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From the Editor

Susan Fingerman

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From the Editor

Susan Fingerman



This August issue positively exudes energy and enthusiasm from the Annual Conference in Denver in June. I don't remember an issue in which so many Chair columns began with the same word – great! That word certainly expresses the feelings of SLA HQ staff, who proudly pronounced this conference to have "exceeded planners' expectations [with over 5000 attendees] and included, for the first time, SLA members from every chapter around the globe." (18 June SLA press release)

If you felt overwhelmed in the EXPO hall, that too was explained and extolled by SLA as "the largest information and knowledge management exposition in North America, [which] was sold out this year and featured 275 companies and organizations and 445 total booths. SLA welcomed 38 new exhibitors." (op cit) It was good to see companies like Google start exhibiting at our conference.

What I felt most promising were the over 800 first timers out of the approximately 4000 non-vendor attendees, and the fact that 41 countries were represented.

Do you think it was Al Gore? He did give a good performance, playing to the crowd with phrases right out of the SLA website, and starting with engaging humor. His passionate, dramatic final plea for the global warming cause was very moving. I had a fleeting thought that if he'd done more of that during his Presidential campaign, well.....

My major disappointment with this conference was the seeming inability of us to live up to its futuristic theme. I found the Synergy General Session on Monday, moderated by Tom Hogan of Information Today, to be downright embarrassing.

Here were three stellar panelists, Eugenie Prime, formally of Hewlett Packard Libraries, Cliff Lynch of the Coalition for Networked Information, and

Stephen Abram, of Sirsi/Dynix and President-Elect of SLA. These intelligent and articulate people were available to comment on our to quote the program, "leading-edge ideas and thought-provoking comments."

What did we hear? How can I be more valued in my organization? How can I improve my catalog? How do I combat Google? etc. I'm hoping that these were just poor selections from the submitted questions. I couldn't believe myself hearing Eugenie Prime say the same things I heard her say at another Annual Conference at least a decade ago, because she was being asked the same questions! If we can't be more leading-edge than this we're really in trouble.

Maybe some of the roundtable sessions brought out some better thinking. For example, did anyone hear about or comment on the increasing purchasing trend of our information suppliers by investment companies? To me that is an alarming situation. When the bottom line is the major consideration for an owner, instability usually follows in both product and personnel. We saw that not that long ago with Dialog, and I sure don't want that to happen again. I'd love to hear from you, perhaps in a Letter to the Editor, with your thoughts on this and any related topic.

On a happier note, this was an extremely successful conference from the *SciTech News* point of view. Not only did we find new Advertising and Subscription Managers, but I have several interested Book News selectors.

Thanks to those who provided the session reports. They're so good I didn't have the heart to edit them down to the requested ½ page!❖

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