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## The Information Professional in 25 Years

Carol Tenopir  
*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

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**Carol Tenopir**  
**Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Library Studies**  
**University of Hawaii at Manoa**

### **The Information Professional in 25 Years**

It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to predict the changes that occurred in information production, management, access and use during the last 25 years. It is even more difficult to predict what will happen in the next 25 years, since the rate of change and number of developments seem to accelerate every year. I expect the changes to be profound, affecting not only the way we manage and access information, but the way we create and interpret it.

As information creation, dissemination and use become completely online and interactive, data will become more volatile and less permanent. "Absolute answers" in the recorded word will become relative and subject to rapid change. More interaction means more responsibility by collective authors and less reliance on citing one expert source. "Facts" and "truth" become more subjective and less permanent. Personal instant interaction with all information processes will affect the way information is created, changed, interpreted and used.

Special librarians will be profoundly affected by these changes, as will all information professionals. As all individuals become more personally involved in all phases of the information process, the important role of the information professional will change to one of advisor, quality control, filter, and interpreter. Information or data provision will become less important; information analysis and interpretation in a volatile environment will become crucial. Information services will become increasingly personal, with the ability to assess, evaluate and interpret information for individuals becoming the primary skills of the information professional.

**James R. Thompson**  
**Governor**  
**State of Illinois**

### **A Perspective from the State House**

As the Special Libraries Association celebrates its 75th anniversary, it's appropriate to note the advances made in the world of information in recent years and anticipate the strides that will be made in the future. The business of America, it's often said, is business. And business in America is certainly benefiting from new technology in communication, information storage and managing needs.

The advances of the communication industry also are helping citizens better receive the services they need. As Governor of Illinois, I can see firsthand the improvements in the state's information network. Every segment of government at any level of service relies on quick access to information.

In areas such as education, for example, improved communication will better prepare students of today for the jobs of tomorrow. Without progressive steps in learning that combines new technology with basic fundamentals, the next generation will be unprepared to enter a world more advanced than any of their forefathers could have imagined.

That's a situation we can avoid. Illinois, with its many leading centers for learning and technological development, will be in the midst of that information expansion. The limits of that progress can be defined only by our imagination. Its use will be held back only by our needs. When SLA reaches its 100th year in 2009, the production and management of information will make life better, improve government services and help everyone in ways we've yet to discover.