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# A First-Timer's Perspective on the SLA 2010 Annual Conference

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## S. Kirk Cabeen Travel Stipend Award Essay: "Entering SLA's Next Century: Let the Good Times Roll!"

*Submitted by Sara Samuel, Engineering Librarian, University of Michigan*

"Let the good times roll!" This doesn't seem to be a phrase we hear much anymore due to the sad economic state of our country. More often we are encouraging one another by exclaiming "Don't give up!" or "Just hang in there!" I think we in the Special Libraries Association can turn this financially challenging time into an opportunity to show just how good we are at our profession. Every day we use our information management skills to help our patrons find what they are looking for, and instruct them on how to use different software programs and services. We can show that we can make the good times roll in even the toughest of times by using our excellent skills to share information with each other.

Most of the time, we are using our skills to reach out to our patrons to give them assistance and educate them on what resources are available. How can we utilize those same skills to address issues such as budget cuts and patrons asking for and expecting more? Librarians can develop innovative approaches to making something happen, especially as we move into the next century where technology and its convenience can make a big impact.

How do we figure out these innovative approaches? The best way is not only to apply our own creative ideas, but to participate in a community of sharing – use our information management skills to help and inform each other. We need to encourage & educate one another by telling our stories, both those we

consider successful and those that didn't go quite as planned. If we share our experiences, together we can come out ahead and build a brighter future. So instead of telling each other "Don't give up!" or "Just hang in there!" start with "Here's what I did" and share your story.

I've seen this type of sharing demonstrated within the University of Michigan Library through a program called Skillshare. Skillshare is a program that was started a couple of years ago for workers in the University Library to learn what staff and librarians in other library departments do each day and how they contribute to the library's mission. I participated in Skillshare this winter and I found it to be a valuable use of my time. I learned what others did within the library and learned about their personal experiences within the information profession. Although this Skillshare program is executed within just one library system, I think we can benefit from this type of sharing across institutions, and a professional organization is just the place to facilitate it. Connecting people and ideas across libraries can be beneficial to us all, and can be an encouragement in this tough economic climate. Conferences are a great place to share this information, and I'm looking forward to all that I can learn from others at this year's Annual Conference.

So, SLA, let's share our experiences and knowledge at this conference, and let the good times roll! ❖

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## A First-Timer's Perspective on SLA 2010 Annual Conference

*Submitted by Sara Samuel, Engineering Librarian, University of Michigan  
2010 S. Kirk Cabeen Travel Award Winner*

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Attending SLA's Annual Conference for the first time was a great experience. I learned a lot, met a lot of people, and had some really great times. Overall, my time at SLA Annual can be summed up into 3 points that will be very helpful for me to "let the good times roll" when attending future conferences:

**1. Be open to different sessions.** Sci-Tech Division put on some great sessions this year – great job, planners! One of the best ses-

sions I went to was a roundtable. It was very useful to be able to chat with others about a topic and hear what others had to say about it. What we talked about is directly applicable a project I'm involved with at work, and it was very beneficial to be in a session where I could share my own thoughts and experiences in addition to listening to others' ideas.

On the flip side, I'm now aware that sometimes a session is not always what it sounds like it

might be. I was looking forward to a certain session because the title made it sound very applicable to something I am interested in, but it didn't live up to my expectations. I think it was a good lesson for me that a session may not always give you what you want, but it was still interesting to hear the speakers give their point-of-view. Next year I'll know to have a back-up session for each time-slot, and I'll try going to another roundtable.

## 2. Experience the city the conference is in.

SLA was in New Orleans this year. I explored the French Quarter with my colleagues during our first afternoon in the city. We managed to find Jackson Square, eat beignets at Café Du Monde, see local artists display their artwork for sale, and get rained on. I signed up for the city bus tour that was organized by SLA. We went to several different areas of the city, heard its history, learned about its culture, and even got to see some of the effects of Hurricane Katrina. I also found time to ride on the St. Charles Street streetcar. Most importantly, I ate several meals out in local restaurants and tried something different at each one. The food was fabulous! I think part of experiencing SLA is

experiencing the city it is in each year, so take advantage of it and go explore and eat out!

3. **Say "Hi" to everyone.** Okay, so you can't really manage to meet everyone, but you can meet the people around you. Waiting in line for the computers? Talk to the people around you. Waiting for the shuttle bus? Introduce yourself to people that look like they're waiting alone. Before a session starts, chat with the person sitting next to you.

I met some great people while waiting in lines, attending first-timer receptions, going up escalators, and sitting on the shuttle bus. You never know who you might meet, what connections you can make, and what opportunities may arise from your speaking up.

I'm very grateful that the Sci-Tech Division gave me the opportunity to come to SLA 2010 where I learned a lot, met people, and experienced much. I'm looking forward to granting this opportunity to others this next year, and hopefully we can "let the good times roll" once again in Philadelphia! ❖

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## The SLA 2010 Conference: A Newbie's Account

*Submitted by Molly Tebo*

*2010 Sci-Tech Division and Australia-New Zealand Student Award Winner*

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My name is Molly. I'm a library student in Australia and I was fortunate enough to win a travel prize to attend the 2010 SLA conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. This was the most wonderful opportunity for me and I tried to make the most of it.

The award was offered by the Australia/New Zealand Chapter together with the Science-Technology Division. It was co-sponsored by Annual Reviews. I'm extremely grateful to everyone who made this prize possible. Right from the get-go Sheila Rosenthal from Sci-Tech and Gillian Ralph from ANZ were in contact with me, helping to arrange travel and letting me know what to expect. Their support and encouragement made a world of difference for me.

The trip to the conference was a long one (about 25 hours on four planes) and it was a shock to

go from winter in Perth to the heat and humidity of NOLA. There was excitement in the air, however, and this helped me ignore my jetlag. I arrived at the Convention Center bright and early on Sunday to register and see what was happening. I was fortunate enough to sit down next to some friendly people who were also first timers. We ended up chatting and making dinner plans. In the end, we spent much of the conference together along with other friends we made along the way.

This was my first indication of the brilliance of the SLA conference for networking. Not only is it essential, it's fun! So many of the people who attend this conference are fascinating and delightful, with many stories to tell. I learned a huge amount from people I met and various conversations I had with them.