

ERMD News

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Environment & Resource Management Division, SLA

Summer 2017



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Chair's Column

By Eric Tans, tans@mail.lib.msu.edu



Greetings ERMD!

I hope everyone who attended SLA 2017 in Phoenix arrived home safely after a great conference. I know I learned a lot, met some great people, and managed to (mostly) avoid the heat. I was relieved when my flight out of Phoenix lifted off the ground despite the 120 degrees F. temperature and rumors that the heat would force the airport to cancel flights.

As you may have already seen, I have taken to directly emailing ERMD members to share important information regarding the proposed merger between ERMD and the Food, Agriculture & Nutrition Division. Our member survey regarding the merger is still currently open and is accessible here: <https://goo.gl/forms/22eNPqMyhWWKm4mP2>. The survey will be open until the end of the day on Friday, July 14, thanks to everyone who has already responded to it. If you have any questions or concerns about the merger or its process, please feel free to express them using the survey. I will be reviewing the feedback and will work to develop a document that addresses any questions and concerns prior to putting the question to a vote.

SLA bylaws regarding mergers require that we move quickly. The membership bodies of both ERMD and FAN must vote to approve the merger, and the vote must take place within 45 days of the division business meetings that took place in Phoenix. In order to achieve that deadline, I plan to share a link to the poll on July 19. The poll will remain open until August 2.

I will share an update on the results of the ERMD poll as soon as I am able, but we will have to wait to hear from FAN to know their results. If both bodies approve the merger by a 2/3 margin it will proceed.

The next steps in the process would be for our unit leadership to draft in conjunction with the FAN leadership a petition to submit to the Unit Cabinet Chair and the SLA Membership Department. The Unit Cabinet Chair will then present the petition at the next scheduled Board of Directors meeting for final approval; division leadership will receive a notice that the merger will proceed and receive an effective by date. After that date, the merger will be complete and the leadership boards will combine. For the remainder of the first year, the board will proceed with dual officers (two Chairs, two secretaries, two treasurers, etc.) who will work together to streamline the combination of assets, resources, and documents.

I am confident that a merger between our two divisions would make for a stronger and more dynamic unit. By combining resources and personnel, we will be able to provide more services that are meaningful to our members. However, we will still need the help of those willing to take on positions of leadership going forward. I hope you will consider volunteering to take us into a new and exciting future!

Thank you very much.

Editor's Note

by Bobbi Weaver, baw@cwsl.edu



Well, we had a hot time at the SLA 2017 Annual Conference in Phoenix—both literally and figuratively. The thermometer read 118 degrees Fahrenheit when I arrived at the airport on Tuesday night to catch my flight back to balmy San Diego. We survived record-breaking heat by staying inside the Convention Center and attending many informative programs offered by the various SLA divisions.

One of the topics discussed at the ERMD board and business meeting was the possible merger with DFAN. Lower membership numbers for the division have made it increasingly difficult to find new members to fulfill leadership roles. Please let your voice be heard about this proposal by completing the online survey at <https://goo.gl/forms/x7n2BTov9OaCvNJH3> by this Friday, July 14.

This edition features some great articles about the educational programs we have presented, co-presented or might be relevant to our interests as information professionals dealing with environmental issues. Enjoy!

ERMD NEWS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Environment and Resource Management Division of the Special Libraries Association

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Possible merger with FAN

**We need your input by
Fri., July 14, 2017**

Because the Division's membership numbers are declining and it is becoming more challenging to fill leadership positions, the Environment & Resource Management Division is considering a merger with the Food, Agriculture & Nutrition Division to form a new division, Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Resources Division. We need to know what our members think about this proposal before moving forward. Please complete the survey at <https://goo.gl/forms/x7n2BTov9OaCvNJH3> by **Fri., July 14**. Thank you for your help.

SLA 2017 Annual Conference Programs: Reviews

Food and Medicine from the Desert

Presented by: Food, Agriculture & Nutrition Division, Biomedical & Life Sciences Division, Environment & Resource Management Division, Pharmaceutical & Health Technology Division, and Science & Technology Division

Sponsor: ACSESS

Monday, June 19, 10:30-11:30am

Reviewed by: Eric Tans, tans@mail.lib.msu.edu

Ethnobotanist Martha Ames Burgess challenged the popular perception of deserts as dry and lifeless expanses of dust and sand in her SLA Annual Conference 2017 session *Food and Medicine from the Desert*. While deserts do have long periods of scarcity, they are also punctuated by short pulses of plenty that can provide both food and medicine for human consumption.

Ms. Burgess learned the natural rhythms of desert scarcity and abundance from Juanita Ahil, a traditional elder from the Tohono O'odham Nation. For the Tohono O'odham, understanding how to harvest food from desert plants has been a key to survival and is now a way to maintain a connection to traditional practices.

