

LIBRARY PROFILE

Great perks, sure, but Club members get perk of their own in librarian



BY HANNAH SOMMERS
NATIONAL PUBLIC
RADIO

The next time I run across a technology I'm not sure I really need, I'm going to call **Beth**

Shankle. She's a research librarian at the National Press Club, and after confessing that I hadn't gotten excited about e-readers yet, she whipped out her adorable, chic Sony reader and demonstrated a couple of features. Even though we were being blown down the sidewalk by sub-freezing gale-force wind . . . let's just say now I think I get it.

Beth has one of those qualities that all good teachers possess: By the time you realize you're learning something you're too engaged to turn back. Teaching is one of the core components of her job. Her classes on web-based tools such as Twitter, Facebook, advanced Google, blogging and RSS are popular with Press Club members and tend to sell out quickly. She spends a lot of time teaching in the classroom, devel-



Beth Shankle trained nearly 1,000 students in her popular sessions at the National Press Club.
Credit: Courtesy Photo

oping new class ideas and watching new web-based tools. In fact, the amount of time she spends training is something she feels is untraditional about her job (she had nearly 1,000 attendees in her classes last year). Her other major responsibilities include providing research assistance and

working with the library's fundraising program.

The National Press Club was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1908. It is a membership organization of about 4,000, over half of whom are working journalists. The

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NLN STAFF



By JULIE DOMEL

January is usually the time when I settle in with a case of ennui. A particularly harsh winter in South Texas has left the landscape black and crispy (as my mother says, “We live down here to avoid that kind of thing.”) and the temperature is more conducive to afghans and lap cats than getting anything done. The hustle and bustle of the holidays is gone, another year is over and I’m left wondering “what now?”

It’s a good time for evaluation of circumstances, both personal and professional. I’ve gone through files and storage cabinets, book shelves and emails, wondering: “Why did I keep *that*?” or “So that’s where it’s been hiding.” It’s time to be merciless as we clean out the clutter and get rid of the inefficiency.

How am I allocating my time: What should take priority and is it being treated as such?

Do I like where my life is headed? Is my professional trajectory on target? Should I look into additional training, go to conferences or attend classes? Do I need to talk to my supervisor about additional (or fewer) responsibilities?

We may all want to forget 2009, but did you accomplish everything you hoped to do (or perhaps had the ability to do under the economic conditions)? What would you like to do this year? Are you going to dream big or just hope to get by while not drawing attention to yourself? I hope it is the former because the latter isn’t doing

anyone any favors. Shouldn’t we be drawing attention to ourselves? Crowding from the rooftop what we can do for our reporters and editors? Pushing the envelope of what our departments have traditionally done?

How about the News Division? First of all, I hope everyone has made the resolution to become a member of SLA. It’s an easy one to keep. Secondly, if you want to volunteer more in 2010, the division is a great place to start. We have some board positions open, especially that chair-elect-elect position, which is incredibly important; hence, this isn’t the first time it’ll be mentioned in this issue. I’m sure it looks daunting (I felt that same trepidation when asked to be NLN editor, so I understand), but

“...if you want to volunteer more in 2010, the division is a great place to start...”

your fellow division members are always willing to lend a hand and previous

conference planners are around to advise. Plus, it is a great way to build skills like management, organization, networking, etc., that all look good on resumes (and who doesn’t need that kind of help in our industry these days?).

Perhaps by the time this issue reaches you, the ennui will have lifted and I’ll be ready to see what 2010 has in store for me. The wind may be howling outside, but the sun is shining brightly and beckoning for a brighter tomorrow.

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



BY AMY DISCH

Happy 2010! Even though it is cold and gray in central Ohio, I always look forward to a new year, when I can leave behind disappointments and look forward to new possibilities and experiences. This year is a notable one for me for a couple reasons. It was ten years ago this March when I started my news library career at the *Wisconsin State Journal* and *The Capital Times* in my hometown of Madison, Wisc. Also, this summer, I will reach another milestone of sorts when I celebrate a “big” birthday. (I’ll leave you to wonder about the number because I’m not telling!)

On a more serious note, I know many of us were more than happy to say good riddance to 2009. Valued colleagues within the News Division and in our respective organizations lost their jobs and those of us who remained struggled to stay hopeful about our futures.

