REPORT OF FINDINGS
RMSLA Member Mini-Survey: "Elevate Your Value"
October 2010
Report prepared by Connie Clem, RMSLA 2010-2011 Director
connie@cleminfostrategies.com, Niwot, Colorado

PART 1. SUMMARY

The Rocky Mountain Chapter, Special Libraries Association (RMSLA) conducted this short survey in October 2010 using SLA's SurveyMonkey system. There were 44 respondents, representing approximately 25% of the chapter membership.

The survey was conducted to update the chapter leadership on members' priorities and the perceived value of RMSLA membership, access to chapter programs and events, program topics of strongest interest, and speaker suggestions.

Questions asked in this mini-survey include:

1. What are the top benefits that you value from participating as a member of Rocky Mountain SLA?
2. Among the benefits of chapter membership you selected in Question 1, please identify your most essential benefit and tell us what makes it so valuable to you.
3. When are you most likely to be available to participate in live, face-to-face programs hosted by RMSLA?
4. When are you most likely to be available to participate in online virtual programs hosted by RMSLA?
5. What topics would you like to hear about at future RMSLA events?
6. Please suggest any speakers you'd like to hear from at an upcoming RMSLA event.
7. Please add any additional comments about chapter programs and events.
8. Can we quote your survey comments in articles or promotional materials about RMSLA?
9. My name, title, employer/company, city, state (optional)

Membership value

Members said their top values in chapter participation were:

- Networking
- Programs
- News, expertise, connections
- Learning opportunities from beyond RMSLA

Program Access

- **Day and time — live, face-to-face programs.** Members are most likely to be able to attend if the events are held on evenings during the work week. About half as many respondents said they can attend face-to-face events during the lunch hour.

- **Day and time — virtual events.** Members are most enthusiastic about programs hosted during the lunch hour. Morning or afternoon programs during the weekday also can be attended by a fair number of respondents. Members are strongly interested in having access to virtual programs after the live event.

- **Location — live, face-to-face programs.** Several Colorado Front Range area respondents said they have difficulty getting to meetings and suggested more balance in where meetings are held. Specific ideas include central Denver, Boulder, Broomfield, and locations accessible via public transportation.

Program Content

Members are most interested in programs on:

- Business research
- Research in the social media
- Marketing myself / my organization
- Measuring ROI for information services

Some of the write-in suggestions offered by members include:

- Digital libraries / virtual worlds
- The future of libraries
- Job trends
- Meeting the info needs of smaller organizations (not big corporations)
- Solo librarianship challenges
- Content in scientific fields
- Vendor showcase / hot web sites

In terms of speakers, members would like to hear from several of the "big names" in SLA, local SLA members, and other experts both within and outside the SLA network.

PART 2. SURVEY DATA AND ANALYSIS

Question 1. What are the top benefits that you value from participating as a member of Rocky Mountain SLA? Please check your 4 top choices.

Top benefits valued by members are:

- Networking—mainly face-to-face (#1), but also at virtual events and online
- RMSLA professional development opportunities—mainly face-to-face (#2), but also virtual (tied for #5)
- Connection to the RMSLA community for news and expertise (#3)
- Leads to professional development from sources other than RMSLA (#4)
- Job leads (tied for #5)

Table 1. Top Benefits of RMSLA Participation

|		%	N
1	Professional networking at face-to-face chapter events	72.7%	32
2	Professional development at RMSLA programs - face-to-face	54.5%	24
3	Sharing of news, views, and expertise within the RMSLA community online (on the discussion list, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)	52.3%	23
4	Leads on professional development opportunities from RMSLA and beyond	38.6%	17
5	Professional development at RMSLA programs - virtual	29.5%	13
5	Job leads	29.5%	13
	Professional networking at virtual chapter events	18.2%	8
	Professional networking online (on LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)	18.2%	8
	Updates from SLA Headquarters and how SLA initiatives are being reflected at the chapter level	18.2%	8
	Other	4.5%	2

Comments / Other:
- *No programs locally.*
- *I learn a lot from reading* Information Outlook *about copyright, technical tools, and other significant matters. I don't belong to SLA to network. I gain a lot of knowledge from the scientific podcasts and the conference sessions--virtual and in-person events.*

Figure 1 (next page) illustrates the answers in a bar chart.

