

NLN FEATURE

Barbara Semonche, devoted chronicler of the News Division, retires

By CAROLYN EDDS

With all the layoffs and buyouts suffered by our industry in the recent past, newsrooms have fewer news librarians today. The community has also shrunk due to retirements—and will soon decrease by one more with the February retirement of a very special person dedicated to chronicling our profession. Now is an opportunity to recount part of her very busy career. When Barbara Semonche arrives home after spending her last day at the Park Library on the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill campus, she probably will not be sitting still for very long.

We begin on page six of the Summer 1984 issue of *News Library News*, which recaps the annual conference held in New York that year. The minutes of the business meeting state:

"Following recognition of first time attendees, Ms. Semonche summarized her year: she visited 30 news libraries; 225 copies of Guidelines have been sold and current membership is 416."

Typical Barbara. Always networking with colleagues, exchanging information



Barbara Semonche is shown at the Park Library. Courtesy The (Durham, N.C.) *Herald-Sun*

about the profession, trying to keep us somewhat organized and recording our history. Barbara was the News Division Chair and *NLN* editor that year while managing the library at the Durham (N.C.) *Herald-Sun*. Since then, she has traveled around

the world visiting newspapers and training journalists. How many libraries has Barbara visited by now? Probably more than the number of front pages the Newseum loads on their Web site each day. The number of

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BY JULIE DOMEL

My undergraduate degree is in Finance, but that is also why I'm a librarian. I knew back then that I needed to have a much higher obsession with the stock market and related topics to make a go of that world as a career; I just enjoyed learning about it. So, it is a bit ironic now that I try to stay up-to-date with the latest economic news. However, I still don't have the courage to open my 401K statements!

The economy is hitting the newspaper industry like a ton of bricks. Unfortunately, the library seems to be one of the first places management goes to cut. This issue's People column is much longer than usual due to all the news of departing librarians. I have hope that everyone will land on their feet, but it most likely will not be back in the news business. These departures are bad for the reporters and editors they served, bad for the industry as a whole and bad for our Division.

In this environment, we are more needed than ever. As institutional knowledge heads out the door, who else is going to help young journalists place news events in context? As our organizations move more and more to the web, who is most likely to embrace the next generations of technology? While management is worried about the present, who will care about the past and future?

In response to a recent departure, **Tim Rozgonyi** of the *St. Petersburg Times* posted an eloquent statement to NewsLib that included these words: "News librarians bring a totally different perspective to the newsrooms in which they work. We are all about service, which isn't necessarily a core value of a news operation." His entire mes-

sage made me misty (check the archives if you didn't see it), as it summarizes why I do what I do and why our jobs are so important.

It is amazing how these things tend to go full circle; just check out new News Division President **Ron Larson's** column in this issue. He reminds us of the 1909 "Veranda Conference" that started SLA, as well as a speech Barbara Semonche gave many years later invoking the same ideas. This issue also pays tribute to "The Queen" in retirement, as well as to **Liz Donovan**, whose passing caught many of us by surprise.

News Library News is what it is today because of Barbara, and it is only fitting that she came through for me in a pinch while I was preparing this issue. I'm sure she will continue to be supportive and inspiring to the news library community when she isn't enjoying her new free time, while Liz's spirit will live on in the countless number of librarians she encouraged during her career.

One of those people was **Derek Willis**, whose Tech Tip gives us much to think about in his discussion of archiving web content. Derek's session (with **Jessica Baumgart**) at last year's SLA conference discussed librarians finding non-library technological outlets for their skills. **Hannah Sommers** has found just a librarian in **Jenny Benevento**, the Controlled Vocabulary Developer at the Associated Press. Hearing about librarians who have spread their wings beyond the traditional environment inspires me (and should give us hope in case we end up in a future People column). I hope you enjoy this issue as much as I did.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



By RON LARSON

The snow is piling higher and higher and the frigid wind is howling. The depths of winter can bring a bit of despair, especially to those of us who live in the north. The feelings of hopelessness might also pertain to those of us in an industry that is struggling while members of our Division are losing their jobs. On the bright side, the warm sun of spring always follows the cold winter and the collective spirit and talents of our Division members will rise above the current state of affairs and continue doing great things.

This year is one of celebration as the News Division turns 85, while SLA celebrates its centennial. These are, indeed, milestones worthy of celebrations. It was one hundred years

ago when John Cotton Dana invited any interested librarian to join him at a meeting in Bretton Woods, N.H., calling on them to help form a group that would tackle their problems and serve their collective specialized interests. A group of 26 librarians joined Dana in New Hampshire on July 2, 1909, later to be known as the "Veranda Conference," thus signaling the beginnings of the Special Libraries Association.

