

Director's Report on LOEX Fall Focus: 2015 and Beyond

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LOEX has conducted over forty annual conferences since its inception in 1971. Each has dealt with basically anything and everything regarding library instruction and information literacy; it is purposefully broad. However, over the last few years, LOEX has considered what other avenues there might be besides this late April/early May conference to advance LOEX's mission of promoting the exchange of ideas about library instruction. For example, starting in 2008, live online Encore sessions were added to give additional exposure to a handful of presentations from each annual conference. But what else could LOEX do?

One idea was a shorter, 1-2 topic conference that would give librarians an opportunity to go in-depth on a particular subject(s). But what topic? Then the *ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* began to be developed—it soon became evident that this new paradigm was far-reaching and that there would be a lot to discuss and consider. This was solidified when I attended the ACRL Board of Directors meeting at Midwinter 2015 and heard numerous librarians discuss the pros and cons of the proposed framework; it became clear to me that LOEX could serve a valuable role by providing a space for librarians to consider what others thought of the *Framework* and help each librarian determine how they can best move forward.

Since it was already late January, and the only time available to LOEX is in the fall (we're kind of busy in the spring!), there would not be much time for planning. Luckily, I have a great deal of experience in this domain and was able to get the assistance of three librarians (Bill Marino, Ben Oberdick and Teague Orblych) who had helped LOEX with conference planning before—fortunately, they agreed to help. We knew it had to be located nearby to LOEX, as we were all in Michigan. So after considering a few hotels, from Chicago to Detroit, we landed on our old stomping grounds, the Ypsilanti Marriott. LOEX has held numerous annual conferences there before, but we had not been there since 2004, as at that point we regularly started moving it around the country. After some negotiation, we were able to get a reasonable deal and block off a couple days in November that would work.

So how did the conference go? Overall, it was a success! We received over 40 proposal submissions and accepted 25 of them. They were not from any one area of the country, which was our hope, as LOEX has a widespread membership. We also had an excellent plenary from Merinda Kaye Hensley, an ACRL task force member. In terms of attendance, we hoped for at least 100 people (including presenters) and we ended up with about 135. In contrast to the

presenters, the non-presenter attendees tended to be more regional, which made sense as travel budgets tend to be affected by whether you are presenting or not.

Beyond the numbers, the feedback on the forms was positive, as people liked the content, appreciated the chance to learn from a wide-array of presenters, and found enough opportunities to discuss their own experiences in an informal setting with fellow attendees. The hotel also did a fine job, overall, of meeting everyone's needs.

Based on all this, can LOEX members expect a Fall Focus 2016? Well, while the end result was a success, the entire process ended up taking up quite a bit of time during the summer and fall. While this is not really surprising, the hope was there would be high efficiencies based on the experience of the planners, especially me. While there certainly were many, in the end, conference planning is still a detail-oriented business (e.g., Did that payment get sent? Are there typos in the program? How are the rooms laid out? Is the website ready?) and all that takes a certain amount of time, no matter how much experience you bring to it. Considering all the other activities, not just including the annual conference, that the LOEX Director needs to do, it's not feasible to make that time commitment every year.

Thus, LOEX won't have a Fall Focus in 2016, but our hope is to have one in 2017. That will be dependent primarily on two issues: 1) finding a suitable location and 2) selecting an appropriate topic (or two). For issue 1, it has become more difficult over the last few years to negotiate effectively with hotels (e.g., discounts on food prices and guest room rates), as the U.S. travel economy has improved—and discounts that we are able to get for a 375 person annual conference aren't typically available for a 140 person conference. We'll have to see what hotels offer and if that matches up with what LOEX attendees expect and typically value. For issue 2, we have a number of ideas, but the *Framework* was atypical in that it was such a deep, game-changing, important new topic. Since the next conference will be on something else, is that something else compelling enough to organize a 100-plus person conference? We'll have to carefully consider that.

But for now, thank you again to all who made LOEX Fall Focus 2015 a success. I hope we'll have other "focused" success in the future.

See PowerPoints, handouts and more from the conference at: <http://www.loexconference.org/ff2015/>