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The SLA 2010 Annual Conference: A Newbie's Account

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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! ❖

The SLA 2010 Conference: A Newbie's Account

Submitted by Molly Tebo

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

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.

That first day I attended a lunch for first time Sci-Tech attendees and made another friend, a fellow geeky knitting librarian! I also went along to the newcomers meet and greet where I met even MORE people!

For a bit of a change, I then went to have a look at the Info-Expo. This was a real eye opener and very interesting. I was delighted to see some high tech digitisation machines and to learn about all of the amazing ways different companies are presenting online content. I spoke to most of the exhibitors, picked up a bunch of brochures and many freebies along the way. The squishy Einstein was especially notable. Sadly, I failed to win an iPad.

The next four days passed in a blur. There were so many interesting sessions; it was very hard to choose what to go to. Fortunately Twitter saved the day by helping me get the high points from rooms I couldn't make it to. I did attend a number of great sessions including "Science-Engineering Resources 101," "Open Source Technologies" and "Embed Yourself" to name just a few.

I also made an effort to get to as many social gatherings as possible including the International Reception, a number of open houses and the most excellent Tuesday night masquerade where I danced the night away in a feathered mask. I have many vivid memories to take away including the sights and smells of New

Orleans (especially Bourbon Street at 1 am), the taste of beignets and café au lait, a badly timed downpour before the International Reception and some impressive ribbon collections people were wearing!

I learned a great deal from my SLA conference experience. It really helped open my eyes to the myriad of issues facing information professionals. It gave me a number of things to follow up and learn more about which will help make me a better librarian. It also introduced me to some wonderful people (including a new mentor) who have already enriched my life and will hopefully continue to do so.

Some of the things I have taken away from the conference include a strong urge to play an active role in the SLA Sci-Tech Division. I am also keen to encourage other information professionals from Australia and New Zealand to attend future SLA conferences in order to learn from and contribute to them. I fully plan to make it back across the pond, hopefully playing a more active role next time.

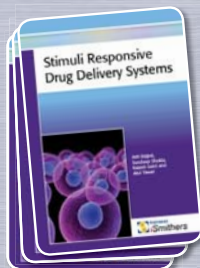
I am extremely appreciative to have had this opportunity to attend the SLA 2010 Annual Conference. I think helping students and overseas librarians to attend SLA conferences is beneficial to everyone concerned. I hope the Science-Technology Division continues to offer these prizes so that others have the same chance that I have gained so much from. ❖

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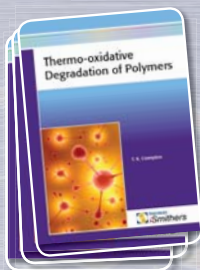


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