Our very own, very esteemed, **Barbara Semonche**, who is celebrating the beginning of her retirement this month, gave a speech in South Carolina ten years ago that mentioned the "Veranda Conference." In her speech, she said, "Whenever I think about the future, I return to the past seeking clues, patterns to what might be projected beyond the present. SLA's earliest origins are illustrative of the creativity, courage, and inspiration in our profession. We needed those talents then; we need them now; we'll need them even more in the future."

Barbara's words from ten years ago resonate very loudly today. If there is one divi-

sion of SLA that possesses an abundance of talents, including creativity, courage and inspiration, I believe it is the News Division. But, I feel the collective voice of the Division has grown quiet in the past couple of years. Due to industry economic woes, the News Division attendance at the 2008 SLA conference was the lowest in recent memory, while even the traffic on NewsLib has diminished (even though subscription numbers are over 1,100). Membership in our Division is

at a low point (in the 400's) that hasn't been seen in decades, and we are dropping fast. We need to come together and figure out how the News Division can tackle our problems and serve

"We need to come together and figure out how the News Division can tackle our problems and serve our collective specialized interests."

our collective specialized interests. I believe it is time for the News Division to have our very own "Veranda Conference."

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AP Taxonomist Keeps the Wire Stories Flowing



BY HANNAH SOMMERS,
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

Given the gloomy state of the economy and the coinciding tough times in the news industry, I decided to seek out someone who could remind us all of the passion for information — finding it or managing it — that led each of us into this line of work. The person I found is **Jenny Benevento**, who works for the Associated Press in New York City. Her passion is metadata. (see photo at right)

You have an LIS degree - do you work in a library?

A Do I work in a library? I don't! I work in a department called Information Management. I am officially the Controlled Vocabulary Developer, or basically, the authority control. Along with the rest of the people in our group, we come up with terms (and synonyms) for subject access, place names, and people's names, and teach search software how to categorize news with them. Everything from Jerry Lewis (the comedian) to Jerry Lewis (the politician) must be kept up to date and articles about each need to get the right tagging.

Who are your customers?

A It depends how you look at it. Our categorization and metadata creation helps journalists file their photos. Also, it helps us create products that newspapers and other organizations buy; so, journalists and media outlets.

What is a typical day like in your world?

A Meetings with other team members about vocabulary changes in light of the stories we're seeing getting tagged with them. Meetings with software vendors about the products we use to make categorization work. Writing Boolean rules to make sure articles about certain people get the right tags. Responding to internal requests for controlled vocabularies to feed forms or standardize values in our metadata schema. Looking through lists of names that are being written about but not being tagged and adding them to our vocabularies. Testing that our rules are working properly.

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The AP's Jenny Benevento's passion is metadata.



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PEOPLE



BY AMY DISCH

On the Move

Richard Geiger accepted a buyout from the *San Francisco Chronicle* after 28 years with the paper. In his message to NewsLib, he said "I can't begin to tell you how much you have all meant to me." **Bill Van Niekerken** became library director on Jan. 1. Richard says he "worked with Bill since 1980, when I was library manager at the *San Jose Mercury-News*. I know he will do a great job!"

Sharon Clairemont's last day at the *Orange County Register* was Nov. 7, after 25 years with the paper. She accepted a buyout, and reports she is "excited about my many choices of 'encore careers.'" She says "it has been my pleasure and inestimable gain to hang out with you all online and at conferences. You are such smart people, passionate about preserving and sharing information. Thank you!" The *Register's* news research efforts are now "in the very capable hands of **Michael Doss**," who can be reached at mdoss@ocregister.com or 714-796-7797.

Pam Eisenberg also left the *Orange County Register* on Nov. 7, having been with the paper 20 years. In her message to NewsLib, Pam wrote "Bless you all for finding research fascinating. Thank you all for being interested in knowing - wanting to share, and being there to help in a moment's notice."

Anne Mintz left *Forbes* on Jan. 6, and can now be reached at annemintz@yahoo.com. She will be attending the SLA conference, speaking on a panel titled "Research Methods for Journalists."

Christine Irizarry was laid off from her position as a researcher at *The Tennessean*. She can now be reached at ci13913@gmail.com

Alan Thibeault left his position as Chief Librarian at the *Boston Herald* on Dec. 26, and began a new position as Director of the Winthrop (Mass.) Public Library on Jan. 5. He succeeds **John Cronin**, who retired as director. You will recall that Alan succeeded John once before, taking over as Chief Librarian at the *Herald* when John retired in April 2005. Alan says he has "enjoyed my time here and in the news library profession immensely. I simply felt that after nearly 15 years it was time for a change and, almost simultaneously, a wonderful opportunity presented itself." **Martha Reagan** is the *Herald's* new Chief Librarian. She has been with the paper three-and-a-half years and Alan says she "will do this newsroom proud."

Leslie Norman reported that "the *WSJ* Library will

cease to exist on March 23, 2009." She and news assistant Ed Ramos were let go from Dow Jones. Ever the professional, she worries "There are so many little things about what we do...how do I possibly explain them or even write them down?"