The session featured a presentation describing the dietary and medicinal properties of many plants, including prickly pear and barrel cactus, jojoba, chia, wild rhubarb, desert broom, staghorn and pencil cholla, and triangle leaf bursage. Each plant has multiple uses for both food and medicine, and Ms. Burgess described techniques for harvesting and preparing each plant species. The highlight of the session, however, was the table featuring samples. Sampling food from the plants described in the presentation was a fun, interactive, and delicious way to cap the presentation.

SLA 2017 Annual Conference Programs: Reviews

Water in the Southwest: History, Policy and Data Mon. June 29, 2017, 9:00-10:00 am

Reviewed by Bobbi Weaver, baw@cwsl.edu

Current ERMD Chair, Eric Tans, introduced this session. He mentioned that one of the scheduled speakers, [Jack August](#), had unfortunately passed away earlier in the year. The audience observed a brief moment of silence in his honor.

The first speaker of the program was [Sarah Porter](#), Director of the [Kyl Center for Water Policy](#) at the Arizona State University. Porter noted that Arizona is a hot and dry place with less than 12 inches of rain per year. She further noted that the most populated areas of the state are also the hottest and driest areas of the state.

Porter gave an overview of the history of water use and policy in the region. She mentioned that the ancient [Hohokam people](#) engineered water solutions by digging canals to bring water from the river to farm fields. When the Europeans settled in the area, they took advantage of these pre-existing canals for their irrigation use.

In more recent history, after the Civil War, the U.S. government was looking to settle vast areas in the West, she explained. Explorer [John Wesley Powell](#) traveled down the Colorado River, but reported to the U.S. government that there was not enough water to develop the West.

Porter next described the [Salt River Valley](#) and the impact of the [Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902](#). She noted that the [Roosevelt Dam](#) near Phoenix was the first project initiated after the passage of the act, and it was a source of secure and reliable water in the region. She added that the [Central Arizona Project](#) was the last project under the Act.

Porter noted that during the most recent drought experienced in California, there was no similar water rationing in Arizona. She mentioned various ways that the state has managed its water supply. Arizona has developed methods to safely [reuse](#) wastewater. She added that Arizona also uses the practice of [water banking](#), storing water during years when the state has not used its full allocation of the Colorado River.

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The next speaker was [Grant Weinkam](#) of the [Water Resources Research Center](#) at the University of Arizona. Dr. Weinkam's presentation focused on the various programs of the Center.

Weinkam began his presentation by discussing the [Desert Flows Database](#), a database exploring the watersheds of the Sonoran, Chihuahua and Mojave Deserts and deriving the data from more than 400 peer-reviewed publications. He continued by discussing the Water RAPIDS [Research and Planning Innovations for Dryland Systems] project, which seeks to balance water resources with community needs. Weinkam also discussed the [Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative](#), a binational (U.S. and Mexico) effort to identify and repair natural resources with a focus on springs, streams and grasslands.

Weinkam showed the audience a graphic of America's most endangered rivers from the American Rivers' report, [America's Most Endangered Rivers 2017](#). As noted on the graphic, the Lower Colorado River was in first place on the list.

He also recommended the documentary, [Beyond the Mirage: The Future of Water in the West](#). Information about the film can be reviewed at its web site, and there is a link to view the documentary on Amazon.

Weinkam added the importance of water to the outdoor recreation industry of the state. He noted that more than half of the state's residents engage in regular outdoor recreation, and spend about \$10.5 billion annually in these activities. He also noted the importance of water to the various wildlife species in the areas, which include over 300 species of birds living and migrating through the San Pedro River corridor.

He next revisited the topic of the Desert Flows Database. He discussed how the data was gathered and analyzed. More details on this research can be reviewed in the [Desert Flows Methodology Guidebook](#), which is available online.

SLA 2017 Annual Conference Programs: Reviews

The Science of Food Deserts

Presented by: Food, Agriculture & Nutrition Division, Biomedical & Life Sciences Division, Environment & Resource Management Division, Science & Technology Division, and Social Sciences Division

Sponsor: ACSESS

Sunday, June 18, 9-10am

Reviewed by: Eric Tans. tans@mail.lib.msu.edu

Given the Arizona setting, one might assume that the SLA Annual Conference 2017 session *The Science of Food Deserts* was about arid climate and lack of water. That, however, would be incorrect. In fact, the study of food deserts is a way to examine food insecurity in communities across the country. Speaker Kara Tanoue (filling in for the originally scheduled Daoqin Tong) gave an informative talk about the need to study food deserts and the changing methods used to define the term.

The USDA defines a food desert as a pre-determined area that are both high poverty and lack access to healthy food options. Within a food desert, the most readily available food might be available at a gas station or liquor store, without accessible grocery stores or supermarkets. Most food deserts tend to occur either in urban city centers or in remote rural areas. Living in a food desert forces families to face challenges every day when it comes to procuring and consuming food, with many forced to strategically plan trips to the store.