In spite of the many challenges facing the division, I want to assure you that we do have positive things to look forward to this year, namely the SLA annual conference in New Orleans in June. Conference planner **Leigh Montgomery** of the *Christian Science Monitor* has done a wonderful job developing topics that are cutting-edge and thought-provoking, including programs on knowledge management, changes in news consumption and dissemination and a ticketed event introducing attendees to computer programming. I’ll leave Leigh to tell you more over the coming months.

The News Division is welcoming some new faces to its board. **Derek Willis** of NYTimes.com succeeds **Jessica Baumgart** as Director-Education/Professional Development and **Angelika Kane** of the *Pittsburgh*

Post-Gazette succeeds **Megan Waters** as treasurer. **Nina Johnson** of the *Columbia Missourian* will serve as division secretary this year, filling out the term of **Anne Holcomb**. Many thanks to Jessica, Megan and Anne for their service to the division and welcome Derek, Angelika and Nina!

We still need to fill the position of chair-elect-elect and I urge each of you to consider assuming the role. I know our lives are extremely busy and it’s difficult to make the commitment, but filling the position is crucial to ensuring we have a successful slate of programs for the annual conference in

Philadelphia in June 2011. If you would like to know more about what the role of chair-elect-elect entails or are interested in serving, please contact me.

We will be moving ahead with plans for an overhaul of the division’s Web site, including making *News Library News* an online-only publication. Director of Publications **Catherine Kitchell** will be leading those efforts, as will

Webmeistress **Alice Pepper** and *News Library News* Managing Editor **Julie Domel**.

I want to take an opportunity to thank past chair **Ron Larson**, who did a fantastic job leading the division last year in the midst of some very difficult challenges, including continuing declines in membership and a decreasing bank account. Ron’s call for a “Virtual Veranda” on NewsLib inspired some thoughtful discussion that I want to continue over the next year. Look for the start of my periodic messages on NewsLib soon.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your chair. I look forward to working with all of you this year and urge you to contact me with your concerns and ideas regarding the future of the division.

“In spite of the many challenges facing the division, I want to assure you that we do have positive things to look forward to this year, namely the SLA annual conference in New Orleans in June.”

Two elected for News Division office

BY ELECTIONS CHAIR LYNNE PALOMBO
THE OREGONIAN

I am pleased to announce the results of the 2010 News Division officer election. The newly elected board officers, starting their terms as of January 1, 2010, are:

Treasurer, Angelika Cane

Director of Education/Professional Development, Derek Willis

Congratulations to both Angelika and Derek! Thank you for stepping forward to help lead the Division and our profession into the next decade; read more about them below. Unfortunately, the chair-elect position remains vacant. Please contact President **Amy Disch** if you are interested in serving.

A note about the election process...

We were able to hold our election on time this year, thanks in part to Survey Monkey. For the second year, the Division voted via an electronic ballot. I am pleased to report that voter turnout this year was 26%, which is an increase of 3%! Turnout is still slightly lower than the last year of paper ballots, but we also held a contested race that time.

The Candidates



Kane

Treasurer

Angelika Cane

Education: B .A. degree in secondary education, with a concentration of history, from SUNY Potsdam

First library job: Assistant photo librarian/assistant librarian for Gannett Rochester Newspapers

Current position: Head Librarian, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Joined SLA: Sometime in the mid-70s

Years of library experience: 35

"In the years I've been a librarian, we've gone from manually clipping and filing stories and photos, the merger of two libraries, an electronic library system on AteX, a PC-based library (we were the first department in editorial to get PCs) and a digital photo archive - and we've gone from a staff of 7 to a staff of 3 2/5...not by choice.

Besides my normal library duties, database and staff management, I split my time between web publishing and Community Server/Community Forum administrator work. I've also had the opportunity to work on 4 books the *Post-Gazette* has published, receiving credit as associate editor or co-editor on 2.



Willis

Director of Education/Professional Development

Derek Willis

Derek Willis began his journalism career in the news library at the *Palm Beach Post*, where he was an intern and then hired as a research librarian. He also worked on computer-assisted reporting projects at the *Post*. For five years he was a staff writer at Congressional Quarterly, covering the House of Representatives and campaign finance, and also conducted CQ's annual vote studies.

He has worked at the Center for Public Integrity and as research database editor at the *Washington Post* before turning to Web development, first at washingtonpost.com and currently at the *New York Times*.