Kathy Foley is "thrilled to report that NewsBank has hired me as a Senior Product Manager in the Media Services Division. My main areas will be microfilm and historic newspaper digitization. I will work from home in San Antonio. There is life after the newsroom!"

News Division Chair **Ron Larson** is teaching a course on Corporate and Specialized Information Services at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Library and Information Studies.

Lindsey Knight joined the CNN Atlanta Library on Dec. 8, 2008. She completed her LIS internship at CNN's D.C. Bureau.

Kathleen Cottay has "joined Hearst Newspapers working on taxonomy, semantic web solutions and digital asset management for online media. Most recently Kathleen was taxonomist for NASA's Johnson Space Center. Previous experience includes being VP of Information Resources at American Media, Senior Editor at Hoover's and management of public libraries." Hearst Newspapers' digital media group is based at the *Houston Chronicle*.

Success stories

Columbus Dispatch news researcher **Susan Stonick** provided extensive background research on inmates and cases for the series "Test of Convictions," which garnered an honorable mention for *Dispatch* reporters **Mike Wagner** and **Geoff Dutton** in the John Jay College of Criminal Justice's 2009 Excellence in Criminal Justice Reporting Awards. The series, which examined Ohio's DNA inmate testing program, is available at <http://www.dispatch.com/dna>

Pete Basofin, Director of Editorial Research at *The Sacramento Bee*, announced "a new *Sacramento Bee* blog that ought to be of interest to news librarians and researchers, I-Tool Tips, http://www.sacbee.com/static/weblogs/i-tool_tips/." Pete reports that "the blog aims to spotlight valuable and relevant information sources available on the Web that might empower/inspire readers to do their own investigative research."

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Remembering Liz Donovan

By ANGIE DROBNIC HOLAN

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES

Our division witnessed an outpouring of condolences and memories at the news that **Elizabeth “Liz” Lacey Donovan** passed away on December 9, 2008.

Simultaneously a research legend and a down-to-earth colleague, Liz was well-known in the news library world. Any recitation of her accomplishments would have to start with the big one: Watergate. Her research at *The Washington Post* helped Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein with reporting that brought down a presidency, and she is thanked prominently in the book *All the President's Men*.

“It was a team effort and an incredible experience,” Donovan wrote years later. “Those of us who worked at the *Post* in those years were blessed. I’ll never forget the comradeship we had then, and keep fond friendships still.”

She also noted that the famous movie includes a scene of a researcher bringing a key photo to Woodward, played by Robert Redford.

“It’s a permanent reminder of how essential our job is, and what a difference we can make,” she noted.

In 1981, Donovan moved to the *Miami*

Herald, where colleagues said she was critical to the paper’s first efforts in computer-assisted reporting. Her contributions resulted in many important investigations, such as the *Herald’s* Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Newer librarians will remember her collegial, helpful posts on Newslib and on her own blog, “Infomaniac: Behind the News.” The news division named her to the Agnes Henebry Roll of Honor in 2004.

At the news of her death from lung cancer at age 63, news librarians and researchers shared memories and condolences.

“Liz has left an unforgettable legacy of strong spirit and unexcelled generosity, and extraordinary professionalism to news librarians and reporters all over the world,” wrote **Barbara Semonche**, director of the Park Library in the UNC-CH School of Journalism and Mass Communication. “Truly, she will remain one of a kind, the very best.”

“She was a constant innovator, a skilled researcher and a wonderful person,” wrote **Derek Willis** of *The New York Times*. “Among the people in journalism, it is rare to find someone about whom no one has a bad thing to say. Liz was one of those people.”



Liz Donovan accepts the Agnes Henebry Roll of Honor Award at the 2004 SLA Conference in Nashville.

Photo Courtesy Barbara Semonche

“What I am reminded of is how she always noticed developments in our profession and our names when they would appear,” wrote **Leigh Montgomery** of *The Christian Science Monitor*. “She was hugely encouraging, particularly with some of our own library’s early ventures in blogging. She found this ‘thrilling’ and even described our effort - this in 2003 - as ‘beautiful.’”

More remembrances, published obituaries and information about Donovan’s career may be found at the SLA News Division web site.

People

Continued from previous page

St. Petersburg Times News Researcher **Angie Drobnic Holan** posted a message to NewsLib letting us know that *Denver Post* Research librarian **Barry Osborne** was featured in the PBS program “Bill Moyers Journal” on Nov. 14, 2008. Barry created a database to accompany the *Post* series “Lawless Lands: The crisis in Indian Country, which reported on the failure of federal authorities to prosecute crimes on American Indian reservations.”

A transcript of the program can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/11142008/transcript2.html>

A video of the program can be found at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/expose/2008/11/no-justice-out-here.html>

Barry appears just after the 15th minute.

