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Update on Special Libraries and Environmental Information

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In this time of increasing focus on our environment, the Environment and Resource Management Division (ERMD) of the Special Libraries Association (formed in 1989 by the merger of the Environmental Information Division and the Natural Resources Division) thrives, as more information specialists from diverse settings in industry, academia, governmental agencies, the media, etc. seek to enhance their ability to stay abreast of information resources.

The Special Libraries Association Annual Conference, held every June, serves as the opportunity for much information gathering and networking by ERMD members. In June 1995, the conference was held in Montreal and featured a number of activities and programs for ERMD members.

On the international front, ERMD hosted four environmental librarians and a systems analyst, all of whom were visiting from Central and Eastern European countries. Barbara Rodes, ERMD International Liaison and winner of the 1995 ERMD Outstanding Member Award, coordinated the study trip and arranged for funding from the Trust in Mutual Understanding. The visitors each shared information about their own libraries and future plans at the well-attended International Affairs Roundtable. Study trips such as this one serve as fruitful means to not only enhance the visitors' information resource expertise, but to afford ERMD members an opportunity to develop personal relationships with information specialists in areas of the world in which professional connections have been difficult to establish. The division hopes to explore other ways to strengthen international ties.

Three other roundtables completed the list of regular conference activities for ERMD members: The Forestry Roundtable, moderated by Deb Sommer of the U.S. Forest Service and Mary Mitchell of the Canadian Forest Service, featured updates on libraries in their respective agencies. The Forestry Roundtable conveyors are working to expand the scope of their attention to include forest products and resources. The State Environmental Librarians Roundtable, moderated by Liz Santa of the Air Quality Division of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and Nancy Simpson of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, served as an informal sharing of useful information sources, especially for librarians working in settings which make use of or produce regulatory information. The biennial Toxicology Roundtable was organized by Nancy Selzer of E. I. DuPont De Nemours Co. This program was in two parts: the first featured a professional toxicologist, Gerry Kennedy, speaking on current issues and practices, and librarian Gayle Alston from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, providing information on new sources and publications. The second part consisted of a panel, on which representatives from a number of

publishers and vendors discussed those of their products that related to toxicology and gave attendees an opportunity to ask questions. The panelists were from CAS/STN, CABI, Knight-Ridder Information, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, and the National Library of Medicine.

In addition to the roundtables, two other ERMD programs were of special interest: In "Casting for Information," Gene Buck of the Congressional Research Service provided insight into the work of the CRS and the tremendous variety of fishery and marine issues faced by the U.S. Congress. Bob Applebaum, an attorney with the Ambassador's Office for Fisheries Conservation, discussed the turbot war on the high seas and other problems facing Canada, such as overfishing.

In "Native Peoples and the Environment," a program jointly sponsored by the Social Science Division, three speakers gave different insights into the changes brought about in the Province of Quebec by hydroelectric developments in areas that are the traditional homelands of the Cree. Michel Allard of Laval University provided an overview of the regional geography, Colin Scott of McGill University talked about the threats the Cree hydroelectric development to their traditional way of life, and Robin Philpot from HydroQuebec presented information about the hydroelectric developments and what HydroQuebec has done to work responsibly with and help the Cree.

In addition to these formal gatherings, ERMD members had a chance to network at three different open houses which were co-sponsored with the Biological Sciences and Chemistry Divisions. One of them was an elegant reception organized by the Bureau of National Affairs. Cambridge Scientific Abstracts invited ERMD members to a party celebrating the debut of their new product, Environmental RouteNet, and also assisted ERMD by providing environmentally correct lunch-bags as a very successful fund-raiser for the division.

As outgoing ERMD chair, at the annual business meeting and breakfast, Chair Duncan McClusky reviewed the activities of the year, presented the Outstanding Member Award to Barbara Rodes, and presented the Outstanding Sponsor Award to A&E Translations of Houston, Texas.

The annual conference aside, ERMD communicates with its members by publishing a quarterly newsletter, filled with book and product reviews, news notes, etc. This publication is a key benefit of membership in the division.

During 1994/95, ERMD chair established a listserv for the division, making arrangements with Academic Computing at Auburn University, to host a listserv site. The listserv has proven to be a very valuable means of communication for the division. It is used not only to post notices of meetings, job advertisements, etc., but more importantly as a vehicle for reference assistance. The list is currently open to anyone who would like to join. To subscribe, send a message "subscribe ermd " to listproc@mail.auburn.edu. Contact Duncan (mcclusky@lib.auburn.edu) with any questions.

Another key benefit of membership in ERMD is a directory of members, organized by place of employment, scheduled for distribution in early September 1995. The directory will enhance members' ability to locate colleagues in diverse settings all over the world. Future plans for the division include the development of an ERMD home page on the World Wide Web. Already, program planners are hard at work developing an interesting menu for the next SLA Annual Conference, to be held in Boston in June, 1996. For more information about the division and its activities, contact Cristina Campbell, 1995/96 Chair, SLA/ERMD, Public

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