

Report on the Association of College and Research Libraries 13th National Conference
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The 13th National Conference the Association of College and Research Libraries was held in Baltimore, Maryland, March 29-April 1, 2007. This conference was attended by over 3000 academic librarians from across the United States and Canada and provided many thought provoking paper, panels, and keynote speakers. In addition, the large exhibit hall afforded an opportunity to confer with many of the major vendors and to explore the availability of new products and services for academic libraries

My primary purpose in attending this conference was to participate in the panel presentation entitled "From Option to Opportunity: Concrete Ways to Attract the Next Generation of Academic Librarians". Along with Susan Searing and Kathleen Kern from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I presented a program that explored and reported on the preparation and training of academic librarians in graduate library and information science education, looking specifically at the programs of Dominican University and the University of Illinois. Although we were assigned a less than optimal time slot for the presentation (Sunday morning), we attracted an audience of more than 30 people.

The organizers of the conference had selected a very interesting set of keynote speakers: Opening Keynote Speaker, Michael Eric Dyson, Keynote Luncheon Speaker, John Waters, and Closing Keynote Speaker, Nina Totenberg. Each speaker was quite provocative and raised very interesting issues that should be considered by academic librarians. It was also refreshing to hear speakers that focused on topics important to but not necessarily part of librarianship. For example, Michael Eric Dyson talked about the needs of young black men and women, John Waters regaled us with stories of his career as a director of edgy challenging films, and Nina Totenberg explored the impact on journalists of the Bush administration's restrictions on information gathering and free speech.

During the conference, I also attended a number of the invited paper presentations, including Learning, Emotion and their Application for Teaching, Education Without Boundaries: The Goucher Experiment, and Digital Media, Learning, and Libraries: Web 2.0, Learning 2.0, and Libraries 2.0. These invited papers, which I believe are also available in the conference proceedings published and for sale by ACRL, challenged librarians to think about topics of importance to higher education from the point of view of non-librarian experts. Dr. Luz Mangurian's paper emphasized promoting student learning through incorporating visual, auditory, and tactile information and by engaging students as individuals. Sanford Ungar, the president of Goucher College, reported on the construction of an Athenaeum at the heart of the campus which will include a new state-of-the-art library and on Goucher's commitment to international education for all students. David Silver reported on his experiences as a faculty member incorporating 2.0 technologies and concepts into his teaching.

Although I focused much of my time thinking about non-librarian perspectives, I also attended a number interesting presentations about library issues, programs, and services. The Reference Question-Where Has Reference Been? Where Is Reference Going? Was interesting program that followed up on the “rethinking reference” movement of the early nineties by bringing together Jim Rettig, Jerry Campbell, and Bill Miller. The most interesting part of the presentation was by Brian Mathews of the Georgia Institute of Technology who is not just rethinking reference but actually remaking reference with social networking software and new services. I also attended a number of interesting programs that described various initiatives at the University of Illinois. One in particular was Gaming for the Ages: A Wholistic View from Collections to Services. The materials from this talk are available at www.library.uiuc.edu/gaming.

The poster sessions at ACRL were extremely interesting. The work presented at these sessions provided a good overview of best practices and areas of current interest to academic libraries. It is also always interesting to not the trends and hot topics of the year. Topics of particular interest included plagiarism and information ethics, information literacy instruction in nontraditional areas such as the college choir tour and international education, faculty librarian collaboration ideas, an array of technology applications, gaming, and assessment.

Finally, one of the most important benefits of attendance at the ACRL National Conference is the opportunity to network and share ideas with academic librarians from across the country. Through the generosity of LIBRAS and Elmhurst College faculty development funds, all of the Elmhurst College librarians were able to attend ACRL together. Traveling to this conference together allows us to spend some quality time together, strengthens our academic librarian team, and really sparks our enthusiasm and creativity. The panel presentation I worked on with two librarians from the University of Illinois provided me with some good contacts at UIUC who I had not known before. I was also able to reconnect with colleagues from previous jobs, former practicum students, and former LIBRAS colleagues. I highly recommend attend the ACRL National Conference.

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