The series can be found at <http://www.denverpost.com/lawlesslands>

Tom Pellegrine Jr., Manager of News Technologies at *The Journal Gazette* in Fort Wayne, Ind., reports that his paper “began operating a 24-7-365 newsroom on jour-

nalgazette.net, Dec. 8, and its news library is a part of the process.” Text librarian **Lyn Winchell** directs the 24-7 desk from 6 a.m. until the Web writer-editor arrives at 8 a.m. She answers a tip-line, watches for e-mails, checks the fax machines and the wires and listens to a police scanner. He says site traffic is “up 36 percent for the rest of December, compared with the same period for 2007, and is up more than 30 percent so far in January from a year earlier.”

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Archiving Web Site Material: Blogs

BY DEREK WILLIS
NEW YORK TIMES

We've had a number of discussions lately on NewsLib about whether and how to archive material that appears only on a news organization's web site, not in a printed publication or broadcast. With the proliferation of blogs, chats and forums, it's an important question, and only likely to grow even more consequential in the years to come. For those wanting to get started, one of the easier routes may be with blogs.

Many news sites that operate blogs do so via a hosted system such as Movable Type or WordPress, and nearly every blog publishing system uses a database backend, typically the MySQL database. What this means is that there already **is** an archive of sorts, if not always in the format you might like it. The good news is that, with a little help, you should be able to get a consistent copy of blog material and be able to work on incorporating it into your archive routine.

This will involve (or be aided by) knowing a little about how databases work, or relying on someone who does. It's also a great excuse for you to become more acquainted with databases if you're not. Most blog databases will have tables that reflect the individual components of a post. For example, WordPress stores its posts in a table called `wp_posts`, while comments are in `wp_comments`. You also may find tables

for categories, tags and authors. The advantage is that simply by using the blogging software, a certain amount of standardization and categorization has taken place. Again, it may not be exactly what you need, but it's a better place to start from than scratch.

My recommendations:

1. Find out what software your site uses to manage its blogs, and try to meet the person who has control over it. Often that person has access to an administrative "control panel" that includes regular database backups.
2. See what the existing schedule is for backing up the database(s) that contains the blog tables.
3. Ask for the database schema (the listing of tables and the fields that those tables contain) and for the specific database server type (probably MySQL).
4. Ask for a recent backup copy. Typically they are kept as zipped-up .SQL files - a series of statements that insert data into a database.
5. Install MySQL, which can be found at www.mysql.com, or find somebody who already has installed it on their machine. If you can't install MySQL on your work machine, try your home computer. Or if you have a Web hosting account, many of those include MySQL. Just get it installed somewhere so you can look at the file. There are a number of tutorials on how to restore a database backup - I'd recommend

searching for "mysql restore db backup". Or email me.

6. Once you are able to look at it, you should be able to see how the blog content fits into your archive system, and how much work will be required to add the blogs to it, if you choose to do so.
 7. Even if you decide against adding the blog content to your existing archive, you should be able to store the database backup files as-is or use them to create a separate archive of blog content.
 8. At the least, get the library involved in the backup process - you can ask for a copy of each backup file (usually these are done weekly, but sometimes daily) to be stored on a network server that you have access to. WordPress has a plugin (<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wp-db-backup/>) to help backup the database tables, and MovableType has documentation on methods for doing the same (http://www.sixapart.com/movable-type/kb/databases/backup_mysql_da.html), if there's no process in place.
- If none of that seems possible or likely, try approaching the problem this way: if your blogs are searchable on your general site, then somebody has gone to the trouble of getting blog content into a broader index. Find that person and ask them how he or she did it, and whether you can piggyback on that effort.

Overall, it will help you if you actually use the software in some capacity - either an internal blog or a personal or group blog outside of work (assuming you can, of course). The more you know about how the blogging software works, the better you'll be able to determine what's necessary to incorporate it into your archiving processes.

"The good news is that, with a little help, you should be able to get a consistent copy of blog material and be able to work on incorporating it into your archive routine."

Division elections for 2009 running a little late, and uncontested

Those of you keeping score at home will have noted that the Division's selection of a new Chair Elect-Elect, a new Secretary and a Director of Publications to join the board for 2009 is happening in 2009. Here's why:

The Division's Nominations Committee identified three willing candidates — **Leigh Montgomery**, *Chair Elect-Elect and Program Planner* for the 2010 conference, **Anne Holcomb**, *Secretary* and **Catherine Kitchell**, *Director of Publications*. With the feverish pace of change in the news business in general and how those changes are impacting the lives of Division members in particular, what turned out to be difficult was finding folks willing to run against Anne and Catherine.

Some years back the Division Board changed policy/practice and began to hold uncontested elections for what was at that time the position of Chair Elect (now Chair Elect-Elect). After some number of calls this year to potential officeholders that resulted in gracious but emphatic answers of "Sorry, but no," it was clear we needed to move to uncontested elections for all positions. An examination of the Division's current governing document confirmed that we are to have elections, but they do not have to be contested. The recommendation to move to uncontested elections was submitted to the Division Board, and approved, last fall.

