

Report on the Association of College and Research Libraries 14th National Conference
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The 14th National Conference the Association of College and Research Libraries was held in Seattle, Washington, March 12-15, 2009. This conference was attended by almost 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

The organizers of the conference had selected a very interesting set of keynote speakers: Opening Keynote Speaker, Rushworth Kidder (substituting for Naomi Klein who was ill), Keynote Speaker, Sherman Alexie, and Closing Keynote Speaker, Ira Glass. 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, Rushworth Kidder spoke about what he called our “ethics recession” and the importance of moral courage in politics, organizations, and our daily lives. Sherman Alexie entertained the audience talking about his writing, his current role as a “representative Native American writer”, and life on the reservation and the Pacific Northwest. Ira Glass spoke about how he creates “This American Life”, including the research he and his producers do to find and document the stories they tell. Since I teach Sherman Alexie’s novel *Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* every semester, it was particularly valuable to hear him speak and to get a feel for him as a person and as a writer.

I was able to attend a numbering of interesting panel presentations on topics of current interest. “Extending the Conversation: The Liberal Arts Scholarly Repository” reported on the experience of several liberal arts colleges with the NITLE sponsored institutional repository, a model that may show some promise for LIBRAS libraries. “Reeling In the Faculty Baiting the Information Literacy Hook” discussed techniques for collaborating with faculty in designing and delivering information literacy instruction. Two programs on library assessment were particularly useful: “Tellin’ Our Story – Or Not: Assessment Results on Academic Library Web Sites” which reported on a project to examine the way libraries do and do not report their assessment data on their web sites and “Designing Comprehensive Assessment Plans: The Big Picture Leads to the Little Picture” which discussed how to use data already collected by libraries to meet the larger institution’s need for assessment data. “Where Have All the Librarians Gone? The Academic Library Workforce of Today and Tomorrow” analyzed the career paths and trajectories of librarians in North and South Carolina. “Subject Librarian 2.0: Emerging Trends and Future Challenges for the Liaison Librarian” looked at new roles for subject bibliographers in research libraries.

On the second day of the conference during the lunch hour, I co-hosted a roundtable discussion, Engaging Undergraduates With Special Collections and Archives

with Nancy Magnuson of Goucher College and Elaine Fetyko Page of Elmhurst. This discussion originated from a conversation I had had with Nancy at the Annual General Meeting of the Jane Austen Society of North America about supporting undergraduate research in the humanities. The roundtable was attended by a mixed group of special collections librarians from research libraries who wanted to make their collections more accessible to undergraduates and by librarians from colleges that wanted to talk about connecting their students with primary sources.

The poster sessions at ACRL were extremely interesting and represented some of the best work presented at the conference in any conference format. These sessions provided a good overview of best practices and areas of current interest to academic libraries. It is also always interesting to note the trends and hot topics of the year. Topics of particular interest included a variety of ways to provide subject area and research guidance to students at many different levels, an array of Web 2.0 technology applications, innovative uses of video and other nonprint formats, and many different approaches to information literacy.

An interesting feature of this year's conference is the ACRL Virtual Conference. Over 300 people registered for the virtual conference, attending the conference via webcast, podcast, blogs, and twitter. Presenters from all of the conference panel presentations, poster sessions, and cyber zed shed sessions have posted their handouts and in many cases powerpoint slides to the virtual conference. In addition, there are onsite Dynamic Screen Captures ® for many of the conference programs and conference blog posts that were created during various presentations. All of this material is available for the next year so that presenters do not have to email their materials or find some other way to provide access to them. More information about the Virtual Conference can be found [here](#).

Another interesting feature of this conference was ACRL's attempt to make it "the greenest conference ever". Conference attendees took a green pledge, conference bags were made of recycled materials, and extra efforts were made to recycle paper, food and containers. A coffee mug/water bottle made of recycled material and a shower timer were included in the conference materials. All of these efforts certainly raised awareness of green and sustainability issues which will hopefully have an impact on participants well beyond the conference itself.

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. I highly recommend attending the ACRL National Conference.

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