

Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
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In March 2006, thanks to generous support from Libras and North Park University, I was able to attend the Electronic Resources and Libraries (ER&L) Conference in Atlanta. Reference librarians, electronic resource librarians, vendors, and library support staff all mingled to discuss the emerging trends, problems, and opportunities that electronic resources bring to libraries.

The conference began with Robert McDonald's (the Associate Director of Libraries for Technology & Research at Florida State University) keynote address on the subject of Library 2.0, or what libraries will look like in the future. The address described the changes that libraries will need to make, such as the ability to "push" digital materials to users rather than waiting for them to come to the physical library. For McDonald, the library's roles as virtual community and as digital archive will become more important than those it plays as a physical space. This address provided the vision of the conference, and was an interesting framework to keep in mind, as many of the other presentations focused on more contemporary issues, such as how to interpret usage statistics, or how to prepare to implement an ERMS.

I attended many different sessions in my time at the conference, including those which focused on how to manage e-journals, digital reference collections, how to build databases, and managing virtual reference. Interestingly, all of the presenters stressed communication with faculty as the most important aspect of their jobs. Several of the presentations demonstrated new methods of connecting faculty and students to resources, and offered approaches to marketing and publicizing the library. Perhaps the most helpful part of each presentation was the fifteen-minute question and answer session, which helped all of us attending the conference to compare and contrast the different approaches that libraries were using when it came to electronic resources.

The conference planners' implementation of technical aids was impressive: all attendees were given access to all powerpoint presentations and handouts at the beginning of the conference, and as each day's sessions ended, the powerpoints were reposted at the conference website with the recorded presentations. Therefore, it was possible for me to learn what had occurred at other presentations, and get more sophisticated notes for the ones I attended.

As a recent graduate of library science school, I approached this conference with a definite list of things I would like to learn more about. Happily, the conference both succeeded in answering my questions and in provoking new questions. I now know that I need to learn more about places to look for further research. I also had a chance to network with people doing similar jobs at a variety of institutions, which should be invaluable. I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to attend the conference.