

## ACRL Report for LIBRAS

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The following report is a summary of some of the most noteworthy presentations, posters, roundtables and conversations with vendors during ACRL 2009 in Seattle:

### **Panel Presentation, [Extending the Conversation: The Liberal Arts Scholarly Repository](#)**

Three presenters gave a PowerPoint concerning the development and rollout of a shared IR (institutional repository), shared amongst 7 liberal-arts institutions. They used DSpace as their Institutional Repository application, which was very relevant because it is a free open-source tool that I have been investigating (for our own anticipated implementation of an IR). I believe that this project is an example of a worthy near-future goal for the Libras consortium

DSpace can handle many types of content- in their current setup, each institution has its own IR “space” within the overall IR. They use a Drupal Content Management system front-end portal that contains a search engine (which works with the DSpace content, although DSpace has a resident search function...if I understand this setup correctly). The shared IR has a nice overall mission statement, as well as a developed collection policy and metadata rules, so that content is tagged in a logically consistent manner.

They use a paid hosting service (longsite.com?) to manage their DSpace instance, and pay \$2300 per institution for access. It’s a fixed fee divided by the number of participants and affected by the storage size desired (per 100gig of storage). In some ways, I think a web-hosted IR makes sense for some consortiums, because then no one institution is saddled with server & app maintenance (nobody has the physical machine).

The IR is used to collect student papers, faculty pubs, and “unique local items & documentation.” Two introductory workshops were scheduled by the aggregate institutions to support the rollout of the tool. The presenters concentrated much of their presentation on their perceived difficulty in establishing a shared collection policy across a range of institutions (which had not occurred to me but makes a lot of sense, if you want to have an IR that makes sense in terms of its content, consistency, and metadata).

**[A “Zed-Shed” presentation on Mobile Devices and Roving Reference](#)** proved very interesting. Emily Rimland at the Penn State University Library did a trial with providing roving reference librarians using a test pool of four different mobile devices. This study was a partnership between library & IT, who provided the devices on loan. The devices were all netbooks, which are mini-laptops with full keyboards, operating systems, browsers and wireless connections (as a noteworthy aside, the study was supposed to include an iPhone it uses a wireless interface, which is not compatible with their wireless environment?). The test librarians performed reference and web access functions on a student and staff level both inside and outside the library. They were also used for library instruction(!).

Lessons learned:

Perhaps not surprisingly, wireless signal strength is most critical. The users preferred the most ergonomically arranged units, which also happened to be bigger ones...portability seemed to fall by the wayside a bit. The units were still relatively similar and there was no clear standout, but the Fujitsu Lifebook was judged best among equals. Presentation URL is <http://tinyurl.com/psuhandhelddevices>. Interesting

observation that there was no talk of a mobile site to accompany and accommodate the mobile devices. Very good presentation!

**Panel Presentation: [Subject Librarian 2.0: Emerging Trends and Future Challenges for the Liaison Librarian](#)**

This panel PPT presentation covered implications for subject librarians based upon the future direction for libraries. As defined by the panel, subject librarians are responsible for our “first response” to user needs. However, letting collection development remain the primary role of a these librarians is a practice that “will not wash” these days (according to the first panelist- it’s not interactive/integrated). Subject librarians have a new role: consumers, publishers, educators, aggregators, intermediaries, entrepreneurs, policy advocates. Mention was made of our role in dealing with the “poverty of abundance,” which seems to mean, if I understand it correctly, strategies that we can bring to the table to help parse the overwhelming rush of information.

According to panelist #1 (a man who’s name I did not catch but was a library systems administrator), these were some of the “new expectations” for these front-line librarians: *R & D/ Rigor/ Project management/ Resource development/ Leadership/ Marketing/ Communication/ Policy & politics*

Qualities that they (sub. lib.) should demonstrate were a “clear sense of mission,” “self vision,” and “continuous improvement.” This is in opposition to the “bad” trends i.e. the subject librarian as “servant” or “stranger/outsider” view, not seen as a faculty partner or friend in institutional settings (but this seems shortsighted; what about librarians w/o faculty status? There is a barrier and it’s a valid one).

