award Chair for this award to me. I feel very much honored to receive this award. During the conference, I met many old professional friends