A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, he did graduate work at the University of Florida but left before finishing his degree to work in a news library, and would do it again.

He has taught journalism at Northwestern University, George Washington University and Columbia Union College.

Derek lives in Silver Spring, Md., with his wife, Leslye and their daughter, Carlyne. His non-work interests, such as they are, include college football and basketball.

You can find Derek online at thescoop.org.

PEOPLE



BY LIISA TUOMINEN

On the Move

Ron Larson, 2009 News Division Chair, is now working at the Wisconsin Historical Society in the newspaper and periodical department. The Society has the second largest collection of newspapers in the country, most of which focus on labor, minorities, genealogy, religion and politics, along with community newspapers from around Wisconsin.

After 12 years, Pulitzer prize recipient **Bill Dedman** is no longer updating Power Reporting, a free resource for journalists. The site helped journalists integrate public records and Web research with daily and enterprise reporting. Bill is still offering workshops in Computer Assisted Reporting (<http://powerreporting.com/seminars/>)

Rebecca Cline, long-time SLA and News Division member is living in Springfield, Va. She has changed to a managerial post with the Defense Dept., becoming Information Manager at the Defense Intelligence Agency's Defense Open Source Program Office, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.

In September, **Kathryn Pease** joined Bonnier Corporation in Winter Park, Fla., as a photo librarian working with their new DAM. Bonnier is a leading multi-platform media company, including 50 special-interest magazines, a book publishing division, television programs, websites, events and marketing programs. She had been a research specialist for the Walt Disney Company until last spring.

Debbie Millward, Chief Librarian at Pacific Press in Vancouver has just been reappointed to another two-year term as a trustee on the Vancouver Public Library board. She will be teaching the Special Libraries course at the University of British Columbia's MLIS program next September, for the fourth time. Also at PacPress, librarians **Kate Bird** and **Carolyn Soltau** have trained 225 newsroom folks in

the last 4 months on their new CMS system, Saxotech, including training die-hard Mac users how to use PCs.

Susan Fifer Canby, VP National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., retired in January 2010, after nearly 35 years at the Society's libraries and information services. She supported the editorial and business staff and partners of the National Geographic Society with a staff of 18 librarians, archivists, systems and records managers, and indexers. She is currently on the SLA Board as Chapter Cabinet Chair. She is a past president of the D.C. Special Libraries Association, DC Library Association, CAPCON Board, and former member of the OCLC Member's Council. She was recognized by SLA in 2001 as the Innovator of the Year, became a University of Maryland Alumna of the Year, 2004, and received the SLA Factiva Leadership Award in 2005. Her library has been recognized by SLA's Business and Finance Division as a Center of Excellence for management. She was a Knight Fellow for the Salzburg Seminar, Libraries for the 21st Century (2004) and a Freeman Fellow for East West Relations (2005). She has been a member of the News Division since 1975 and can be reached at susanfifercanby@gmail.com.

Sandy Hall, formerly of the *Arizona Daily Star*, says Aloha from Hawaii and recommends we check out "how to speak librarianese" from Rutgers <http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~pack501/librarianese.html>. She is just back from a one-month journey trans-China following the ancient fabled Silk Road, experiencing China's many distinct minority cultures. Her plan is to eventually travel from the far west of China and continue thru Central Asia to where the Road ends.

Richard Nelsson, is chief librarian of the *Guardian* and is Chair of the (soon to be disbanding) Association of UK Media

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Web Frameworks

BY DEREK WILLIS

It's safe to say this is the most jargon-filled element of your *News Library News*, so let's resolve to cut through some of the clutter in 2010. For this edition, and leading up to the national conference in June, when the News Division will present a session on the utility of programming for libraries, I'll be setting down some definitions and explanations of some terms from the field of Web development. Where applicable, I'll also try to provide a few words about how those terms relate to libraries. I'll start with a fairly popular term these days: the Web framework.

A Web framework is a piece of software that helps its users build Web sites by simplifying or automating common tasks. If you've worked on your organization's intranet and have lost track of the number of times you've had to build a search form or create a user registration process, then a framework might be the thing you need. Frameworks abstract the repetitive stuff so that instead of writing the HTML by hand to create a form, you generate the 25-30 lines of HTML with just a few lines of code. Or it means that if you want to connect to a database, you use the same file each time the Web site builds out a page with content from that database. Frameworks promote the reuse of common code, saving you lots of time by not having to write the same things over and over; instead, you can concentrate on the elements of your site that set it apart from others.

