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## ACRL 2009 Report

Thanks in part to LIBRAS funding, five professional librarians from Elmhurst College were able to attend ACRL again this year in Seattle. While I enjoyed many parts of the conference, as a technical services librarian I again had a difficult time finding sessions that addressed much of my work at Elmhurst.

One session that I found especially applicable to my work was the workshop “Teaching Old Statistics New Tricks,” presented by Margaret Fain and Jennifer Hughes from Coastal Carolina University. I have never attended one of the ACRL 3-hour workshops, and this was definitely worth signing up for in advance. The workshop format gave lots of time for interaction between the presenters and the participants and between the participants at each table. The workshop was full of ideas about thinking about the statistics we collect and what those statistics might tell us if we collect and combine both quantitative and qualitative statistics. I was especially interested in some of the examples generated from the group about ways to assess what we do, make changes to what we do, then re-assess to find out if the changes made the expected difference. A copy of their materials is in the ACRL Virtual Conference but is also available on their own website:

<http://www.coastal.edu/library/presentations/>

Another activity I participated in for the first time was a roundtable discussion, “Engaging Undergraduates with Special Collections and Archives” with Nancy Magnuson of Goucher College and Susan Swords Steffen of Elmhurst. In addition to Technical Services, I am also the (very) part-time College Archivist, so it was interesting to meet with special collections librarians from research libraries who wanted to make their collections more accessible to undergraduates and by librarians from smaller institutions who wanted to connect their students with primary sources.

I also really enjoyed the two keynote speakers I was able to attend: Sherman Alexie’s sharing of his experiences as an American Indian “representative” to us white folks was entertaining but also helped me think differently about minorities. I am also a huge fan of This American Life on Chicago Public Radio, so I couldn’t wait to see Ira Glass as the closing keynote. He didn’t disappoint – I liked his analysis of how they create the show and the research involved. It’s nice to think about research done for reasons other than “my paper is due next week.”

One of the most useful parts of the ACRL conference for me is always the exhibit hall. I was very glad to be able to talk to some of the vendors we are both happy with and those who could use a little nudge to get back on track to serve academic libraries better. I learned about several new products and features of products we already have that will help me in my work.

Overall I found ACRL 2009 to be a rewarding experience – I enjoyed seeing Seattle for the first time, the keynote speakers were entertaining, and as always, the poster sessions were full of valuable information from the folks working in the trenches. I am glad that LIBRAS is able to support so many of its members’ attendance at this premier national conference for our profession and hope that more LIBRAS institutions will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.