

LIBRAS Report

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ACRL 2009 – Pushing the Edge: Explore, Engage, Extend

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As a first-time attendee of the ACRL National Conference I found myself facing the challenge I have heard so many of my colleagues discussing, which sessions should I attend?

In the end I found myself glued to the Cyber Zed Shed where I was able to listen to brief overviews of various emerging technologies and how individual libraries are using these technologies. Some of the sessions of particular note in the Cyber Zed Shed were Popculture Multimedia and Library Instruction, LibStats, Twitter and iMacros. In Popculture Multimedia and Library Instruction, which I found particularly intriguing, the presenter focused on how to integrate clips from popular media such as movies (The Ring, School of Rock, and High Fidelity were highlighted in particular), music, television and commercials to convey many of the ACRL defined Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education in information literacy instruction sessions. Many of the technologies presented at the Cyber Zed Shed were in such early stages of adoption that they had not been fully integrated in to library services, but all of the presenters provided contact information so that those interested could follow-up on the progress of their projects.

I also found many of the poster sessions to be engaging and inspiring. The part I like most about the poster sessions is being able to have a one-to-one discussion with the presenters. Many of the conversations I had and posters I saw sparked thoughts and ideas in my head that I will be able to adapt in my own library to be able to enhance services. Some of the posters that sparked my interest include “Turning an One Campus One Book Discussion into a Web 2.0 Experience,” “Adding Value to Your Subject Guides: Creating Class-Specific Web Pages Utilizing Web 2.0 Tools,” “The Library: Uncatalogued — Using Video for Library Instruction,” and “Move Over YouTube, DIY Videos for Instruction and Learning.”

One of the most interesting sessions I attended was the contributed paper, “If you build it, will they care? Tracking student receptivity to emerging library technologies” presented by Char Booth, E-Learning Librarian, UC Berkeley Libraries and Christopher Guder, Reference & Instruction Librarian, Ohio University. In this session the speakers outlined the findings of an environmental scan they administered to students at Ohio University to learn about technologies that could be integrated into library services that would be both used and useful. The study, conducted in the form of two surveys with a fairly good size response pool, tapped into student uses of both technology and library services. The survey results would then help the library technology development team to better understand which technologies they should concentrate

on developing. While they presented a significant amount of data regarding student uses of technology broken down by age, they also presented information of student receptivity to a library presence in certain technologies. The study found that the two areas where students would be most receptive to a library technology are Facebook and browser toolbars. The areas in which students showed little interest in a library presence are MySpace, web calling (i.e. Skype), mobile browsing and text/SMS services.

The hot topic of conversation at ACRL seemed to be Springshare's LibGuides. There were a total of seven sessions that highlighted LibGuides that included poster sessions, the Cyber Zed Shed, roundtable discussions, a contributed paper and a panel session. This couldn't have come at a better time for me as we were in the process of integrating our current subject guides over to the LibGuides system. Being able to attend sessions regarding how other libraries are using this system gave me ideas for uses of the system that we had not yet come up with at our library.

I have also found many of the virtual enhancements to the conference extremely helpful. Included with my conference registration is access to the Virtual Conference website. Before heading to Seattle I was able to use the Virtual Conference website to read blog posts from other attendees (both first-time and veteran) and listen to podcasts that would help me to better know what to expect and prepare. In addition, now that the conference is over I will be able to go back and virtually attend recordings of many of the sessions that I was unable to attend because of scheduling conflicts with other sessions.

My first ACRL National Conference was a wonderful experience that I was able to take an enormous amount of information away from and I would like to thank LIBRAS for making that possible by funding my conference registration.