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Engineering Division

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Spring is finally in the air! When I talk to colleagues in other regions of the country, I hear that this has been an unusually wet or cold or just plain long winter, and everyone is looking forward to the Spring season coming around with bright flowers, bird song, and warmer or milder weather.

As librarians and information professions, we are also planning for and looking forward to our annual conference in June, this year located in Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Preparations are being finalized for conference programming and across the globe information professionals are looking through the program, determining “must attend” choices in the schedule, and how best to be in multiple places at one time in order to cover all the sessions they want to attend! If you have not already registered for SLA 2011 or are undecided on whether you will attend, I encourage you to take a look at the schedule, read the descriptions, and think about the great opportunities available to you at the conference. The sessions are informative, energizing, and inspiring, and at no other time or place do you have the opportunities for networking that you will have at the conference. You may meet people with whom you have exchanged e-mail but never met, folks you have helped by providing resources, authors of articles you have read, or members of your Division or Chapter! If you have attended in the past you will have an opportunity to meet with friends you have not seen for awhile. What a great gathering place to learn, exchange ideas, renew friendships, and share what you have discovered, where you have struggled, and your successes!

The Engineering Division has partnered with several other divisions and vendor sponsors to provide excellent programming again this year. All three days are packed with great sessions and speakers!

Monday is the Aerospace Section’s Breakfast and Business Meeting; please join the section in celebrating with award recipients during the breakfast (see Adrianne Jones Washburn’s article in this issue for additional details). Also on Monday is the Data Mining & Visualization session with speakers Richard Klavans and William Pickering. This session covers what’s next once you have developed your thesaurus or taxonomy and tagged your data. The speakers will cover options for visualizing and mining the data you have so carefully tagged using text analytics instead of term analytics. Adrianne Jones Washburn will be presenting a great virtual session on collaboration during the afternoon. She will present collaboration tools used in her organization, “how-tos,” and some great information on methods for reducing e-mail!

Tuesday will include a fantastic session on Tweets from Space, covering how NASA is using social media tools for really long distance communication! Jaime Scibelli from NASA Glenn Research Center will discuss how NASA is using social media tools to connect with the public and improve communication as well as broader support for space programs. Then be sure to register and join us for the Engineering Division Luncheon and Business Meeting. We are planning to hold a raffle during the luncheon with all proceeds going to a local Philadelphia charity. We started this new tradition in New Orleans last year, raising several hundred dollars that went to the local food bank (can something we have done once be called a tradition? – I think so when the intention is to continue!). The afternoon continues with a session on building a physical library in the digital age, where our speakers, Susan Nutter and Helen Josephine, will talk about how two new libraries are using technology, space design, and student input to better align with smaller physical collections, the need for group areas for work or study, and to better prepare students for the more advanced and interactive software they are likely to encounter in many workplaces. The day is capped off with the All Sciences Poster Session and Reception. Be sure to plan time to come by and talk to the presenters about their posters and learn first hand about some of the innovative ideas being developed.
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During the SLA conferences, typically Wednesday rolls around with a feeling of physical exhaustion accompanied by heightened mental excitement among conference attendees as new ideas continue to be explored – and SLA 2011 will be no different! The Technical Standards Update session starts off the morning providing a review of new products and services from our engineering and technical standards providers. What a great opportunity to learn about new features all in one place! The Science and Engineering Resources 101 session will include a discussion on materials science and marine science with our speakers Mary Frances Lembo and James Manasco. Be sure to arrive at the closing session early to get a good seat for our closing general session featuring keynote speaker James Kane, considered an expert on loyalty and what it takes to inspire loyalty to a person, a cause, or an organization.

All of these great sessions would not be possible without the support and resources provided by our vendor sponsors at SLA. Be sure to say thank you to the sponsors as you wander through the Expo Hall, attend sessions, or run into them in the hallways. They enable us to learn, share, and grow in our profession. If you find you are not able to attend SLA 2011, please be sure to thank your vendor representatives next time you meet with them in your own organizations.

Another topic related to conferences, learning, and sharing is mentoring. With the conference coming up in June we have a great opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet. We are looking for Engineering Division volunteers to be conference mentors. This is a great learning opportunity for mentors as well as mentees – both gain and share knowledge and experiences. It is hard to say who gains the most from the relationship! An Engineering Division Conference Mentor is someone who has attended several SLA annual conferences and has been a member of the Engineering Division for several years. This experience enables the mentor to help the new conference attendee to get the most out of the conference. The mentor helps the mentee determine which meetings and programs would best meet their learning goals and interests, introduce them to colleagues, and help them get involved in the division. The goal is to help the mentee find the conference experience beneficial, informative, and less stressful. How many of you remember your first SLA conference? If you didn’t have someone who helped you through the maze of programs and meetings, you likely felt a bit lost and overwhelmed at times! Please consider being a conference mentor, and contact Bonnie Osif (bao2@psu.edu), our Mentor Chairperson, for additional information. If we get enough volunteers we can put out a call for mentees to match. Please consider how your experience can help someone, and will likely result in a new colleague relationship for you as well!

I am looking forward to the conference, learning, sharing, networking, meeting new colleagues, and seeing old friends. I hope to see you in Philly!