Figure 1. Top Benefits of RMSLA Participation

What are the top benefits that you value from participating as a member of Rocky Mountain SLA?
Please check your 4 top choices.
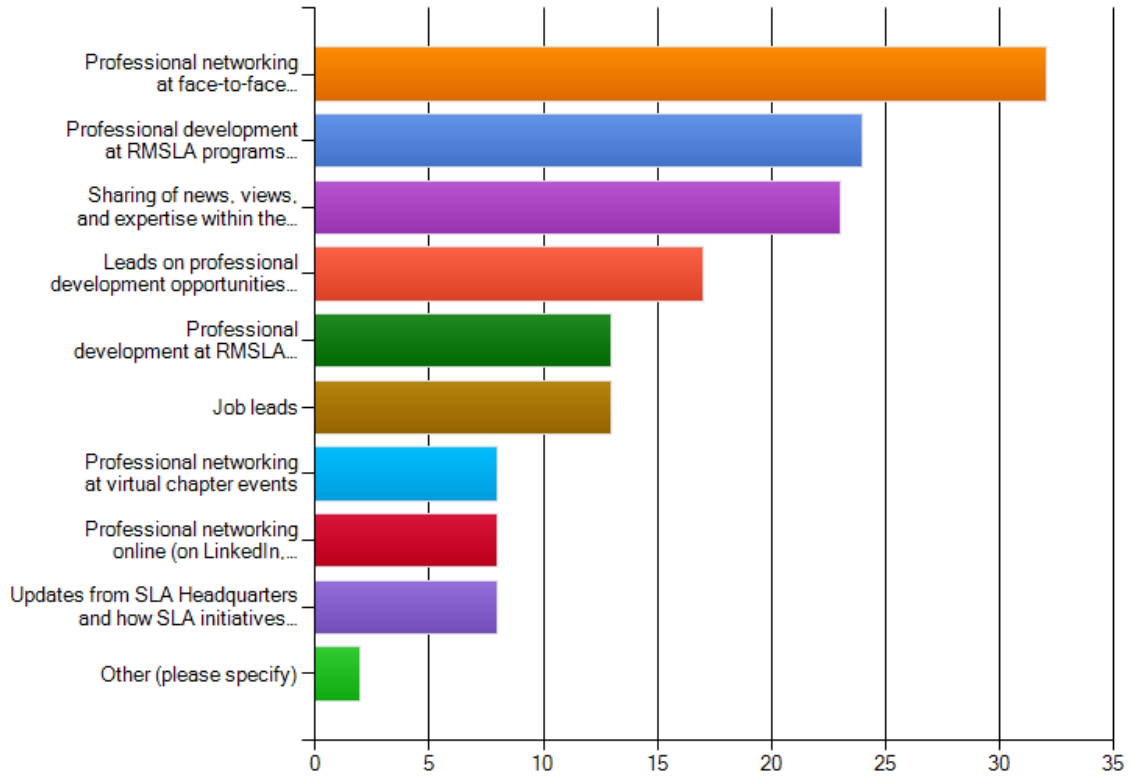
Question 2. Among the benefits of chapter membership you selected in Question 1, please identify your most essential benefit and tell us what makes it so valuable to you.

In this open-ended question, respondents highlighted:

- Networking: 20 responses (general = 5; face-to-face specifically = 13; virtual = 2)
- Connection to expertise and community: 8
- Job leads: 8
- Professional development: 7 (general = 1; at face-to-face events = 3; virtual = 3; other = 1)
- News/keeping informed: 5

Selected comments:

- As a solo librarian with plenty of virtual connections with colleagues, I like to attend occasional RMSLA events to network with local librarians and library students face-to-face.

- I like face to face when I am in town to take advantage of it. Connecting through social media is great, but real connection comes when I meet someone in person or at least have a phone conversation.

- Connections to other information professionals is the most valuable—that can be done in so many different ways but that is the value proposition of being part of SLA.

- I'm interested in knowing what kinds of jobs are available for info professionals, especially outside traditional libraries.

- Job leads are essential and go hand in hand with face-to-face networking events.

- Job leads is most valuable to me because I am still a student with graduation looming around the corner and funding being cut in every area.

- Having a local community that provides professional opportunities that don't require more than an hour or two of travel time.

- Virtual programs are a great idea because the more sources that help me stay current the better and having it at my desk is fantastic.

See Appendix A for a compilation of all answers.

