

ALA Annual Conference - June 2005
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Following are summaries of the best programs I attended at ALA:

1. AASL President's Program: Standards for Success

Dr. David Conley, author of *College Knowledge: What it Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready*. Dr. Conley described the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in college courses. Conley suggests that the current economy and society as a whole demand certain knowledge and learning skills be mastered by all. The issue is who will take responsibility for teaching these skills. The fact that 25 % of college students and up to 60% of community college students require remediation indicates that high school curriculum is not rigorous enough to prepare students for college.

Conley maintains that in order to prepare all students for success (In today's world it is no longer acceptable to only provide the college bound with these skills.) high schools must provide deliberate, sequential courses organized around an intellectually coherent program of study. It is no longer enough to simply master the content of a course, it is necessary to develop the habits of mind related to the discipline. There should be clear expectations and progress markers over the four years of high school, and students should be made aware of the implications of choices they make in selecting courses. Conley recommends that exit standards and assessments include culminating projects which interweave the information mastered throughout high school and which have been developed in conjunction with local postsecondary faculty.

Conley identifies certain characteristics which prevent students from successfully transitioning into high school: lack of retention of and ability to transfer learning; avoiding whole areas of study through "gatekeeper" courses; lack of intellectual maturity; failure to understand the purpose and opportunities presented in college.

2. ALA-LIRT: Seamless Transitions to College: Creating Successful Collaboration Programs

A panel of librarians from public, high school and university libraries discussed how all librarians can develop programs that develop information literacy skills in students with whom they deal. The panel included Julie Hyde-Porter, a high school librarian, and Susan Roberts, a social studies teacher with whom she collaborates. They described the many ways in which they interweave information literacy into the social studies curriculum. They emphasized the need to foster intellectual maturity in students by requiring research that teaches discrimination, evaluation and critical analysis. They recommended the online journal *The Question Mark* <http://www.questioning.org/index.html> as a source for developing the essential questions that will cultivate these skills. One of the assignments they use to encourage discrimination is to first require students to

find 20 sources on their topic. Step two requires the student to evaluate and pick the most relevant 5. The point of the exercise is that most students will stop at the first 5 sources they find unless they are required to go beyond that point.

The next speaker was James Krusling, the First Year Experience Librarian at the University of Cincinnati (UC). He has developed extensive collaborative relationships with the area high schools with the intent of addressing the huge disconnect he sees between high school students' technical savvy compared to their information savvy. To address these weaknesses in information savvy, he provides information literacy instruction for the in-depth high school senior project and includes this group's needs in his collection development. On the UC side, he collaborates with teaching faculty in developing meaningful information literacy experiences. The point of this effort is to ensure that UC freshmen coming from these feeder schools are ready to tackle college level research. One of James' techniques is to start from where the students are comfortable, Google, and then move to the more unfamiliar but better quality resources accessed through databases. Google teaches students certain basic search strategies (keyword searching, using quotation marks, truncation, etc.) After searching Google to remind them of what they already know, he can emphasize the increased quality and efficiency of using a database to find the best information.

3. ALA-IS: Teaching, Learning and Leading: Key Roles for Librarians in the Academic Community

Probably the best session I attended. Maryellen Weimer, author of *Learner-Centered Teaching*, described the five areas in which our current instructional practice needs to change if we are going to teach in ways that promote student learning.

- The role of teacher librarian must change from one of telling and showing to one of guiding and coaching the student in their learning.
- The balance of power must shift from teacher in control to shared decision making about learning between teacher and student. Two suggestions made were to answer a question with another question instead of telling the answer, and offering a variety of assignments from which the student can pick a specified number.
- The function of content must be questioned in this age of exploding information. How much content is enough? Less is more when students develop learning skills and learner self-awareness in addition to a reasonable amount of content. Learning must be more than ticking off a list of facts that have been memorized.
- The responsibility for learning must be transferred from teacher to student. Teachers should create a climate for learning which will motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The processes and purposes of evaluation must change to incorporate activities that cause the greatest amount of learning and self-assessment instead of simply being grade oriented.

4. **ALCTS: Librarians, Learning and Creativity: A Boundary-Breaking Perspective**

Karen Calhoun, Cornell University, started the discussion by examining the changing context for librarians in the interconnected world of the Web. She believes that librarians have created boundaries between themselves and their patrons by the way we define libraries. It is time to create a collaborative community of domain experts (faculty and students), information experts (librarians) and IT experts. We must move beyond our current mindsets and apply creativity to building a new kind of library with porous boundaries where users can act self-sufficiently. Barriers to discovery must be lowered and librarians must be integrated into the social processes of the community (visibility).

Michael Hawley, MIT, is an authority on digital media and its social and business applications, founder of Friendly Planet – a non profit organization dedicated to educating children in developing countries, and the creator of the World’s Largest Published Book - *Bhutan: A Visual Odyssey Across the Last Himalayan Kingdom*. Applying his creative skills in using technology to advance the human condition, Hawley used the thousands of pictures he collected during his exploration of the Himalayan country of Bhutan to create the world’s largest book, a photographic record of the country and its people. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to providing educational opportunities to developing countries like Bhutan. Initial proceeds have been used to purchase bookmobiles. Unlike traditional bookmobiles, these contain computers and printers instead of books. Students choose from those books available freely on the Web, their selections are downloaded, printed and bound on the spot, and they leave with their books. In addition, the bookmobile carries basic medical equipment and personnel, enabling visitors to gain knowledge and medical care in the same stop.

5. **ACRL: Time for a Reality Check: Academic Librarians in a TIVO-lutionary Age**

Tom McBride and Ron Nief, creators of the Beloit College Mindset List, discuss the realities of the culture of today’s college students in an attempt to enable librarians to offer more effective service through a better understanding of that culture. David Silver, founder of the online Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies, offered an analysis of how knowledge of the four technologies dearest to today’s students can help us in effectively teaching them:

- DVDs – They are inexpensive, thus making larger film archives possible. Many contain a primary source and several secondary sources, such as the add-on interviews with the director, the “making of...” segments, etc. These provide a relevant lesson in the differences between primary and secondary sources.
- TIVO – The ability to record programs without commercials gives students practice in discriminating between content and commercial and selecting only that which has value. It can be pointed out that the library is another wonderful non-commercial space.

- MP3 – This is an electronic example of an information commons: free music freely shared. Likewise, the information commons of the library is the central hub of the college.
- Cell phones are the embodiment of this generation’s ability to be “here” and “there” at the same time. They must decide which of the many “theres” available to them is the most interesting and act accordingly. Libraries are the epitome of “here” and “there” simultaneously.