Ok, but what *is* a framework? A framework is a collection of files that you customize and expand on rather than an actual pre-built Web site. Blogging applications like WordPress and Movable Type are rightly called "content management systems," but they aren't frameworks, even though developers have extended them to do other things. A framework could be used to build blog software, or anything else that connects to a database system and produces HTML.

Two very popular frameworks are Django, written in the Python programming language, and Ruby on Rails, written in Ruby. Other frameworks are written in everything from PHP

to ColdFusion to Javascript. Even a product like Caspio, which I wouldn't call a framework like the others, has some tendencies. It abstracts the process of connecting to the database and producing HTML.

So you can think of the following progression from the foundation to the finished product:

Programming language -> Web framework -> Blog CMS

Each is built atop its predecessor, and the application and uses get more specific as you go.

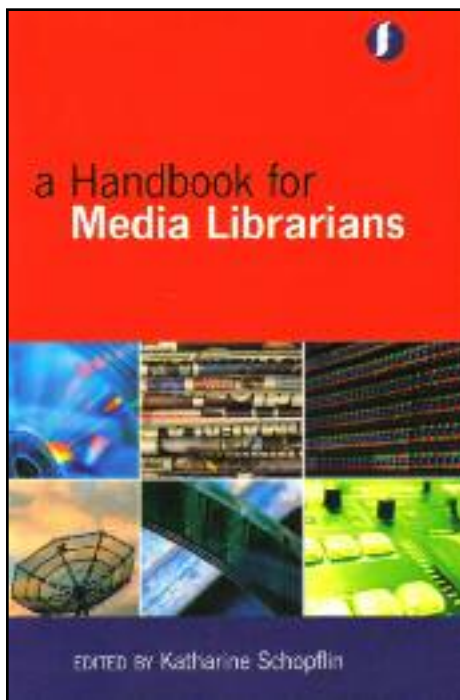
So why would a library need a framework, and how would it use one? A lot of newsrooms want the ability to have reporters and researchers find information stored in databases via the Web, but writing intranet pages is boring and time-consuming. Many frameworks have a generic approach that can get a browsable database Web app up and running in a very short period of time. And replicating that with other datasets becomes less of a chore since you don't need to repeat most of the process - copy and paste with a little alteration here and there will do in a lot of cases.

To get started with a framework, I'd recommend two things: first, find out what the dominant language/platform at your organization is, and try to find a framework written for that language and platform. So if your IT or Web site staff work in PHP, maybe check out the CakePHP framework. Any good framework can be downloaded and run locally on your own computer; this is how I set up Django initially when I worked at *The Washington Post*. Read the documentation. Follow the tutorial. Build out a simple application - maybe tracking research requests (or even credits!).

Once you get comfortable with a framework, you'll begin to see how it expands the possibilities for what you can do, or you can use components that other people have written and released. For example, Ben Welsh of the *Los Angeles Times* has released a Django application to track changes in content across various databases. He calls it correx. That's a term we know only too well.

BOOK REVIEW

By JULIE DOMEL



“*Having survived the fallout after Tasini, I was intrigued by the chapter on legal issues for news databases and archives.*”

A Handbook for Media Librarians

Edited by Katharine Schopflin

Facet Publishing

\$125.00

While by no means the “end-all-be-all” in how to be a news researcher/media librarian/whatever we’re calling ourselves these days, *A Handbook for Media Librarians* covers a lot of bases. The book, published in the UK, and told for the most part from their perspective, still has a lot to offer to those of us back in the States. Personally, I’m always interested to see the worlds of other news librarians, so their tales were still of interest to me.

The editor, Katharine Schopflin, a media librarian herself, opens the book with an overview of media libraries in the 21st century, which serves as a great primer to anyone interested in our field — and bravely tells it like it is, especially in terms of job prospects. As with any textbook, the latest technological advances are not addressed here, but you can go elsewhere to find that kind of information.

The book continues with chapters on virtual media libraries and picture librarianship, and not to leave out our broadcast colleagues, cataloguing television programs. Having survived the fallout after Tasini, I was intrigued by the chapter on legal issues for news databases and archives. The author covers Tasini, as well as some cases with which I was unfamiliar. I had not considered that due to the international scope of the internet, even cases decided outside the U.S. may affect us.