Question 3. When are you most likely to be available to participate in live, face-to-face programs hosted by RMSLA? Most programs are held in the Denver/Colorado Front Range area. (Check all that apply.)

Respondents showed a clear preference for evening programs during the work week.

- Members are most likely to be able to attend events held on evenings during the work week.
- Almost half as many respondents said they can attend face-to-face events during the lunch hour. (These are likely RMSLA members who work in central Denver.)
- Afternoon, weekend, and morning programs are of interest to a smaller number of members.
- Four members indicated they are not likely to attend any Front Range-area programs in person.

Figure 2. Preferred Day and Time for Face-to-Face Programs

When are you most likely to be available to participate in live, face-to-face programs hosted by RMSLA? Most programs are held in the Denver/Colorado Front Range area. (Check all that apply.)
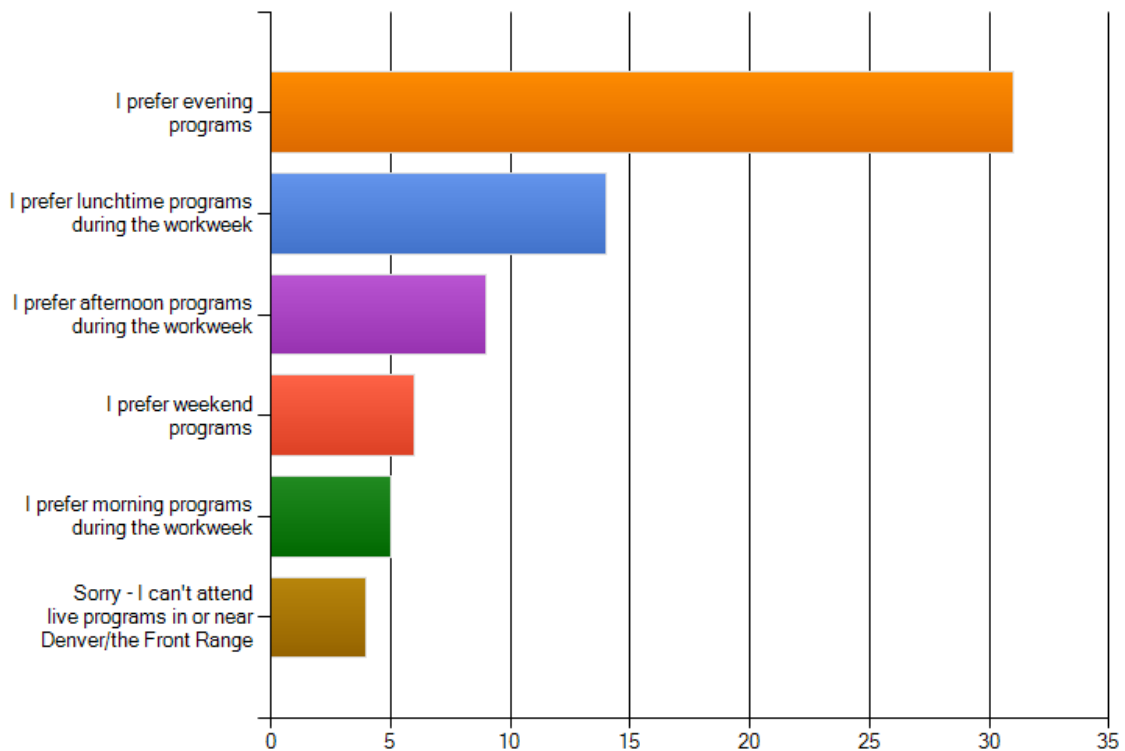
Question 4. When are you most likely to be available to participate in online virtual programs hosted by RMSLA? (Check all that apply.)

Respondents are enthusiastic about lunchtime and archived programs.

- Most members can attend programs hosted during the lunch hour.
- Morning or afternoon programs during the weekday also can be attended by a fair number of respondents.
- Members are strongly interested in having access to virtual programs after the live event.

