Illinois Library Association Annual Conference
October 18-20, 2011
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October 18, 2011
Opening Session: Embracing the Library Life Cycle
I did not find much in this presentation to be new, but there were two things that gave me pause.
First, the speakers that this if you have a scenario where a patron walks up to you and says "I
know this is a stupid question...", then our library just made them feel stupid. The issue is not
with the patron but with the library and its staff. Second, the speakers spoke about refreshing the
library based on the 80/20 rule. Libraries should keep 80% constant and change 20% constantly.
The changes need to be visible and not something that only will be seen by the library staff.
Other helpful snip-its from the speakers included to consider routine sunsetting and to not define
the rule by the exceptions.

Session 1: Staff Rewards and Recognition
Representatives of the Oak Park Public Library described how they went about developing a
system of peer-recognition for contributions of the staff. They have some good ideas, such as
email digests of staff recognizing others for a job well done and an agenda item at administrative
meetings that includes staff recognition so that good works get documented in the meeting
minutes. Both of these ideas could be adapted for a small library staff. The Oak Park Public
Library has a staff of 140 individuals. Other forms of recognition they employ would be difficult
to implement with small staffs.

Session 2: Succession Planning and Cross Training
Representatives of the Palatine Public Library District discussed their program for succession
planning and cross-training. The majority of the time was spent on their cross-training program
which is quite good. Once again, though, they have a considerably larger staff than all the
LIBRAS institutions. There are more people available to share the cross-training load.
However, there were some good suggestions which can help all institutions, such as putting
together a plan to deal with possible vacancies. In the plan should be a list of ongoing tasks, a
list and location of mission critical documents, a list of critical relationships and contacts, etc.

Session 3: Organizational storytelling
The speaker is a Dominican SLIS faculty member. She gave a nice lecture on organizational
storytelling highlighting the idea that most people are touched by stories and remember them as
opposed to merely building a case on data. She provided some suggestions for the more useful
books on the topic. She did not provide examples of the different types of stories or how to
create them which would have made this session more helpful.

October 19, 2011

Session 1: College Student Expectations of Their Library
This session provided an overview of the ERIAL project which primarily studied two questions:

what do students really do when they are assigned research projects and how do the expectations which people have affect the research project. The findings of the study have been published in College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know. A toolkit for doing our own study can be found at http://www.Erialproject.org.

Session 2: Valuing Reference Services
This was an interesting presentation by two librarians from the University of Illinois. At the focus of any valuation effort is the question of how what we do contributes to the goals of the overall organization. There are a number of things that can be assessed about reference transactions: quantity, duration, staff type, patron type, time, question type, subject matter, correctness, satisfaction, tools used, and referral. The data cannot tell you how to fix a problem. However, the data can demonstrate use patterns, perceptions, collection and tool gaps, staff training needs, and marketing needs.

Session 3: ILA President's Program. Guerrilla Innovation Changing Libraries from within
This session provided some examples of how various organizations made changes by soliciting suggestions from inside the organization.

Poster session: I Want That! Letting Patrons Request On-Order Materials
This is such a simple thing to do for our users that we will be incorporating the link into our catalog records at the time of acquisitions. Basically, all that is needed is a web request form and an 856 field with a link to the form and some language to tell people to click here to request the book.

Session 4: Change Management Best Practices for the Bold, the Brave, and the Brilliant Even When It's Really Scary at Your Library
The session began with an overview of change management grounded in organization development principles. Representatives from three different libraries discussed how they implemented specific changes at their libraries. One thing struck me during this session. When managing people, there are two questions one should not be afraid to ask: what do you like about your job and what would you like to see changed at the library to make it better.

October 20, 2011

Session 1: Making a Connection: Library Services for International Students
Librarians from IIT presented this session, which I found to be the most engaging and useful one at the conference. I have taken the ideas they presented back to my library and will be incorporating their ideas and suggestions into operations. Some were very simple, but we never thought of such as making bilingual signage to help the international students with basic information. Others were more innovative such as placing QR codes at the end of shelving units to tell users what subjects are in the aisle as well as the availability of e-books and databases that may be useful to them. The key contact for working with the international students should be the international programs office on campus.

Session 2: Departing the Desk: Reference, Change, and the Art of Letting Go
This was an enlightening presentation by librarians from Illinois Wesleyan University. It was very helpful to see a module of on-call reference and student training schedule that worked. This is something we have experimented with at our library, but have not really fully committed. The enlightening moment came when the presenters described their population of 2,100 largely contained students. This is vastly different from our situation. Maybe this is why we have not had the staff commitment and success we thought we would. We will have to reflect on this during upcoming months to determine the model that will work best for our situation. The other helpful thing about this presentation was seeing the student worker training modules which were developed by the students and posted on YouTube.