And that is, in summary, why you'll find information in this issue of *NLN* about your new Board members and not in an earlier issue. The move to uncontested elections will serve us well for the future as we deal with changes in our professions and in our Division.

Thanks to Leigh, Anne and Catherine for their willingness to serve on the Division Board (with special thanks to Catherine for what will be a return to the

Board for a second (or third!) term.

And please, when a member of the 2009 Nominations Committee gives you a call this summer and suggests you becoming Chair Elect-Elect, or Treasurer or Director of Education/Professional Development, say "Yes!"

Respectfully submitted for the News Division Nominations Committee,
Justin Scroggs, Chair



Montgomery

CHAIR ELECT-ELECT

Leigh Montgomery

Leigh Montgomery is Librarian for *The Christian Science Monitor*, the international daily newspaper and multimedia website which is in its centennial year. *The Monitor* will be the first national newspaper to move to a web-first model and weekly print edition, in addition to adding an e-mail daily news digest, all in April 2009.

Leigh conducts and oversees research on international and U.S. news topics, as well as business, science and societal trends for the editorial staff, located in 18 national and international bureaus. She is also responsible for management of the photo and page archive for the paper, development and maintenance of its print collection, training of the staff and every journalism and library intern on online research tools, as well as working on the library Intranet pages. Leigh is the *Monitor's* only full-time librarian.

She has contributed to several analytic journalism projects during her career and is active in use of computer-assisted reporting, collaborative technologies and social networking to advance journalism. Leigh also enjoys volunteering by hosting

prospective librarians and Boston public school students at every opportunity to encourage careers in information professions, news librarianship and daily journalism.

Leigh joined the *Monitor* staff as News Researcher in 1996 after receiving a Master of Science degree in Mass Communication at Boston University's College of Communication. She was promoted to Librarian in 1998, at which time she joined SLA, the News Division and the Boston chapter. Leigh has served the Division as Editor, *News Library News*, 2006 to 2008, and as a conference moderator and presenter at the 2005 and 2008 Annual Conferences.



Kitchell

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS

Catherine Kitchell

After graduating from the University of Virginia with a degree in Art History, Catherine started as a library assistant at *USA*

Today way back in 1983 shortly after the paper began. She went to the University of Maryland to get her MLS and worked as a reference librarian until moving to California to briefly work at the *Marin Independent Journal* before returning to Washington and getting a job at BNA. She has been a librarian at BNA (and a member of SLA) since 1990 and editor of BNA's Directory of State and Federal Courts, Judges, and Clerks since 2001. She was Managing Editor of *News Library News* in 1996-1998. Additionally she was Treasurer, Washington Chapter, 1999-2002 & News Division, 2001-2003. She received the DC/SLA Board of Directors Award for 2001-2002. For the past few years she's

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2009 SLA Conference Preview

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2009

4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Tour/Reception at National Public Radio

NPR Librarian Kee Malesky will host News Division members for a tour of NPR's facilities and library. The event will also include a reception with various NPR personalities.

SUNDAY, JUNE 14, 2009

1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

CE Course: Doing More with Less

Learn some secrets about doing more with less from experienced practitioners. News library managers, librarians and some technical experts come together to share useful knowledge, like prioritizing tasks, nifty tools and being more efficient. Participants will also pick up some tips about managing in times of change and may learn a bit about defending their funding and staff.

MONDAY, JUNE 15, 2009

9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

Painless (No, really!) Negotiating

Many more things are negotiable than we may think; in fact, much of life involves negotiation, and the effects of not negotiating can be cumulative. This presentation helps you identify who is "the boss of you", develop your ability to reframe challenging situations and build tools to enhance your negotiation skills and approach every situation as negotiable.

1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Census 2010: Not Your Grandmother's Census

If you've ever used Census data on citizenship, employment status or occupation, you've used the long form of the Decennial Census. The long form of the decennial census is no more - it has been replaced by the American Community Survey. Join us for a crucial discussion of the 2010 Census and the differences between it, past censuses and the ACS. We will also review geographic aspects of the Census and focus on the implications of these changes for people who use Census products.

* Shared program with the Social Science, Advertising & Marketing and Government Information Divisions

3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

News Division Business meeting

The News Division leadership reports to the members of the division, discusses progress and plans for the future.

6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

News Division Awards Banquet

The News Division presents its annual awards.

TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2009

7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

More With Less: Successful Time Management practices

In an era of downsizing and tight budgets, how do you make the most effective use of your time and prioritize in a way that offers the best value for your library and your organization? This session will offer practical tips for doing just that.

9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The role of social networking sites in research

A panel of Washington Post researchers will lead a discussion on using social networking sites for research and the ethics involved in doing so.

11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Research Methods for Journalists

When CUNY (City University of New York) opened its Graduate School of Journalism in fall 2006, a first semester course in Research Methods was required of all students. Now in its third year, the Research Methods course has been merged into the school's fundamental Craft curriculum. The speakers will compare the student outcomes of both pedagogical approaches, as well as present findings from a survey about research education and training conducted among journalism school library directors. They will also present findings from a survey of major media libraries about research education and training on the job.

1:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Onion editor Scott Dikkers

Scott Dikkers, editor of The Onion newspaper, will speak about the paper's brand expansion and the changing habits of media consumption.

* Shared program with Advertising & Marketing Division

6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Open house at the Newspaper and Current Periodical Room, Library of Congress

An open house at the Newspaper and Current Periodical Room at the Library of Congress for News Division members

Division elections for 2009 running a little late, and uncontested

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parlayed her SLA board experience into working for her local bike club, Potomac Pedalers Touring Club. With 3,200 members, PPTC is the largest recreational biking club on the East Coast. She was Chair-Elect, then Chair in 2006-2007 and was editor of Pedal Patter, the club's newsletter from 2004-2007. But she is happy to rededicate herself to SLA and the cause of the News Division - it'll be a relief to lead people who don't always wear brightly-colored spandex shorts.

SECRETARY



Holcomb

Anne Holcomb

Anne Holcomb is the online content editor for the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, a daily newspaper that covers the city of Kalamazoo and the surrounding region of

Southwest Michigan, online at www.mlive.com/kalamazoo. Prior to becoming the *Gazette's* online editor in May 2008, Anne served as the *Gazette's* librarian for 3 1/2 years.

Anne is a graduate of Albion College and the University of Michigan School of Information. She is currently enrolled part-time in the Master's program at Western Michigan University's School of Communication. Anne also serves as Membership Chair for the News Division.

This is the division's first electronic election. If you haven't received your ballot from Survey Monkey, or, if you prefer a paper ballot please email the division's election chair Lynne Palombo at lynnepalombo@news.oregonian.com

People

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Lynn M. Dombek, Research Director for the Associated Press, shared this story of how "the News Research Center at the Associated Press headquarters in New York City was an unexpectedly integral part of AP's coverage of the crash of US Airways Flight 1549 into the icy Hudson River on Jan. 15, 2009."

She says that "researcher **Barbara Sambriski** was the first person at the AP to see the plane go into the river around 3:30 p.m." Dombek proceeded to call 911 "and alerted the newsroom on the other side of the building."

Dombek says that "NRC's quick reaction gave AP a unique head start on a major story, and made Sambriski a crucial part of that story as an early eyewitness. She was interviewed by the AP for all news formats, and as soon as her account of the splashdown went out on the wire, she was inundated with calls from media outlets around the world."

In the meantime, "the rest of the NRC team" compiled resources, identified experts, pulled FAA maintenance records, located survivors and their relatives and mined NTSB data. Deputy director Susan James did locator searches to find a crucial Twitter photographer, as well as the airplane crew. Staff located the pilot's bio on LinkedIn, which gave the New York City desk the first real look at his profile.

Dombek adds that "for her timely observation and giving the AP a jump on the story, Sambriski split the coveted internal "Beat of the Week" award - and a \$500 prize — with a multimedia AP staffer. The entire News Research team, including **Judy Ausubel, Jennifer Farrar, Monika Mathur, Julie Reed** and **Rhonda Shafner**, along with database manager **John Parsons**, was spotlighted for their proactive role in moving this happily-ending story forward."

Kitty Bennett, a News Researcher in the D.C. Bureau of *The New York Times*, offered praise for the work of her colleague, database research editor **Margot Williams**. Margot compiled the "Guantánamo Docket," <http://projects.nytimes.com/guantanamo/detainees/held>, an interactive database of Pentagon documents and *New York Times* research regarding 779 men who have been detained at Guantánamo as enemy combatants since January 2002."

Leigh Montgomery, Librarian for *The Christian Science Monitor*, noted that her paper celebrated its 100th anniversary on Nov. 25, and marked the occasion with a "special 18-page section written by current and former editors of the *Monitor*." The section included "a timeline about the many media forms and pioneering efforts in journalism that the *Monitor* has been involved in." Leigh adds "its library staff is in that timeline." The story can be accessed at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1125/p25s08-usgn.html>

Committee Chair **Justin Scroggs** reminds us to please consider applying for the Hayden Fellowship. The Hayden Fellowship, in the amount of up to \$500 per year, is intended to help defray the costs of job-related continuing education. The application deadline is May 8. There are links to the Hayden application forms on the Division Web site's awards page, <http://www.ibiblio.org/slanews/about/ndawards.html#hayden>

Stan Friedman is once again the ESPN Couch Potato Champion. He successfully defended his title by "watching back-to-back sports programs for 19 hours, 48 minutes and 18 seconds - one second longer than the runner-up." You can read the story at http://www.nydailynews.com/ny_local/2009/01/02/2009-01-02_potato_repeats_laze_of_glory-1.html

AP Taxonomist Keeps the Wire Stories Flowing

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Is technology changing how you work? How has the job changed in the time you've been with the AP?

