

## LOEX 2008 Conference Report : Oak Brook, IL

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(LOEX 2008 Conference Recorders)

The conference was held at the Doubletree Chicago – Oak Brook hotel in Oak Brook, Illinois, May 1 - 3, 2008. A reception was held Thursday evening and meals were provided on Friday and Saturday, allowing conferees an opportunity to learn more about each other and practices in other academic libraries. A plenary session opened the conference each morning and conferees had to make some tough choices of which of the 45 breakout sessions to attend. The LIS graduate student poster sessions in the foyer also added another dimension.

### Plenary Sessions

The plenary speaker on Friday morning, May 2, Laurel Ofstein (instructor at DePaul University and Assistant Director of The Center for Creativity and Innovation at DePaul), provided an interactive session titled: “Creative Collaboration: Setting the Course for the Future of Library Instruction.” In the first part of the session, Laurel talked about creating a climate for creativity and walked through nine dimensions of a creative environment:

- Challenge and involvement – do staff feel engaged and a stakeholder in success?
- Degree of conflict – is there a tension amongst groups?
- Discussion – do people really listen and does everyone have a chance to participate?
- Freedom – are staff allowed to innovate, do they have any autonomy?
- Humor and play – is it OK to be a little different and show humor?
- Idea support – are new ideas reflexively shot down or encouraged?
- Idea time – is there time for workers to take a step back and stretch their minds about new ideas?
- Risk taking – are people allowed to try something new, even if it might fail?
- Trust and openness – are ideas shared in a respectful environment?

Brief discussion of these dimensions drew the audience in as we all applied it to our work environment. She then talked about a really useful technique to get to the ideal, “Wouldn’t It Be Nice If...” (WIBNI). With this technique, a small group can start at the end and work backwards to generate ideas on steps that would need to be taken to get to the desired result. The audience found WIBNI particularly helpful because it is easy to introduce to a group and have them quickly understand the concept and generate some desired outcomes. The entire audience then had an opportunity to participate: At each of the tables an activity to create a model for the future of library instruction was conducted. Using the suggested method, everyone at the table could participate because suggestions were written on 3x5 cards anonymously and the results were read. What a great way to include everyone without anxiety! The activity was very instructive as well as fun. As she closed her session, she recommended the book *Ideas are Free* by Robinson & Schroeder as one resource that can help an organization get ideas from employees at all levels.

In Saturday’s plenary session, Leslie Warren, Information Literacy Librarian at Moraine Valley Community College, acted as the moderator of a panel of distinguished librarians (Lisa Hinchliffe, Head of the Undergraduate Library at the University of Illinois; Christopher Stewart, Dean of Libraries at the Galvin Library at Illinois Institute of Technology; and Annette Haggray, Dean of Academic Alternatives & Instructional Support at the College of DuPage) for a far ranging discussion on “The Future of Librarians in Higher Education.”

One of the most striking features of the discussion was that despite the differences among the libraries, the panel was unanimous in their assessment that college and university libraries must be able to redefine themselves in the context of an increasingly complex higher education environment. Information Literacy concerns, changing demographics and an “economic Tsunami” are the connective tissue of issues that characterized a discussion in which, to borrow Christopher Stewart’s words, “all of our problems are for the most part, common problems.” In

response to the query about where the library should be in five to ten years the panel was likewise united on a number of concerns that bear further study, including: issues of access to higher education, the quality of undergraduate instruction, questions of efficiency, definition of the mission (for lack of a better word) of the library profession and most universally with the idea of building a bridge to K-12 education. Oh, and by the way, the book isn't going anywhere...book publishing continues to increase. Libraries are, and will continue be the "front door" of higher education if we pay heed to how we design our spaces and services. Libraries represent an important communal space that allows for both the "parallel play" of studying together and the opportunity to engage in a singular quest for information. Academic libraries must be able to respond with a clear definition of our purpose and utility to an ever more attentive and demanding public.

