

ACRL Conference Report

Baltimore, MD., March 29-April 1, 2007

**Conference report by Laura Burt, Reference and Instruction Librarian,
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The conference in Baltimore this March was my first ACRL conference. I enjoyed the chance to attend informative panel and paper presentations, see posters describing library actions, and wander the exhibit halls. It was wonderful to see so many other dedicated academic librarians wandering the conference hall, exchanging ideas between sessions, and asking questions about current and future library trends.

Overall conference impressions: Much as library science research would suggest, the practice of information literacy, its instruction, and its assessment were major themes of the conference. As an instruction librarian, I was eager to hear about the elements of successful programs. It was exciting to learn about new teaching approaches, ways to meld information literacy with existing curriculums, and accurately learn what impact we have upon our students.

The second major theme in the presentations I attended concerned how the library is evolving in a time of change. It seems that most libraries are still struggling with the question of how to connect to new undergraduates. Questions about reaching freshmen and sophomores with virtual reference, Facebook and MySpace, gaming in the library, and the re-creation of the library as a social commons with all of its attendant problems dominated many of the sessions, with interesting answers and questions following the presentations.

As the librarian in charge of database acquisitions at my university, I was also excited to get a chance to speak to several vendors. I saw a demonstration of Lexis-Nexis's new search engine (debuting in July, the salesman told me), got a chance to see the direction of some of Proquest's new databases, and spoke to a Newsbank project designer about helping to refine the new search engine they are hoping to launch this summer. Taking part in serious conversations with vendors helped me to have further information with which to guide my database selections at our library, as well as gaining more connections in the electronic resource industry.

Summaries of thought-provoking presentations I attended:

I began my conference on Friday morning by attending a pair of matched papers, the first entitled "From Midnight Breakfast to Facebook.com: Social Networking and the Small College Library," and the second "Privacy and Library 2.0: How Do They Conflict?" Both presentations were notable for their emphasis on social networking in libraries as a definite part of library services. The Facebook presentation included specific ideas about

putting together a workable profile which advertised campus events and library acquisitions, whereas an interesting idea from the privacy presentation was that though information technologists and librarians seemed to believe that privacy was important, both had different ideas of what constituted privacy.

I spent the entire session on Friday afternoon, attending a several hour workshop entitled “Creating Meaning in Information Literacy: Presence and Transcendence.” The workshop was an interesting look into the by-roads of teaching one-shot library sessions. We discussed how students might understand library instruction on different levels, tactics to begin a library session so that the students would pay attention, and ideas for employing active learning strategies with students while keeping control of the classroom at the same time. Suggestions included playing music as students entered the room, teaching beginning students about information anxiety gaining student attention and encouraging questions. We also discussed how to best use Wikipedia in library sessions.

I began Saturday by co-leading a roundtable discussion about academic and public library collaboration with Uri Toch of Schaumburg Township District Library. The discussion was intense and spirited, and led to many good ideas to further library collaboration.

I then attended “Reinventing Library Services for Undergraduates: Strategies for Reaching Millennial Students,” presented by three librarians at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This presentation was an interesting look at the library as community and information commons: the librarians addressed how they had combined the circulation, reference, and other desks, expanded the collection to include video games, invited the career center and academic services to drop in to the library at scheduled hours each week, and used commercials to advertise current library services. Since they have begun to implement these methods, they have noticed that their gate count and circulation figures have grown exponentially. I especially loved their conception of the library as a learning place for students outside of classroom assignments—incorporating career service and academic advising drop-in hours in the library was a wonderful idea.

I spent Saturday afternoon in two presentations: the first discussed information literacy assessment (and provided interesting information about how for students, self-perception about library confidence did not always or even often relate to searching competence) and the second discussed virtual reference, which I found interesting.