Officially, I work in the Technology Department. In an organization that has existed for over 150 years, you can imagine we've seen a lot of technology changes. Organizing content in a variety of formats in tens of systems over the years was part of the reason my job was created. When I started here 2.5 years ago, we had no subject headings, and now we have thousands! So it's definitely changed from active creation to maintenance in a lot of ways. Definitely without some of the software and databases we use, and the technically savvy people who created/tweaked them, it would have been impossible. I talk a lot to people who need to categorize a lot of data, but think of the number of news stories, photos, audio, and video ONE DAY generates. It's a blizzard of information. Without some auto-categorization there just would never be enough time to categorize the news the way we do.

How does one become a taxonomist or vocabulary developer?

Well, by doing it. That's hard. Some people come to it through Information Architecture or linguistics. Some people just go to Taxonomy Boot Camp or some other taxonomy instruction outside of schooling. In a lot of these cases, the person works in a non-librarian technical position and their business realizes they need metadata and they get sent to figure out how to do it.

But a lot of people are librarians. In library school, I focused on classes on thesaurus construction, info retrieval, cataloging, metadata creation, and classification systems. There's some body of knowledge that is fairly specific on this area which is useful. I would suggest though that people just start doing it. There's so many places that need it done, I just started making taxonomies part of my projects everywhere I worked. All of my previous positions were in libraries, mostly public and academic, and one corporate. I've never been called a librarian yet, though!

Is there a place for folksonomy in the work you do?

There's a place for folksonomy in a lot of types of content, but more so if you are customer-facing. As we are business-facing, most businesses aren't going to spend time and money to tag your data. In fact, they send us their data and we'll tag it for them! They just want to get the most for their money in the quickest time possible, which is why controlled data is so much more useful. In my spare time (ha!), I freelance with some web businesses who love combining controlled and uncontrolled vocabularies. I think there are a lot more websites out there using controlled vocabularies than will admit it—anything that makes products easier to find is probably driven with some taxonomy.

Jenny, your personal business card describes you as a "meta-dater." Say more.

Honestly, for a job about coming up with words, there are way too many

terms for what I do—metadata, thesaurus construction, ontology, vocabulary, etc. Though those all have different shades of meaning they are used pretty interchangeably. I do freelance work for a lot of web companies, and they are not as comfortable with all these terms and their meanings as much as librarians are. So I try and make it a little less scary. I know metadata seems frightening, boring and technical to the vast majority of people. When I can show people it means I get to read the encyclopedia and Star magazine all day, it makes discussing it a little easier. It doesn't have to be painful.

What's the greatest challenge facing your group? What's the most innovative change you've implemented or experienced?

Time! When the organization discovered it needed a taxonomy, it needed it yesterday. Likewise, news is such a quick business that things need to get tagged automatically, and correctly the first time, or it's of no use to our customers. Nothing can slow down our journalists because speed is a commodity in news.

I think going from having no taxonomies to a large portion of the news categorized by auto-categorization in two years is amazing.

How many people work for the AP overall? In your group?

Including me, seven librarians, a linguist and an XML expert. And there's a "productization" side of the group as well which uses our metadata to make products.

Continued on next page



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AP Taxonomist Keeps the Wire Stories Flowing

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How many terms do you manage? How many vocabularies? How many systems do you use in your work?

10 or so subject vocabularies—things like “Health” or “Science.” A few entity vocabularies, e.g., “Sports Figures” or “Celebrities.” Then there are a few dozen system vocabularies that we use to feed other vocabs, how they are used technically in the system or feed controlled dropdowns and fields in the schema. I mainly use SchemaLogic to control the vocabularies, but we use Teragram to write rules for the auto-categorization and disambiguation of where terms get applied.

How much content is produced in a typical day that is tagged by your system(s)?

I have no idea. However, you think of a story of what gets published. We think of every writethru of every story. Especially in breaking situations, that can be tens of different versions of a story sent over a “wire”!

Any other fun facts?

The carpet at AP has a Morse Code pattern for AP (dot dash/dot dash dash dot)! We also have research librarians and archivists. And there's a party if someone wins the Pulitzer.

Note: As of press time, Jenny informs us that her career is taking her to a new position as Taxonomist/Information Architect at Sears Holding Corp. Watch for her AP position to be posted.

Notes from the Chair

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Between now and the June SLA conference in Washington, D.C., I want to have a number of discussions on NewsLib. I want everyone to become involved in the News Division's “Veranda Conference.” I want veterans and rookies, I want large libraries and small libraries and everything in-between, I want newspaper and news-magazine libraries, broadcast libraries, students and other interested parties.

True, we won't be able to solve the problems that have plagued the news industry in recent years. We can, however, as news information experts, find answers and options that can strengthen and broaden our profession and Division along with serving our collective interests.

