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Report on ILA, October, 2005

I had the extreme pleasure of attending ILA in Peoria, IL, this October. Many times, I hear my fellow academic librarians complain that there isn't enough content at ILA directed at academic librarianship. As an academic librarian, I have benefited greatly from the time that I spent at ILA.

I think that different types of librarians can learn quite a bit from each other. One only has to be clever and think of ways that "public" or "school" library ideas can be twisted slightly or adapted to serve our college patrons. I attended two sessions that have already been very helpful to me. I am in charge of programming and book exhibits at my library. Lately, I have felt a little bit of frustration creeping in when I plan new book exhibits. I always feel like cutting out construction paper and arranging books nicely isn't that important of a skill to have and who looks at the displays anyway? Attending "Displays – What We Can Learn from Museums, Theater, Retail and the Container Store" with Sally Decker Smith and Ted Swinson gave me so many new ideas and taught me how to look at the work of displays in a totally new light. Ted said that librarians create not displays but "exhibits." Just the idea of calling what I do by a different, more important-sounding name made me feel better about what I do. I learned how to plan and execute a display more effectively even down to the type of font that I should use.

Another session that I attended was more geared to the public librarian but it was very helpful to me. Emily Kicklighter from Rockford Public Library, presented "Branding Your Library." Emily told us about a marketing project to launch and brand their new catalog by giving it an identity – Max the Dog. While I don't see our library

getting its own mascot anytime soon, I did learn a lot about the basics of marketing and how those principles can be applied at any library. Emily covered a lot of ideas from community needs assessments to designing pages for the visually-impaired.

The Opening General Session with Stephen Abram of SirsiDynix was engaging, sexy, informative and eye-opening. He spoke a lot about Google, its upcoming changes and the effect of those changes on libraries. He discussed a number of ways that libraries can compete with the Google market but most importantly he stressed that the attitudes of librarians need to be readjusted to learn and practice new technologies. We must better predict what our customers will want to use in terms of technology and move more quickly to provide these services. It was funny because after Stephen's comments about changing and flowing with new technologies, I heard a woman behind me say to her friend, "I don't do technology; I do reference. Period." This kind of attitude will certainly make relics of libraries and librarians!

I attended so many more sessions and events that I would love to expand upon further. I want to also say that conferences like ILA give a newer librarian a tremendous opportunity to get to meet new people – colleagues in the trenches and Illinois library leadership alike – and from new people spring forth new ideas and new partnerships. The ILSDO 40th Anniversary party, the poster sessions and the Synergy Reunion were three such events where I was able to network and share and learn with others. Barbara Ford introduced me to 14 librarians from around the world. Talking with and listening to them was so valuable and so reaffirming of my career choices.