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From the Editor

Susan Fingerman

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From the Editor

Susan Fingerman



You are a SME.

Here at The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab we have many SMEs. These are Subject Matter Experts, scientists and engineers who have expertise in a specific area of knowledge. The term of course is not unique to APL. The Wikipedia "stub" entry says that a SME has "expertise in the field of application but without technical project knowledge." There are some more exacting definitions in certain fields, such as computer technology, but there is also the more general definition of "any individual with expertise in the subject matter to be documented."

Librarians often describe ourselves as generalists. We are often asked for, and can provide information on a wide range of topics. We can come up to speed fairly quickly in the literature of almost any topic, and often can grasp concepts to a level sufficient to allow us to discover and filter meaningful information for our customers. Many librarians, of course, also have secondary subject degrees, even up to the PhD. Many also have an undergraduate degree that in no way relates to the subject matter they research.

I suggest that a trained (MLS) librarian is an SME in information – specifically "capable of analyzing information, information needs and of providing information services and materials" in the words of the Wikipedia entry on Librarian. The U.S. *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, way back in Winter 2000-2001, described us as "information experts in the Information Age." (<http://stats.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2000/winter/art01.htm>) Let's translate that "expert" into SME. It will help us define ourselves in a way that is more aligned with the specialists we work with, and I believe enhance credibility both in our own minds and in theirs. Of course, we will need to back it up with deeds, but I believe that will not be a problem. I welcome your comments.

On to the SLA 2008 Conference coming up in June in Seattle. This issue details the planning,

the sessions, and the expectations for that conference by our Divisions and Sections. The 2008 program seems to me one of the better ones in recent memory. There are sessions for all levels of expertise. CE courses include "Executive Renewal Think Tank," in-depth subject reviews and primers for novices and those moving into new disciplines, and several related to management, strategic, financial and other kinds.

The Cyberinfrastructure series of sessions, created by the Engineering Division, and discussed by Daureen Neddill in her Chair's message, brings programming to a new level of ingenuity and interest. All three of our Divisions and two Sections have inspired programming that creates, for me at least, the usual frustration of wanting to be in at least two, if not three, places at the same time. I truly hope many of you readers can attend.

On a final note, we pay tribute to John and Jean Piety, who have decided to leave off active participation in SLA and go on to true retirement. You will find more about Jean's work history and the wonderful send-off given her by the Cleveland Public Library in January in this issue. We hope to have more about John in a future STN issue. All we can say is a deeply felt thank you for all your contributions in both official and unofficial (mentoring) capacities. Board meetings will not be the same without you.

We will be sending out requests for conference session reporters on the various lists. Please be thinking about those you would like to cover. And if you take any photos at the conference, please don't hesitate to send them to me for the August issue.❖

See you in Seattle,
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