

**Kudos to ALA !**  
**Submitted by Ursula Zyzik**

As an academic librarian I have attended ACRL conferences every couple of years until this year when I decided to skip the conference in Minneapolis and attend the annual ALA conference in Chicago. I enjoyed it and will do it again in the next years.

First, I realized that the issues that differentiated the academic from public and special libraries are not so different any more. Web publishing technologies, Google, full-text databases, user education are equally important to all librarians regardless of the type of library they are working in. Technology has become one leveling phenomenon for librarians and patrons. ALA national conference attracts all library professionals and addresses a host of issues that are of interest to academic librarians as well. The choice of McCormick Convention Center was terrific. It is a beautiful facility with a lot of space that made all the difference when it comes to so many attendees and exhibitors. One did not have to rub elbows in the crowds or abandon a session because the room was too small for all interested to attend. And the restrooms facilities were always available. I also liked that sessions were offered in various locations in downtown hotels to which free air-conditioned and very comfortable shuttle buses drove regularly from McCormick.

I was interested in the topics of reference services and information literacy and those were mostly the sessions I attended. Through them I got interested also in the groups or ALA sections that sponsored them. For example, ALA-LRRT (Library Research Round Table) offered a very interesting program titled "Innovations in Service at the Seattle Public Library: Connecting Research and Practice". A newspaper journalist described the library's ultra modern glass architecture building as a library within art. The innovative models of "the mixing chamber" as a trading floor for information and the "Dewey books spiral" are designed as the solutions for future growths in the information needs and physical collection of the library. The library is using the Vocera wireless communication system, fully automated technical services system with robots and dumbwaiters engaged in various routine tasks. Librarians are roving on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the "mixing chamber" directing questions to subject specialties on different floors of the Dewey's book spiral. Of course there have been some problems with the Vocera system when patrons used their cell phones and interfered with the reference librarians communications. Patrons have had problems locating the staff that was roving among the patrons and no one knew who was who.

RUSA-HS offered a program titled, "Primary Sources in the Electronic Age: Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching Historical Research". Three speakers presented their papers: UCLA history professor Janice Reiff, librarian Lynn Lampert from California State University at Northridge, and the Field Museum Director of Teacher and Student Programs Elizabeth Babcock. Lynn Lampert asked in the title of her paper: "Where will they find history? The challenges of information literacy instruction and primary resource research strategies for undergraduates of the electronic age". Among the major challenges for undergraduates are:

- a) aversion to print sources on the part of the students;
- b) limited prior exposure to primary sources;
- c) overexposure to secondary literature;
- d) lack of knowledge of what's out there;
- e) lack of library outreach to students in need of this knowledge;
- f) disintermediation in research (students enter into research process without consultation)
- g) conflation of the term 'web' in research creating a lot of confusion and misinformation.

ACRL-IS Teaching Methods Committee held a brainstorming session in which I participated with quite a large number of librarians. This year's topic "Engaging the Google Generation" had three questions for which we tried to propose a top strategy. Working in groups made the session very interesting and collegial. The questions were:

- 1) How can I help students transfer existing web searching skills to other resources?
- 2) How can I incorporate advanced web searching concepts and/or Google Scholar into instruction sessions?
- 3) How can I anticipate and teach to significant changes impacting Internet searching?

All of us in various groups came with common observations that the Generation Y is not much interested in organization of resources and the value of it. Someone stated that teaching to generation Y you have to first "wow" them with the idea and only then will they experience the cognitive dissonance and start learning. Few of us stressed the idea of decontextualization of information that is troubling and challenging in teaching the undergraduates.

The ideas and strategies will be posted on the Instruction Section web site. Prior to attending this session I read the archives of previous years sessions and found the material very information and useful in my teaching library research.

I have selected those sessions for my report as part of the theme of reference services and information literacy. There were similarly engaging poster sessions (numerous as always that one had to be very selective). I welcome any questions

or comments for additional information including links to relevant websites.