Figure 3. Preferred Day and Time for Virtual Programs

When are you most likely to be available to participate in online virtual programs hosted by RMSLA? (Check all that apply.)
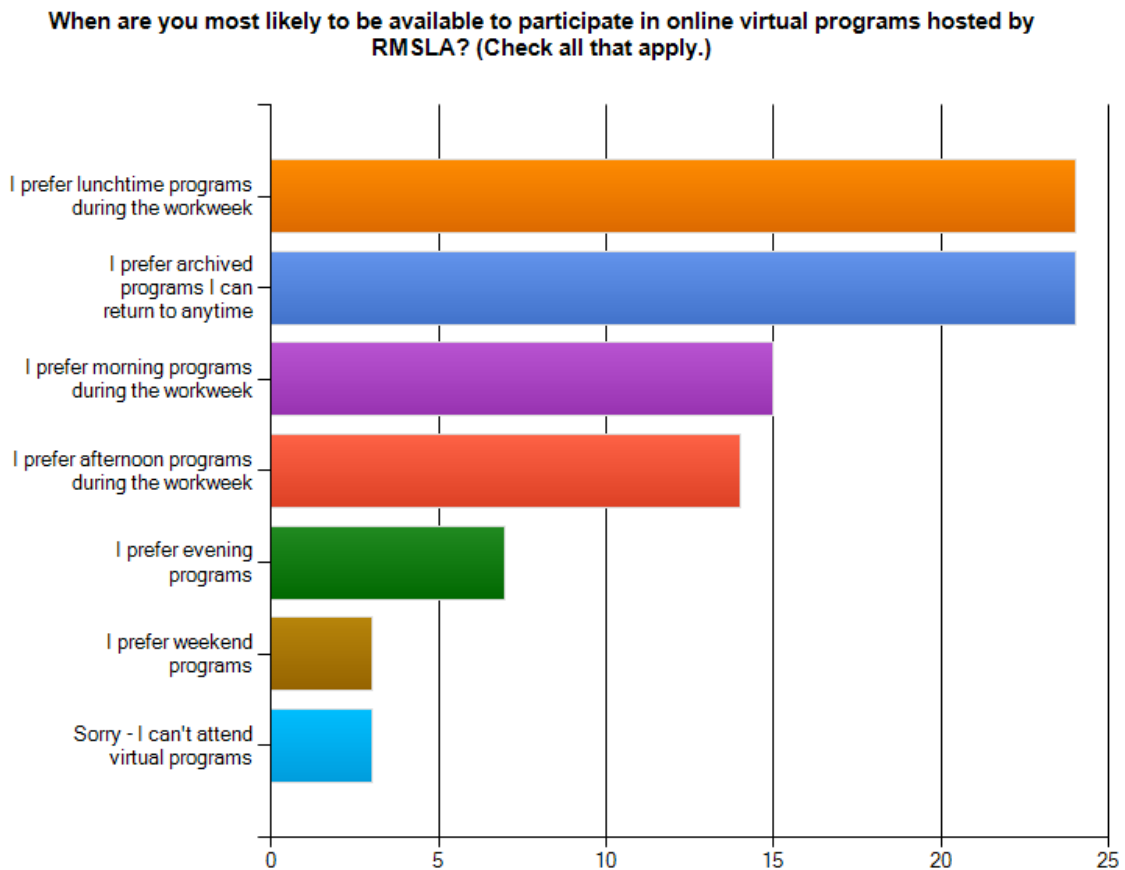
Question 5. What topics would you like to hear about at future RMSLA events? (Please check your top 5 choices.)

Members' top subjects for professional development programming are:

- Business research
- Research in the social media
- Marketing myself / my organization
- Measuring ROI for information services

**Table 2. Preferred Program Topics**

		%	N
1	Business research techniques and sources	61.4%	27
2	Conducting research in the social media	52.3%	23
3	Marketing my services/my organization's services	50.0%	22
4	Measuring return on investment (ROI) for information services	47.7%	21
	Career options with my info skill set - transitioning / mid-career	40.9%	18
	Using the social media to advance my career and visibility	38.6%	17
	The latest tech toy or trend	38.6%	17
	Demonstrating alignment of info services with the organizational mission	34.1%	15
	How to work as a team member while remaining a solo	34.1%	15
	Member libraries with an interesting mission or service model	34.1%	15
	Career options with my info skill set – starting out	22.7%	10
	Other	11.4%	5

