

Notes From Conference Call
Biomedical and Life Science Division Board and SLA Board of Directors
20 July 2004

Attending: Ruth Holst

Chris Hooper-Lane (Chair of Medical Section, Biomedical and Life Sciences Division)

Peggy Jones (Chair, Biomedical and Life Sciences Division)

Jackie Knuckle (Chapter Cabinet Chair, SLA)

Janice Lachance (Executive Director, SLA)

Eleanor MacLean (Treasurer, Biomedical and Life Sciences Division)

Brent Mai (Division Cabinet Chair, SLA)

Ethel Salonen (President, SLA)

Barb Spiegelman (Director, SLA)

Anne Turhollow (Secretary, Biomedical and Life Sciences Division)

Peggy Jones (PJ) welcomed everyone to the conference call. She asked Ethel Salonen to give the group the background information on the request for a proposed medical division.

Ethel Salonen (ES) reported that while making her chapter visits (specifically mentioned were New Mexico, North Carolina, New Mexico plus a Boston biotech network) between February and May 2004, a number of members (12 or so) during her Q&A sessions mentioned that they felt they were missing out on the robust networking possibilities that might be available from a separate medical section. They felt the creation of a separate division would assist in convincing their managers to allow them to attend SLA Annual. Their managers believed that MLA was a better conference to attend, but these librarians felt that the SLA programming was more robust and diverse. This brought up the question if the Medical Section could be pulled out of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division and stand-alone.

Janice Lachance (JL) said she had heard similar opinions. SLA has been asked to partner with MLA on more things such as the annual conference, but the financial structure and other factors make it extremely difficult to do. How do we give members more straight business skills and applications for the hospital setting?

PJ said there are a numbers of librarians who hold both SLA and MLA memberships and can only attend one conference per year, which for many is MLA. The creation of a medical division would be counterproductive as we don't really need more medical programming but the non-division programming (such as Business Finance) is what's attractive. She reported on the Division interlinking with MLA, such as our MLA liaisons, in fact last year the MLA president attended the Division's business meeting.

ES said that more marketing of the section is needed; its visibility is limited. A division is easier to justify to management. Perhaps the Division should use a tool such as Survey Monkey to determine interest.

PJ asked if ES knew whether or not he people she spoke to were members of the section or not. ES did not ask; she did ask about their divisional affiliations, most were in the Pharmaceutical Division.

They were looking for a more robust presence of the section at the conference and in the association.

JC pointed out that the division level is more visible than a section. For many the division is the most important level, a section is perceived as a secondary priority. The question of the "right" number of division is a different issue but the divisions are seen as the association's priorities.

Eleanor MacLean (EM) said we need to remember the abbreviation BIO is for Biomedical not Biological. Are these people active in the Medical Section if they are concerned about it?

ES said she had encouraged them to approach the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division board with their concerns. PJ reported that the board was not approached. She said the board realizes it needs to do more public relations with respect to the section.

Jackie Knuckle (JK) asked why was the Medical Section born?

PJ said it was the result of a proposal in 1994 to set up a Medical Division. The then Biological Sciences division had serious concerns. 50% of its membership is health science librarians. It was felt it would hurt the division both in competition for members and programming plus vendor funding. The Medical Section creates special programming in the medical sciences. It invites the local MLA Chapter to attend the programs and their reception. Medical librarians have played and continue to play leadership roles within the Division.

Barb Spiegelman (BS) was Chapter Cabinet chair at the time. She wanted to assure all that she had no vested interest in the outcome now. The proposed Medical Division formation in 1994 was defeated by one vote. The issue is that (some hospital) management places no credibility on SLA.

JK said perhaps a name change for the division is needed. However she is concerned with management making a decision on which conference a professional can attend.

Chris Hooper-Lane (CHL) pointed out that the programming for the Medical Section reflects diverse topics.

EM asked what purpose would the name change serve. Clearly we need to do more publicity about the section. Her concern is that the need for a division comes from the members.

ES wants to be proactive in meeting members' needs and comments. We need to judge how accurate these opinions are. It is up to PJ and her board to decide how to respond.

JK said we need to do the survey; we don't want to do this top down but that is where the comments started.

Ruth Holst (RH) is active in both MLA and SLA. We need to be sure to survey beyond the members of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division. She has attended both conferences and feels that the programming with the Division is not the same as MLA what is attractive is the

programming outside the Division. Since medical librarians find SLA appealing for "outside" programming, we need to put together a PR package of all programming of interest to medical librarians. This might help to convince management to let them attend SLA.

ES or JL (??) asked RH about the type of keynote speaker - would it help if the keynote was the Surgeon General speaking on health information. RH said one program would not tip the balance. One year she attended SLA due to geographic location.

?? heard that MLA is very academic in its programming. RH said that is not true, its programming has changed over the years. SLA provides more on the business aspects than MLA. Many librarians belong to both organizations and alternate attendance.

ES said that it is her job to respond to member needs and to insure high attendance at the annual conference.

RH said that argument about boss is odd; she would question how hard did they try to make their case. Management in larger medical settings would welcome people attending different conferences. It was felt that the previously mentioned members came from small libraries.

CHL said it is also a matter of corporate culture. He is from a large center (University of Wisconsin) with 15 librarians only one of who attends SLA. His director was delighted to have some one attend difference conference.

JK is also from a large academic center and there the librarians attend MLA, SLA, or ALA. She attends SLA for the diversity of programming. She takes the opportunity to educate her CIO. She is a member of the Medical Section and feels it needs to "pump it up," there is not enough visibility. We do need to hear from others in the Section.

PJ summed up that we have two proposals for action. First is a survey for members inside and out of the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division. We will work on question related to what members need in terms of medical content form SLA and what are their non-medical needs. Second there needs to more PR about the Section. There are plans in the works for the PR, Publications, Membership, and Biofeedback to enhance the knowledge of the Medical Section.

ES said the survey is good and we should get interesting results. She did want to force the idea down people's throats but wanted to explore the idea. There definitely needs to be more marketing. And we should explore the issue of a name change to emphasize the medical portion.

EM pointed out that DBIO is the official abbreviation.

Both ES and JL said they are available for additional assistance. If there is not objection, ES will report on this call to the SLA Board during their conference call tomorrow. PJ said that was fine and that a report was going out to the Biomedical and Life Sciences Division as well.