

LOEX 2008

Librarian as Architect: Planning, Building & Renewing Doubletree Hotel, Oakbrook, Illinois

Sally Anderson

This was a particularly good conference for LIBRAS attendees due to its local venue (Oakbrook), LIBRAS representation: Rosemary Henders from North Central as Co-Chair and Peg Cook from Elmhurst College on planning committee; pre-conference tour of Elmhurst College Library (over 70 in attendance and great presentation by Susan Swords Steffen and their architect); and attendance by members from several LIBRAS institutions: Elmhurst, North Central, North Park, Dominican, Judson, Trinity International, Judson, Columbia, and Benedictine. When we heard that LOEX would be local, the LIBRAS directors voted in the fall to be a sponsoring organization for the conference, leaving the specifics to the judgment of the executive committee. When we heard that Chicago Tribune journalist/photographer pair Rick Kogan and Charles Osgood would be giving the Friday night talk, we opted to sponsor that event, and it was money well spent. Their low-tech presentation was absolutely riveting, as Osgood walked around the dinner tables showing blown up photos while Kogan waxed brilliantly and humorously on everything from barbershops to double decker outhouses to research in the era of Wikipedia to journalism and information ethics (not that he called it that). He repeatedly told us all how great librarians are in his book. Rosemary gave a very good and light-hearted introduction to their talk, and I got to say a few words about LIBRAS, the sponsoring organization.

As for the meat of the conference, there were many options, and most presentations will be posted on the LOEX website: <http://www.emich.edu/public/loex/conferences.html> . Following are notes from a few of the presentations I attended.

“Laying an ethical foundation: Information ethics as a good beginning” – Elmhurst College

Elmhurst College Library director Susan Swords Steffen, Mary Kay Mulvaney (English Professor), and one of their honors students described their first year seminar as a first step in the revision of their GE program. An information literacy component is embedded into the course which is taught by faculty in four different disciplines (eventually this will be expanded to include 16 sessions). The section in which the presenters were involved was “Exploring Chicago.” The information literacy goal was to “articulate and demonstrate ways to ethically gather, synthesize, and present information.” Unlike traditional BI sessions that focus on access and evaluation, the librarians emphasized communication and ethics through the use of three blog assignments: 1) reflection writing on academic dishonesty that followed a group discussion; 2) critical examination of web-based sources of information (Wikipedia, Encyclopedia Britannica); and 3) experience of ownership of information by posting blog reports (including multimedia) on their Chicago experience. Susan stressed that this course did not supplant the information literacy instruction provided in their two semester English composition course that all students take.

“Library instruction and student engagement in the age of Google” – Central College

- Advocated being a transparent teacher – tell the students what you’re going to teach and why
- Begins where students begin – with a search engine such as Google or Yahoo
- Shows them ways to improve a Google search (advanced search) and then, winning their confidence, moves on to demonstrating a database such as Academic Search Premier and can convince them of the advantage of using library databases
Sample searches included *special education*, *ADD myth*

“ESL students cross the academic threshold: how interpreting demographic data builds information literacy skills” – Suffolk County Community College

An ESL teacher and librarian described a very work-intensive course that prepares English language learners to advance to regular academic courses (non-ESL). Using the World Almanac and selected census sites they guided students along a study of a specific community, looking at such factors as whether the area has grown or shrunk in population, the age distribution of the population, income levels, and implications of these demographic trends for the future. Several of us felt this would be a great session for regular college students as well.

“Teaching the Teachers: Building Information Literacy into the Biology Curriculum” – James Madison University <http://www.lib.jmu.edu/instruction/default.aspx>

The university has demonstrated its support of information literacy by funding an information literacy workshop for faculty the past few summers. Faculty apply for \$1,000 stipends to meet one-on-one with a librarian to discuss their major’s curriculum and to alter assignments to include IL objectives.

Plenary Panel (COD, IIT, UIUC Undergrad libraries): Future of Academic Libraries

- Importance of consulting/collaborating with faculty to define “information literacy” -- librarians don’t own the concept, though sometimes it seems we’re the only ones talking about it.
- Libraries’ value to an institution goes beyond its information resources – participation on committees and in campus events and projects beyond the library is crucial; along with this idea is the importance of promoting yourself – the more visible, the better
- Value exists in customer ‘s (patron’s) mind, and marketing exists in relationships; opportunity for marketing exists at every transaction, from circulation desk student worker to reference desk, etc.
- UIUC plan for organizational development in undergrad library included all staff; emphasis on customer service, especially toward student workers.
- Importance of having a browsing collection (UIUC)
- Interesting if debatable observation that the library is the only place [on campus] where it’s socially acceptable to be alone