### **Breakout sessions & interactive workshops**

Beyond the plenary sessions, attendees had a diverse group of 45 sessions to choose from. Here are just a few examples of the range of topics shared:

The opening gambit for "Library Instruction and Student Engagement in the Age of Google" was the best of the sessions this conferee attended: nothing like a little bit of humor to set the tone of a session and engage the audience! The presenters, Michelle Kowalsky from William Paterson University and William H. Weare, Jr., from Valparaiso University, were introduced with information found by "googling" their names in that search engine. At some point in this, the audience caught on: the information did not match the backgrounds of the presenters and was quite outlandish, proving a point about evaluating results received when doing a Google search. Grappling with whether or not to use Google and/or how to use it in an Information Literacy session gets easier with the information provided in this session. The presenters premise was to start where students start (i.e., the web, typically Google), build on their prior knowledge and then design projects that can't be answered by Google and need library databases to answer questions. This helps students acquire skills, not just knowledge, on manipulating databases. As each strategy was presented, the pedagogy behind the strategy was discussed and then some practical tips on using the strategy, all of which are immediately applicable to instruction sessions.

"Learning (2.0) to be a Social Library" presented by Beverly Simmons, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga was a "how to" on bringing a library staff into the 2.0 world. Their program was adapted from the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County model of "23 Things". The library chose twelve applications for their staff to complete in a ten week period. The program was required of all staff and to sweeten mandatory participation, prizes for all staff and continuing education credits were awarded for non-professional staff. The modules were self paced. Samples of blogs and social networking pages designed by staff members as part of the program were shared at the session as well as comments, both positive and negative, made by the staff. Ms. Simmons very candidly shared things learned in conducting the program, including the fact that it was time consuming to create and took staff away from their jobs to complete, but well worth it. If you are looking for a way to bring your staff into the 2.0 world, this conferee highly recommends the handout and the sources listed there.

"Teaching Web 2.0 to Student 1.5" presented by Robin Ewing and Melissa Prescott from St. Cloud State spoke to many of the concerns faculty have about students' lack of awareness of the wide-variety of Web 2.0 tools outside of Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. Drawing on the results of two studies: "Teens and Social Media" (Pew Internet & American Life) and "Creating & Connecting" (National School Boards Association), Ewing and Prescott conducted additional research to see how their students compared to the picture of a technology-savvy teen population. Through their research and the practical work of their Research in the Information Age (1 credit hour) class, Ewing and Prescott identified the substantial limitations in their students' understanding of social software (particularly blogs, podcasts, photosharing, and social bookmarking) and its application to educational endeavors. Instead of just discussing these tools to teach them to students, the presenters developed a hands-on approach so students could experience for themselves the tools' usefulness. A basic library tour was turned into a participatory activity: students took photos of parts of the library during the tour, uploaded the pictures to Flickr, and then tagged them (which led to a discussion of subject headings and controlled vocabulary). From there, the students could more easily see how tagging worked for social bookmarking (via del.icio.us).

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use of Blackboard to encourage feedback and manage course content will ameliorate technological advancement. Future teachings of LIB 101 may incorporate video and audio streamed through a Flash Player or online tutorials with links on the library homepage. Regardless of which format each instructor chooses, the librarians at Delta State University will continue teaching students essential library and technology skills to enhance their academic, professional, and personal lives.

#### **Resources List:**

Faden, E. (2007, May 18). A fair(y) use tale [Video file]. Video posted to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJn\\_jC4FND0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJn_jC4FND0)

LIB 101 example syllabus. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from Delta State University: <http://www.deltastate.edu/pages/3294.asp>

The research process: An outline. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2008, from Delta State University: <http://www.deltastate.edu/docs/library/respro.pdf>

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Additional activities, using RSS feeds and podcasts, also helped students to understand some of the basics of research and relevance. Future experiments will include blogs as research logs and Wikipedia article creation.

For more information about the conference, and the PowerPoint presentations and handouts for many of the sessions, including from all the sessions listed in this article, visit the website at <http://www.loexconference.org/2008/sessions.htm>

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“Besides,” I say. “Finding the info is the easy part. It’s figuring out what you need, and then figuring out how to use it is where the real work is.”

“Everything is different but everything’s the same.” I sing to myself.

A few minutes later, Jarry says, “I gotta go. The baby’s crying.”

To this day, I have a hard time remembering that there are real people on the other side of these AVs.

“Ok, Maggie’s Cakery at Bloomberg’s. 06.10.52 @ 08:00 GMT?”

“I’ll be there,” she says dissolving from the chair that was never really there.

“Flash me if you need anything before then,” I say as the others vanish.

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From my sleep, the gentle sound of a Bach ringtone. My daughter has just sent me a new picture of my granddaughter.