The food insecurity that comes with living in a food desert is a problem across the US. 42.2 million people are currently food insecure, including 13.1 million children. In Arizona, 1 in 4 children live within food insecure households

The broad scope of the problem has given way to an increase in the number of studies examining food access. The number of articles featuring the term “food access” has increased exponentially in recent years. Even so, studies lack a consistent approach for defining key concepts and measures, which can influence results and conclusions. The key challenge is determining the appropriate size unit for study.

Often researchers will use pre-existing boundaries such as census tracts or blocks, zip codes, or other spatial units, but the lack of standardization can cause issues. The results of analysis can change depending on the size of the units measured, with larger units indicating worse access and smaller units showing better access for areas of high poverty. This can lead to researchers and policy makers overestimating access for impoverished people living in smaller but more densely populated urban centers and underestimating access for those living in more affluent and sprawling suburbs.

Food desert researchers must continue to develop novel approaches to studying this complex issue to better understand individual experiences over large areas. This can include integrating mixed methods approaches like interviews, individual level analysis using GPS tracking data, integrating the study of travel behavior, and big data analysis.



SLA 2017 Annual Conference Programs: Reviews

Biodiversity Information in the 21st Century

Tues., June 20, 2017, 10:15-11:30 am

Reviewed by Bobbi Weaver, baw@cwsl.edu



Presented by the Biomedical & Life Sciences Division, this program explored how information on biodiversity is gathered and analyzed today. The speakers were introduced by Ruth Gustafson, Division member and Convener of the Natural History Caucus.

The first speaker was Bryan Heidorn of the University of Arizona iSchool. He began by noting that there are approximately 8.7 million eukaryotic (with nucleus) species identified in the world, but we still don't understand most of them or their role in our ecosystems. He added that while old technology is still being used to gather biodiversity data, new tools are now generating much more data. Images from satellites, airplanes and drones have accumulated about a million gigabytes of data on biodiversity. This data needs to be properly maintained, so there is a need for data curation, he added.

Prof. Heidorn then discussed some of the current efforts to collect and keep data on biodiversity. He mentioned the report, [Harnessing the Power of Digital Data for Science and Society](#), which was compiled by the Interagency Working Group on Digital Data to the Committee on Science of the National Science and Technology Council. He also discussed the work of the [National Ecological Observatory Network](#), an organization formed to gather and provide open data on ecosystems.

Prof. Heidorn addressed a method of data collection on biodiversity known as [DNA barcoding](#). To keep current on developments in this area, he suggested viewing and subscribing to the blog at <http://DNA-barcoding.blogspot.com>.

He then discussed data on the behavior of certain species. Most notably, he mentioned the Desert Museum's research on the behavior of the [Less Long-nosed Bat](#). Some of the interesting characteristics he mentioned about this bat is that pregnant bats roost in Mexico and then migrates north. The bat is nectar-eating and sometimes competes with hummingbirds for food.

He concluded by discussing some depositories of information on biodiversity. He mentioned the [Biodiversity Heritage Library](#), which now has 31 million pages of data. He also introduced information on the [Map of Life](#), which has gathered millions of records on a variety of species and presents information by geographic location. The [Taxonomic Database Working Group](#) has been formed to coordinate biological databases and develop standards for recording information. He added

that [iDigBio](#) works on digitizing numerous biodiversity collections. The [Nature's Notebook](#) web site allows citizen scientists to record their observations on biodiversity online.

Prof. Heidorn's slides can be viewed online at https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9DMUzx2ek_ea1pQTXdBdnZQVnM/view

Curt Bradley of the [Center for Biological Diversity](#) was the next speaker in this program. He also discussed various organizations that compile data on biodiversity, especially with regards to threatened and endangered species. He presented some data on the growth of bird populations from the web site of the [North American Bird Conservation Initiative \(NABCI\)](#). He displayed information on the [American pika](#) that he obtained from the web site of the [Global Biodiversity Information Facility](#). He further noted that climate change will be significant in the next 20 years, affecting the habitat of this species. Bradley also presented some climate data and maps he obtained from the web site of [AdaptWest](#).

He expressed concern for the proposed border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Bradley indicated that there have been several jaguar sightings in border areas. He noted that a border wall would prevent the animals from migrating to the U.S. The Center for Biological Diversity has compiled a report on this topic titled [A Wall in the Wild: The Disastrous Impacts of Trump's Border Wall on Wildlife](#).

Bradley discussed the usefulness of federal government information in the study of biodiversity, but also expressed concern about federal government information disappearing from the internet. Currently, the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) provides information on endangered species, including a breakdown of species by county. However, he displayed a screenshot from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management showing a dead link. He mentioned that [Landsat](#) currently provides valuable imagery data, but that the Trump Administration is cutting the budget on satellites that research climate change. Bradley suggested using the [Freedom of Information Act](#) to obtain data that has been taken down from the Internet.

Mr. Bradley has made his presentation slides available online at <http://cbdnet.info/Public/SLA.pptx>.

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