

**American Library Association Conference**  
**Chicago, Illinois**  
**June 23-28, 2005**  
**Luann DeGreve**

**Program: Six Sigma: A 3M Leadership Model for Libraries**

**Presenters: David Pointon, 3M**

Curiosity led me to this program. The instructors in the MBA program, for whom I have done instruction, like to use this topic as a search example. I thought this program would provide me with some useful insights which I could then apply to my instruction sessions. I did not really expect that this process was something which the library could use to examine and improve its processes. Basically, six sigma is a methodology calling for continuous quality improvement and reducing inherent variability. It requires a thorough process and product understanding and is clearly focused on customer driven expectations. The key component to six sigma is DMAIC, or define, measure, analyze, improve, and control. The goal of six sigma is to reduce errors to 3.4 per million or have an accuracy rate of 99.99966%. One of the best places to start finding information on six sigma is [isixsigma.com](http://isixsigma.com). I found myself thinking about processes which could be improved in my library by using this methodology. I would recommend that the LIBRAS programming committee investigate developing a program on six sigma as the topic would be useful to both public and technical services departments and can be applied to all library staff.

**Program: Distance Learning: We Know Where We've Been, But Where Are We Going?**

**Presenters: Arthur Young, Northern Illinois University**  
**Ashley Bonnette, University of Louisiana at Lafayette**  
**Karen Brown, Dominican University**

This session examined the future of distance library services in three areas: library administrators/leaders, instruction, and librarian preparation. The most useful piece of information provided was that the fastest growing age cohort in colleges and universities is made up of people between the ages of 85-94. Secondly, adult students like to see librarians who are their age. Since librarianship is typically a second career choice for many people, it would not be unrealistic for adult learners to work with many librarians in their age groups.

**Opening Session**

This is the first opening session of an ALA conference which I have attended. This was also the first time I have heard Mayor Daley and Senator Obama speak in person. I was impressed with the enthusiasm Mayor Daley has for Chicago. I also liked his vision that the quality of education cannot be improved without libraries. I was intrigued by the different personalities and styles between the two speakers. I am glad I had the opportunity to attend this session.

**Program: Primary Sources in the Electronic Age: Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Historical Research**

**Presenters: Jan Reiff, UCLA**

**Elizabeth Babcock, Field Museum of Natural History**

**Lynn Lampert, Cal State University Northridge**

I attended this session hoping to discover something which I could use when I meet with our history senior thesis students. Jan Reiff, who is a history professor, spoke of how she incorporated primary source materials in her classes. I found this exciting as this is what I wanted to do as a classroom teacher, but I did not have the tools available to me.

Elizabeth Babcock spoke about museum-based learning as being constructivist learning and inquiry-based learning. She provided a framework that teachers could use as they plan field trips to the museum. She also spoke about the primary source lending program available to teachers through the Field Museum of Natural History. Again, I found this exciting based on my previous experiences as a classroom teacher. Lynn Lampert, a librarian, rounded out the panel.

**Program: LAMA President's Program: Using the Future to Create the Present**

**Presenter: Betty Sue Flowers, LBJ Library & Museum**

This was a wonderful program. I left with having much to think about on the drive home. The focus of this program was on organizational learning. It is important to think about the future for four reasons. First, leaders are responsible for taking the organization into the future. Second, the future is going to be different than the present. This is the only thing that is certain about the future. Third, it is important not to project the past into the future. Finally, the future should be thought of as a series of scenarios. In this way, the future will remain fiction instead of fact. Next, Flowers entered into a discussion on transformational leadership. Transformational leaders change the direction of the parade, so to speak. There are five characteristics of these leaders. First, the leader is the storyteller of the organization and is responsible for the organization's story. Second, this type of leader is committed to a goal that is larger than himself. Third, a transformational leader is will to change. He is also willing to give up control. Finally, a transformational leader is conscience of the "story" the organization is in and the "story" that needs to be told. Today's world is operating under the economic myth. As a result, any organizational story needs to be placed in the context of economic benefit. The nature of leadership in the future will require leaders to suspend their own ways of looking at things in order to see things in a new way. Leaders will have to redirect their views in order to see the whole in the parts. Leaders will also have to be willing to let go so that something new can emerge.

**Program: What Makes a Reference Work a Classic?**

**Panel Presentation**

The first speaker identified criteria Reference Books Bulletin used to determine their list of classic reference materials. The criteria included permanent usefulness, an achieved identity, and enjoyable reading. Nevertheless, print reference materials need to evolve in order to remain viable in an electronic world. The second speaker addressed similar qualities including publisher reliability and readability. She also mentioned the need to

think about space and cost issues depending on the type of library. In her setting, single-volume reference works costing less than \$100.00 are the classics in her libraries. This generated some discussion about using the size of the work and its cost as criteria. The third speaker offered the view of the publisher of classic reference works. Publishers view classic works in a different manner. Classic works include those that sell for a long period of time. The works are reliable and authoritative. How often a work is cited is another criteria. Fourth, the work has to have a personality of its own. Fifth, the editor needs to have a clear vision and passion for the work as well as good timing. Finally, people have to be familiar with the work. The final speaker spoke about how resources will be judged in an electronic environment.

**Program: Communication Skills for Managers**

Instead of focusing on communication skills for managers as indicated in the program, this program turned into how to get an equity pay increase for your employees. Unfortunately, the speaker did not really tell the audience how to accomplish that either.

Overall, I attended very good sessions at the ALA conference this year. I would like to thank LIBRAS for supporting my attendance at this event.