The final two chapters are more day-in-the-life. The first, a descrip-

tion of life as a UK regional news librarian, is told by Colin Hunt, who joined the Liverpool Daily Post and Echo in 1973. He had me from when his interviewer offered him some Johnnie Walker pulled from a file cabinet (not unlike some stories I’ve heard about liquor stashes of the past in my newsroom) and he realized he’d “never work in an industrial library again.” The last is by our own Carol Bradley Bursack — she sure had a rough hill to climb! However, as she perseveres through it all, I think we can all gain a little inspiration as we fight those who just don’t get our value and gain strength from those who serve as our champions.

The price of the book is a bit steep, making it more of an investment or something to add to the collection rather than some bedtime reading material. However, for those of you out there teaching hatchling librarians, I think you should consider adding it (or parts of it) to your curriculum. Anyone considering a news librarian career should also add it to their reading list to get a feel for what the industry is really like — no sugar-coating here.

My only complaint: a reference in the chapter on legal issues that refers to NewsLib as being the mailing list of the News Division of the American Library Association. Gasp! We’ll forgive our UK colleague for that one, just don’t tell SLA HQ! They are still recovering from the last identity crisis.

Great perks, sure, but Club members get perk of their own in librarian

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remaining members are interested individuals and groups including lawmakers and newsmakers themselves. The Club hosts hundreds of events each year in its meeting rooms, restaurant and broadcast center. Beth reminded me that news librarians are eligible for membership, the benefits of which include free breakfast, sessions with a personal trainer in the gym and great prices on drinks at the bar – plus access to research services. The Press Club's Eric Friedheim Library is the nonprofit arm of the Club, and coordinates fundraising activities that support awards and scholarships on behalf of the Club. Beth is one of four members of the Library staff which also includes a director, an archivist and an assistant.

Prior to joining the Press Club staff in 2007, Beth worked with a consulting firm

and as a government librarian. She earned her graduate degree from the University of Maryland in 2004. When I asked her to name the biggest challenge she's faced professionally, she cited working through a renovation. This required packing up and storing the entire library, while providing services as best she could. An unusual challenge of a different sort involves drawing up seating charts for the annual Book Fair and Author's Night the Library facilitates — research is required to put together engaging groups of authors (and to separate personalities who may be embroiled in public feuds). Beth says working at the Press Club has given her a new perspective on the kind of effort that goes into pulling off large events, such as dinners and book fairs. And the perks? Don't let anyone tell you there's so such thing as a free lunch.

PEOPLE

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Librarians, and a SLA member. He's just had *Those Who Dared*, published, a collection of *Guardian/Observer* articles about exploration and adventure travel, from Shackleton to the space race. It involved mining the newspapers' archives for coverage and first-person accounts. You can see the related blog at: <http://thosewhodared.blogspot.com/>

Amy Disch reports that some *Columbus Dispatch* librarians received recognition late last year: **Julie Albert** received an A1 credit for the data analysis she did for a series of stories on domestic violence in Ohio. On the same day, she received a research credit for tabulating the results of the *Dispatch's* annual children's book survey. **Susan Stonick** used her GIS skills to create a map showing domestic-violence arrests in Franklin County, Ohio, from 2002-2008. Web producer **Victor Black**, a librarian who works on the paper's Web team, assisted with the map by developing longitude/latitude coordinates for addresses gathered from Franklin County jail booking data.

Congratulations to **Celia Donnelly**, chief librarian at the *Globe and Mail* and **Astrid Lange**, research specialist at the *Toronto Star*. They were profiled in the Ryerson (University) journalism school's *Ryerson Review of Journalism* (<http://www.rrj.ca/online/821/>). The article sang the praises of news librarians with quotes from reporters and columnists, discussing the false economy of slashing or eliminating library staff. It ran with a photo of Celia with her ER (Editorial Research) sign with a big red cross.

Long-time NPR librarian **Kee Malesky** took some time off in 2009 — to write a book! An editor at John Wiley & Sons asked her to compile *All Facts Considered*, a collection of some of the interesting and unusual facts that he assumes are stuffed in her brain after 25+ years as a reference librarian. It's scheduled for publication in September. Kee has created a web page for the book, and may start blogging in a few months:

<http://www.AllFactsConsidered.com>