Other suggestions [some of these answers were provided elsewhere in the survey]:
- *Digital libraries and virtual worlds. That's where the future of the profession is in my opinion.*
- *Content in scientific fields*
- *The future of libraries.* (Scott Brown, Owner, Social Information Group, Longmont, Colorado)
- *What are the latest job trends for special libraries?*
- *Information needs of smaller organizations (not big corporations) and how to meet them.* (Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Growing Local Economies, Inc., Denver, Colorado)
- *As a solo—Challenges of being a one-person department—feelings of loneliness, disenfranchisement (not really belonging to any team but being a peripheral member of many teams), lack of peer support & interaction.*
- *Tech development updates, including vendor showcase.* (Marti Cox, Content Manager, Medical Group Management Association, Englewood, Colorado)
- *Bootcamp on honing skills— including search secrets/new techniques, new tools, database updates, "hot" websites, etc.* (Marti Cox)
- *Industry issues and updates roundtable discussion.* (Marti Cox)

Figure 4. Preferred Topics for Future RMSLA Programs

What topics would you like to hear about at future RMSLA events? (Please check your top 5 choices.)
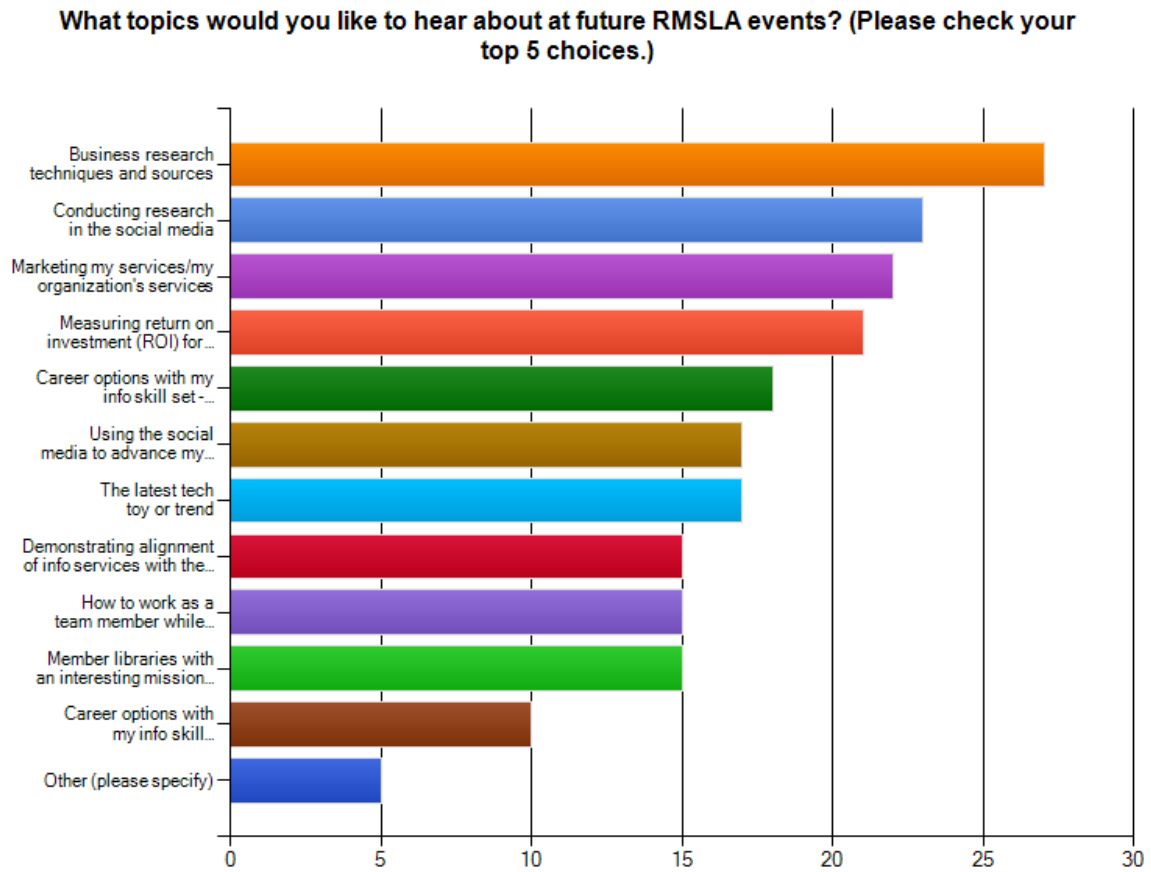
Question 6. Please suggest any speakers you'd like to hear from at an upcoming RMSLA event. (Chapter events may be live or online, so don't limit your ideas to local speakers.)