I would like to have our virtual “Veranda Conference” culminate with a meeting of the minds at the News Division's annual business meeting at the SLA conference in Washington, D.C. And after the meeting adjourns, I'm sure there is a real veranda somewhere in D.C. where we can continue the discussion, reflecting on the past while embracing the future, and savoring the present on a warm evening as we scoff at the memory of cold winter winds.



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Barbara Semonche, devoted chronicler of the News Division, retires

Continued from page 1

news librarians, reporters, editors and students she has helped and trained in her career is many, many more than that.

By the way, *Guidelines* was a reference to *Guidelines* for Newspaper Libraries. In her 1984 annual report, she acknowledged **Shirley Mooney's** hard work as the editor. Almost ten years later, she found herself an editor of her own publication, *News Media Libraries: A Management Handbook*.

The Summer 1986 issue of *NLN* contains verbal bouquets from **Lany McDonald** to Barbara who "almost single-handedly published *News Library News*" for the two years prior. (see graphic on right)

A year later Barbara ran for a SLA director post. Also, she had an article published in *Collection Building*, a professional library journal. The article was titled "Newspaper Indexing: In Search of a Solution." The woman never stops!

The history of news libraries, which practically coincides with the history of Barbara Semonche for many years, is chronicled in *NLN*. In the fall of 1993, **Pete Basofin** made an announcement that forever changed the lives of news librarians/researchers around the world and their ability to communicate and network with each other. Maintained at the UNC campus in Chapel Hill, Pete Basofin wrote that NewsLib, an electronic mailing list, was established through the efforts of Barbara Semonche. To bring back memories for some of you, possible discussion topics suggested by Basofin included telnet, FTP and Usenet.

Although she has been free of NewsLib responsibilities for more than two years now, when you think of NewsLib, you think of Barbara. Today with more than 1,000 subscribers, NewsLib remains the strongest tool for quickly connecting with colleagues around the world. Solo librarians could not manage without it.

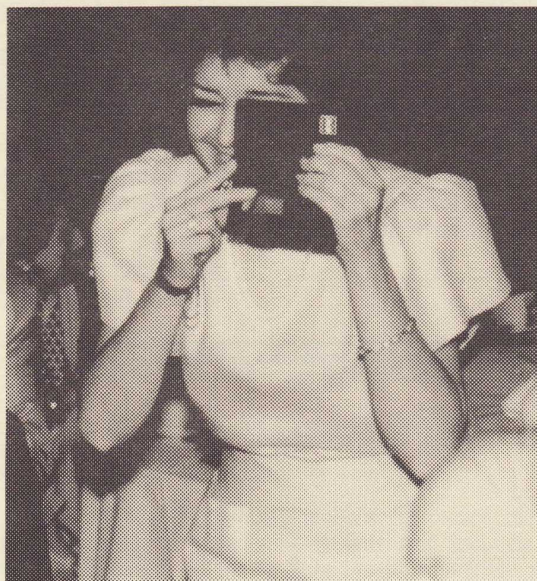
Barbara has always been a constant cheerleader for our profession. It would take a full issue of *NLN* to list everything she has done for the News Division and for other chapters/divisions of SLA. In addition, she has been a mentor to many library school and journalism students as well as a few news researchers. We can always count on Barbara to give a thoughtful, entertaining and interesting presentation when she is a speaker. She's worked hard to make sure photos from the conferences are archived on the Web and our history is preserved. If anyone needs anything, Barbara has always been ready to help whether that be providing space to meet on her campus for news researchers from the Mid-Atlantic states, to mentoring news researchers and providing them with sage advice, to providing us with a good laugh from her great sense of humor.

Editorial—Bouquets For Barbara

For two years, **Barbara Semonche** of the Durham (N.C.) Herald-Sun Library, has almost single-handedly published *News Library News*. She has been the editorial, advertising, production and circulation departments all rolled into one. To *News Library News* she brought her usual energies and flare, and under her direction, it continued to grow in both content and circulation. As a member of our division, I received my copy of *News Library News* with gratitude that someone else cared enough to do all that work. But it was not until I assumed responsibility for publishing *News Library News* that I realized the full extent of her contribution to the division and to each of us. She has done an enormous job and done it well.

Thank you, Barbara. *News Library News* now bears your stamp as it does those other giving members of our division who served as editors before you: **Ellie Briscoe**, **Joan Stern** and **Bob Isaacs**. We are grateful to be allowed to follow this tradition of excellence and we hope we can uphold it.

Lany McDonald
NLN Managing Editor



Barbara Semonche as we remember her best.

This excerpt from a 1986 issue of *News Library News* illustrates the contributions of Barbara Semonche to the Division.

It is expected she will tackle her well-deserved retirement with as much energy and enthusiasm as she has her career. We look forward to reading reports, and afterwards, it is likely we will say the same as Lany McDonald wrote in that 1986 issue of *NLN*:

"She has done an enormous job and done it well."