What should we be doing? He says “Subject librarians 2.0” should have the following skill-set:

Social networking (he’s just throwing out buzzwords, social networking looks like a non-starter as far as I understand it)

- Collective intelligence (is this cooperation- uncertain?)
- Permanent beta-tester (I CONCUR on this point)
- Library as participant (more participation in student life, curriculum, or faculty governance, or all three?)
- Authorship revolution (does he mean institutional repositories? If so I agree)

We should embrace: “rapid technology deployment” (I agree), diversification, boundary erosion, complex relationships, and everything else that sounds good on a resume.

Speaker #1 wrapped his portion up with his summation of how users want sub. Lib. to be: Authoritative, authenticated, appropriate, pertinent (and I would say brevity is part of that), and omnipresent (I disagree).

Speaker 2 (Karen) made these observations from the director perspective.” Here is her “Position Description Framework” for focus areas for sub. librarians;

- Scholarly communication
- New info lit process, away from the 50min IL session, towards a broad curricular integration- think scaffolding and first-year programming)
- Teaching & learning
- Digital tools
- Outreach
- Collection development, management

- Fund raising
- Reference services

She advocates/places into practice the concept of having no librarians on reference desks...they are busy focusing on the above areas, plus performing policy revisions & curricular development partnerships with teaching faculty.

Speaker 3 (Kara) gave us the front-line librarian perspective, focusing on librarians' traditional roles (The holy trinity of duties, she says, I like that) and 2.0 expansion of those roles:

- 1) Reference: virtual services, in-depth consultations, collaborative ref. (institutional reference, I guess this refers to the opportunity for continuous librarian support via non-traditional means, i.e. outsourcing?)
- 2) Collection Development: demand-oriented ordering
- 3) Instruction: course-embedded librarians (but doesn't this parse out the librarians in terms of user support, people think only one particular librarian can answer their question)

More 2.0 expansion of the librarian's role...new skills/ foci:

Knowledge creation, embedded librarianship (see above), technologist, grant writing, communicator/politician (familiar refrain that we need to justify our existence to the administration), librarians as "middleware" (program arbiters, reminds me of the old dialog model), tagging & metadata, preservation of information, programming. How do we do it? She says "just do it" (I agree, guerilla tech), gotta jump in, but you also need technology training and continuing education opportunities. She suggested a recent book titled "Core Technology Competencies for Librarians and Library Staff: A LITA Guide" (ISBN 1555706606 ) as a good starting guide.

I had two interesting vendor conversations during the conference that are worthy of note. The first was with a Serials Solutions vendor. I was there to discuss our institution's experiences with the Webfeat federated search engine, and the representative took some time near the end of talk to show me Webfeat's likely replacement. This is a tool called "Summon," and it is being rolled out as part of Serial Solutions' "360" program. As I understand it, Summon is a new web-based federated search tool that pulls the full-text from your library's database holdings and stores the content in its own server space, so searches are already fully indexed. This has two implications:

1. Searches are faster because there is no external query...Summon is searching its own database pulled from EBSCO, Proquest, et cetera
2. Since Summon has pre-pulled the data, to the user it appears as if Summon is its own database. For the uninformed user it is no longer apparent that you are getting your articles from other databases! Although Webfeat acted in a similar manner, it's been exacerbated with the Summon interface...this is going to be an interesting development, I think, as federated search continues to gain popularity.

The second was with a TextaLibrarian vendor- they are offering a paid web-based interface for librarians to answer IM and SMS questions from patrons. I saw the demo and it is a handy tool, but I feel it does nothing that cannot be facilitated for free with a Meebo or Pidgin installation. The only real benefit is that it has a queuing feature, so questions could be farmed out to several librarians rather than being, IMHO, to be worth the offset of the cost.

Great conference, many more good presentations, but too many to list.