Respondents suggested these potential speakers:

- Steve Abram
- Mary Ellen Bates
- Scott Brown
- Connie Clem
- Kim Dority
- Peggy Garvin
- Christine Hamilton-Pennell
- Cindy Hill
- Cindy Romaine

Additional comments:

- *Stephen Abrams and anyone else who has a cutting-edge message or unique ideas that spark creative directions.* (Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Growing Local Economies, Inc., Denver, Colorado)
- *Alternative career people: Kim Dority, Connie Clem, people working outside traditional libraries, people who are entrepreneurial.*
- *I think it would be great to have someone like Jason Griffey (University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) speak on technology resources, see* http://jasongriffey.net/wp/ *and* http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/perpetualbeta *Heck, I also wouldn't mind talking about some newer technology resources that I use to keep up, but someone like Jason could probably do a better job.* (Joe Kraus, Science and Engineering Librarian, University of Denver. joseph.kraus@du.edu)
- *I always enjoy general career development speakers, i.e., emotional intelligence, time management, leading/managing professional staff, etc.*
- *Would be interested in hearing from practitioners in a variety of settings: museums, medical, legal.* (Scott Brown, Owner, Social Information Group, Longmont, Colorado)
- *I enjoy hearing from area librarians on a panel discussion where we can hear different views or solutions to an issue.*
- *Successful job coaches.*

Question 7. Please add any additional comments about chapter programs and events. If you'd like to discuss your ideas with a board member (optional), please include your name and email address.

Several responses identified getting to meetings as a problem:

- *I'd like to see more programs in central Denver, because it's, well, central.*
- *How about returning meetings to Broomfield instead of south Denver? I rarely attend due to the distance.*
- *Events held in south Denver are very difficult to get to for those of us on the northern Front Range, especially during rush hour.*
- *I'd like to see more in-person events in Boulder or downtown Denver and would like the location to be accessible by public transportation.*

One comment focused on relevance of chapter programming for solo librarians:

- *I've been a member of RMSLA since 1987, but find it less relevant as an independent info pro than when I was in a library (or other organization). Not sure what to suggest except to make sure we are included in local programming, since there are a lot of us who are SLA members!* (Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Growing Local Economies, Inc., Denver, Colorado)

Another member suggested hosting a wider range of chapter events:

- *Drop-in social gatherings (low cost fee or pay own way, e.g. coffee house, bakery, or watering hole) or activities (bike rides, hikes, events, etc.)* (Marti Cox, Content Manager, Medical Group Management Association, Englewood, Colorado)

Question 8. Can we quote your survey comments in articles or promotional materials about RMSLA?

Table 3. Quotability of Survey Answers

	%	N
Yes, and RMSLA can include my name (give us your name in Question 9)	17.1%	6
Yes, but don't include my name	54.3%	19
No, I prefer that RMSLA does not quote my comments	28.6%	10

Some comments have not been included in this public version of the survey report.

Question 9. My name, title, employer/company, city, state (optional—for quote attribution)

(Respondents as indicated throughout the survey results.)

Appendix A

Top Values of RMSLA Participation

In Question 2, respondents wrote open-ended responses to describe the top value each receives from participating as a member of RMSLA. Answers have been compiled to identify themes. Some answers have been counted toward more than one category of response. This is indicated by an asterisk where applicable.*

Top answers are:

- Networking: 20 (general = 5; face-to-face specifically = 13; virtual = 2)
- Connection to expertise and community: 8
- Job leads: 8
- Professional development: 7 (general = 1; at face-to-face events = 3; virtual = 3; other = 1)
- News/keeping informed: 5

Networking: 20 (general = 5; face-to-face specifically = 13; virtual = 2)

- Networking—feel like I get to know people outside of my normal environment

- Networking w/local folks.

- Networking, both at the local (chapter) and the international (association) levels

- Networking (x 2)

- As a solo librarian with plenty of virtual connections with colleagues, I like to attend occasional RMSLA events to network with local librarians and library students face-to-face.

