

Highlights from American Library Association Annual Conference
Chicago, Ill.
July 10-14, 2009
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Friday, July 10

Libraries Build Communities

7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

What a treat to be able to commute to ALA Annual! I took advantage of ALA being in Chicago this summer by spending Friday participating in the 4th annual Libraries Build Communities project. I volunteered with five other conference attendees at Robert Healy School in Bridgeport, on the near South Side. My fellow volunteers and I helped the school's librarians begin for the start of classes in the fall by cleaning computer equipment, shifting books, and barcoding and labeling new materials. It was nice to be out of my office and to see how another library operates for a day. Unfortunately, the experience was also a bit depressing. I learned that over 80% of Chicago Public School libraries do not receive funding from the city. Many rely solely on Scholastic book fairs as fund raisers in order to purchase materials. Overall, my day at Healy was a much-needed wake-up call. My current budget woes seem minor compared to the day-to-day struggles of a CPS librarian.

Saturday, July 11

NMRT Conference Orientation

8:00-10:00 a.m.

On Saturday morning, I met with my fellow NMRT Orientation Committee members to set up for the annual Conference Orientation session and then to welcome newcomers to the organization and the annual conference. I attended the session the first time I attended Annual in Chicago in 2005, and I found it to be so helpful that I volunteered to join the committee the following year. Although Friday night's Conference 101 program has become the more popular orientation session to attend, we had a great turnout, and we were able to answer some important questions. I'm looking forward to serving as the committee's vice/co-chair this coming year and to introducing many more new members to the organization.

The Open Knowledge Commons and Library Collections: The Other Scan Plan

10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

I was extremely busy Saturday morning. I had to leave the NMRT session early in order to get down to the convention center to join my other committee (ALCTS CMDS Administration of Collection Development) for our program about the Open Knowledge Commons (formerly part of the Open Content Alliance) and the role of its partner libraries in the digitization of out-of-copyright books. Panelists Maura Marx (executive director, Open Knowledge Commons), Betsy Kruger (Associate Professor, Digital Content Creation, The University Library at UIUC), and Heather Christenson (Mass Digitization Project Manager, California Digital Library) shared their experiences of working with OKC and OCA and how it compares to the work being done by other not-for-profit and commercial digitization projects, such as Google and Kirtas. Both UIUC and the California Digital Library are contributing content to the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org>). Although the program focused

primarily on larger libraries, there are opportunities for libraries of all sizes to become involved in digitization. CARLI members should be aware of the CARLI Book Digitization Initiative (<http://www.carli.illinois.edu/mem-serv/coll-man/collman-digit.html>). Smaller libraries, such as those in LIBRAS may not have extensive unique collections, but it's likely that we all have something unique that would be of interest to scholars. Overall, the program was rated highly by those who took the time to fill out the evaluation at the end.

America's War on Sex: the Demonization of Pornography

1:30-3:30 p.m.

Marriage counselor, sex therapist, and psychotherapist Dr. Marty Klein entertained and educated attendees as he shared his thoughts and expertise on how the demonization of sexuality in general (not just pornography) threatens to limit the liberty of all Americans. He stated that suppressing sexuality and speech about sexuality causes many more problems than it solves, discussed the effects of abstinence only education, and questioned the role of current legislation in 'protecting' Americans from the sexual other. I thoroughly enjoyed the presentation, which Klein delivered with a great sense of humor, helping to relax a crowd that knew it was in for a potentially uncomfortable conversation. For those who missed the presentation, I highly recommend Dr. Klein's book *America's war on sex: the attack on law, lust, and liberty* (<http://www.betterworldbooks.com/Americas-War-on-Sex-id-031336320X.aspx>).

Sunday, July 12

Creative Ideas in Technical Services Interest Group Meeting

3:30-5:00 p.m.

As the chair-elect for this group, I'm a bit biased, but the CITS Interest Group meeting is something I look forward to attending at both Annual and Midwinter. Despite the interest expressed on Autocat prior to the conference, the group that showed up was quite small, but the conversation was lively, and I learned as much as I always do. Discussion topics included managing tech services during a recession, dealing with e-resources, outsourcing, and gaining recognition and appreciation for the work tech services staff do. Mp3 files of the reports from each discussion group are available for download at http://presentations.ala.org/index.php?title=Sunday%2C_July_12#3:30-5:30_p.m.

Monday, July 13

ALA Membership Meeting

11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

I decided before the conference that I would actually make the time to attend a membership meeting this year just to see what it was all about. Although I would recommend the experience to anyone who has never participated, I have to admit that it was rather underwhelming and I probably won't make it a point to attend in the future.

The Great Debate: Has Library 2.0 Fulfilled its Promise?

1:30-3:00 p.m.

The short answer is no.