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2010 Marion E. Sparks Award: Statement of Purpose

Ye Li

University of Michigan - Ann Arbor, liye@umich.edu

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2010 Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development

Submitted by Cory Craig, Chair, Awards Committee, Chemistry Division

The SLA Chemistry Division (DCHE) was pleased to award the 2010 Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development to Ye Li at the 2010 SLA Annual Conference. Ms. Li is the Chemistry Librarian at the Shapiro Science Library at the University of Michigan. She obtained her master's degree in Library Science and her Ph.D. in Chemistry at the University of Iowa in 2009.

award certificate to support her attendance at the 2010 SLA Annual Conference at the DCHE Annual Business Meeting/Breakfast in New Orleans, LA on Tuesday June 15th. The Sparks Award is named to honor Marion E. Sparks, a pioneering and influential chemistry librarian who worked at the University of Illinois from 1913 through 1929. ❖

DCHE presented Ms. Li with a \$1500 check and

Statement of Purpose

Submitted by Ye Li

Winner of the 2010 Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development

Two months ago, I fortunately became the new Chemistry Librarian at the University of Michigan. With the excitement of my first step in my dream career path fading to the background, I am currently overwhelmed by the thousands of details in my daily work. My passion about librarianship, years of education, and my research experience in Chemistry may have helped me standing out among candidates for the job but they are all just a starting point of my career now. Holding on to both my short-term and long-term goals keeps me from reaching for what is beyond my grasp but also reminds me of the "big picture" which can be easily blurred by the aspects of day-to-day work.

My short-term goal is to become a competent chemistry librarian who can bridge the chemistry community and the world of chemistry information virtually and physically.

To my surprise, the key to achieving this goal is not how much I know but how to apply what I know. For example, I have a chemistry information literacy curriculum in mind but my first challenge is to find an opportunity to teach: I want 30 minutes to help an undergraduate student at the reference desk to learn how to study literature but his/her assignment is due in 10 minutes. I plan to devote my time and effort mostly into chemistry information literacy but more than 60% of my first two months are spent on issues with vendors and publishers. Gaining all the skills and tacit knowledge requested in my job takes daily practice and

constant learning from my own failures, from my colleagues and through the librarians' network, such as various listserv groups. From the librarians' network, I can learn tips on using resources and negotiating with vendors, insight on how new technology or economy development can influence libraries, and strategies on how to promote information literacy. The altruism flowing through the librarians' network encourages me to learn and to contribute to our profession.

In the meantime, as a chemist, I am also learning from the chemistry community about the latest breakthroughs and new trends in teaching and research. Staying up-to-date and relevant with chemistry empowers me to communicate in depth with my user community. Advances in chemistry usually mean new opportunities for librarians and information specialists to serve our users better or to collaborate with them in research. Cheminformatics and data curation are two representative areas for collaboration. I just started a collaborative project with a research group about chemistry information retrieval through graphical recognition. Last but not least, researchers with experience and reputation in scholarly communication often times can help me solve issues with publishers.

My long-term goal is to become an exceptional chemistry librarian who can bridge chemistry learners and researchers all around the world to boost the development of chemistry and related scientific fields. This is the "big picture."

I would like to pursue. To facilitate the collaboration among scientists globally on the base of information sharing requires deep understanding of the scientific information flow, integrated technology allowing seamless communication of data and message, commitment to solve intellectual property issues, psychological and sociological support for scientists to enhance trust in the scientific community. All the requirements may be out of the traditional scope of librarianship but I believe librarians should take the initiative to integrate all the elements together because of our role as bridges and our altruistic spirit.

Participating in the SLA conference belongs to my favorite job category—life-long learning. For the SLA 2010 Annual Conference, I have three major tasks planned: 1) networking with my science librarian peers around the country; 2) presenting a poster titled “Managing Librarians’ Professional Knowledge with Personalized XML”; and 3) learning from the Continue Education (CE) course and all the invited presentations.

Communication in person with my peer science librarians is irreplaceable by any other means of communication. I will prepare myself well by planning meetings with specific science librarians around the country. My anticipated poster originates from a course project and carries my goal to set an example of personal knowledge management for librarians. The abstract of the poster will be submitted soon and I will be thrilled if I can present it in the conference

as my debut on the librarians’ stage. The CE course, Chemical Information Sources, Requests, and Reference, will help me to form a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Chemistry information. In the invited talks, besides exposing my mind to the newest interests in our field, there are two essential questions to which I am looking for an answer. The first is how to develop a state-of-art curriculum for delivering chemistry information literacy. The second is how to get the best out of the decreasing budget when facing the ever-increasing expense for resources.

In addition, learning and communicating with various publishers and vendors at the conference will be very helpful for my future work. After all, we need healthy and collaborative relationship with publishers and vendors to supply the best chemistry information to our user community.

Ms. Marion E. Sparks defined her milestone work, *Chemistry Literature and Its Use*, as “a brief guide to the increasing flood of chemical literature” ninety-one years ago. I admire her for being such a visionary female librarian leading her time. Nowadays, the chemistry information is like “increasing flood” more than ever. I challenge myself to write a new “brief guide” to the chemistry information and the scientific collaboration with my whole career and my life. I would feel truly honored if I can be awarded the Sparks Award to attend my first SLA conference. What a memorable starting line it will be! ❖

My First SLA Annual Conference

Submitted by Ye Li

Recipient of the 2010 Marion E. Sparks Award for Professional Development

As all other first-timers, I waited anxiously to embrace the SLA Annual Conference as well as New Orleans’ music, food, heat and humidity. With the generous support of the Marion E. Sparks Award, I enjoyed every second at the conference in mid-June 2010. Now, I am reflecting on my wonderful trip and feeling inspired by the successful stories of those members we witnessed receiving awards, by creative works the speakers presented, by innovations vendors demonstrated in the exhibition and by the passion about information every one of us shared.

My adventure started with a pleasant dinner with members of the Chemistry Division, the group I spent most of my conference time with. The happy dynamics of the group reassured me that I am in a profession where everyone truly loves their job. With this group, I also enjoyed the Chemistry Division Business Breakfast and Academic Round Table. Exchanging opinions face-to-face and learning from these friends I got to know virtually was such a pleasure. It really helped me to recognize where Chemistry Librarians/information professionals stand and how my peers think and act upon the challenges