- Face-to-face networking. Nothing else quite matches the value of that! *(Christine Hamilton-Pennell, Growing Local Economies, Inc., Denver, Colorado)*

- Networking is number one! There are so many awesome professionals in RMSLA, it's great to have a vehicle through which to meet them and interact with them! *(Scott Brown, Owner, Social Information Group, Longmont, Colorado)*

- Professional Development at in-person events -- allow an opportunity to meet others as well as advance personal knowledge and skills.* *(Marti Cox, Content Manager, Medical Group Management Association, Englewood, Colorado)*

- Professional networking at chapter events. It gives me the opportunity to see people I don't regularly interact with and to meet new people. *(Wanda McDavid, Access/Information, Inc., Denver, Colorado)*

- Job leads are essential and go hand in hand with face-to-face networking events.*

- I like face to face when I am in town to take advantage of it. Connecting through social media is great, but real connection comes when I meet someone in person or at least have a phone conversation.

- Networking-face to face

- Face to face chapter events since I just moved to Colorado.

- This is tough. I like chapter events and national events to learn things but not necessarily to network. That said, I've made a lot of good friends by being associated with SLA and RMSLA so maybe that counts as networking but that's not how I see it.

- Professional networking at face-to-face chapter events. Plus the value of the events themselves.*

- Professional networking at face-to-face chapter events. I really enjoy meeting other members and learning from them.

- There's nothing like f2f networking.

- I've gotten the most benefit from connecting with other RMSLAers on Facebook and LinkedIn.

- Being able to network remotely, as I don't live in the metro Denver area.

Connection to expertise and community: 8
- The discussion list, because it allows access to many levels of expertise and a wide variety of ideas, solutions & approaches.

- I am a solo librarian—RMSLA gives me a helpful, extensive community of peers. *(Shelly Sommer, Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research, Boulder, Colorado)*

- Sharing of news, views, and expertise within the RMSLA community online is the most important to me. As a solo librarian I get a lot of help from the community (whether it be from posting & receiving feedback or reading feedback from another person's posting).*

- Quality information and expertise of others

- Sharing of news, etc. It's very easy to be isolated even with reading newsletters, etc. Also, knowing who to talk to with similar issues.*

- As a new professional, it's hard to stay on top of job leads in so many arenas. The listserv allows each member to capitalize on our collective knowledge. So helpful.*

- Sharing with others

- Connections to other information professionals is the most valuable—that can be done is so many different ways but that is the value proposition of being part of SLA.

Job leads: 8

- I'm interested in knowing what kinds of jobs are available for info professionals, especially outside traditional libraries.

- Job leads are essential and go hand in hand with face-to-face networking events.*

- I really appreciate the job leads because I'm currently a student.

- Job leads is most valuable to me because I am still a student with graduation looming around the corner and funding being cut in every area.

- As a new professional, it's hard to stay on top of job leads in so many arenas. The listserv allows each member to capitalize on our collective knowledge. So helpful.*

- SLA helped me find my most recent job, but that was 13 years ago.

- Job leads (x 2)

Professional development: 7 (general = 1; at face-to-face events = 3; virtual = 3; other = 1)

- Being relevant and current in technologies and enhancing skills—so probably professional development

- Having a local community that provides professional opportunities that don't require more than an hour or two of travel time

- Professional Development at in-person events—allow an opportunity to meet others as well as advance personal knowledge and skills.* *(Marti Cox, Content Manager, Medical Group Management Association, Englewood, Colorado)*

- Professional networking at face-to-face chapter events. Plus the value of the events themselves.*

- Virtual programs are a great idea because the more sources that help me stay current the better and having it at my desk is fantastic.

- Right now it is virtual chapter events during work hours. I don't have the time to do events in the evenings for face-to-face events. I wish I did, but I would rather spend time at home with the family... *(Joe Kraus, Science and Engineering Librarian, University of Denver. joseph.kraus@du.edu)*

- Online courses[provided by SLA national]

- I'm not sure what professional development is offered by RMSLA aside from the Spotlight on Your Career event.

News / keeping informed: 5

- I think face to face events would be of more benefit but am generally unable to attend because of the amount of travel involved. (I work in Boulder.) Sharing news through the list has been how I keep up with SLA and RMSLA events.*

- Sharing of news, views, and expertise within the RMSLA community online is the most important to me. As a solo librarian I get a lot of help from the community (whether it be from posting & receiving feedback or reading feedback from another person's posting).*

- Sharing of news, etc. It's very easy to be isolated even with reading newsletters, etc. Also, knowing who to talk to with similar issues.*

- Discussion lists and keeping informed.

- Sharing of news

###