SLA Career Connection Seminar:
Make the Most of a Difficult Situation: MORE Solutions to Get You Through
June 8, 2014

Description: We’ve all experienced a difficult work situation at least once (perhaps twice). While we believe that we control our own destiny, the truth is that a rough project, an abusive boss, a clash with a colleague or even an unpleasant physical space can alter that belief as well as threaten productivity, working relationships, and the ability to succeed and thrive. In this popular session, we will discuss tactics and techniques, brainstorm solutions, and provide advice for surviving difficult work situations. You are encouraged to bring your questions and situations, and seek solutions.

Facilitator: Jill Hurst-Wahl is an associate professor of practice in Syracuse University’s School of Information Studies and the director of its library and information science program, including school media specialization. She is the co-author of The Information and Knowledge Professional’s Career Handbook: Define and Create Your Success (2011), which she wrote with Ulla de Stricker.

A difficult situation is one:
- that you do not like
- that you do not know how to handle
- where you do not think you have any options
- that is a surprise
- full of negatives
- that makes you feel trapped

Four rules for navigating (corporate) cultures (Career Handbook, pp. 124-126)
- You control your own world.
- Find the person who will say ‘yes’.
- Be (gently) self-deprecating.
- Be on the same level as, and fully engaged with, the person in the conversation

Tips for handling a difficult situation [not in order]: (Hat tip to Career Handbook, chapters 8 & 11)
- Research the situation and learn as much about it as possible.
- Examine your assumptions about it.
- Assess the external environment and its impact on the situation and/or possible solutions.
- Brainstorm possible solutions. (Consider even the wild solutions.)
- Build support around you.
- Pull together a team to advise you.
- Find a mentor inside or outside of your organization.
- Find an advocate.
- Have a confidant.
- Pull together with your officemates to work through the situation.
- Learn how to listen to what is said and not said.
- Talk one-on-one with the person causing you angst.
- If it is harassment, involve human resources or the personnel department.
- Keep yourself physically and emotionally safe.
- Evaluate whether you should fight or flee.
- If you need to leave the environment, have a strategy. Examine your options and finances.
- Remember the positives.
- Trust your gut.

Our situations…: