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LIBRAS Conference Report

On October 19th and 20th, 2011, I attended the Illinois Library Association 2011 Annual Conference at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois. The Conference Title of Bold, Brilliant, and Brave pretty much summed up the conference for me.

The opening general session, Embracing the Library Life Cycle, looked at how we can compare the life of the library to life cycles. How important are our services, are they timeless, do we need to change? All good questions but also ones which many libraries are already answering as new technologies, new resources, and new ways of supporting our users are always being incorporated into our work and our practices.

Duane Bray from IDEO: A Design and Innovation Company, spoke about Guerilla Innovation: Changing Libraries from Within. I liked how he compared libraries to hospitals and how helpful and easy it was to navigate them, to find information or have a service rendered. And I laughed because I had a recent experience in a hospital where I got lost and had to walk out of my way just to find a simple elevator to find my correct laboratory. It did make me wonder if our service points are as clear to others as they are to those who work in those environments. Some of the other connections he made I did not agree with but everyone is entitled to their opinion.

I was also asked by my director to work at the IACRL table in the Exhibit Hall to promote the upcoming IACRL conference which will be held on March 16th, 2012, at the Doubletree Hotel in Oakbrook, Illinois. The conference title is Adopt, Adapt, Accelerate. We are hoping that the statewide conference for academic librarians in Illinois has greater attendance and we are going to do our best to provide interesting programming. And, I was also encouraging all academic librarians to participate by submitting proposals for panel, traditional and poster presentations. We are looking for ideas that inspire as well as practical tips for academic librarians in all institutions and I had fliers to pass out. I was kind of dreading this because I thought it would be boring, but I was wrong. I had a blast talking to all the people who walked by and enticing them with our bowl of shiny, chocolate candy. It is a small world out there and it is amazing how many people you know if you just start talking. I was even talking to trustees from local public libraries who did not know that the academics had their own conference. I also saw a familiar Elmhurst College face and did not know that one of our own Advancement Office employees was a public library board member. I also enjoyed seeing many of my Dominican Interns

attending the conference and was relieved that many of them had now found full-time employment. It was also nice that our table was adjacent to Dominican's GLIS table and I had a lovely conversation with Susan Roman, Dean from Dominican about our Library Intern program and I was able to find out who is their new Intern Coordinator. So, it was a good experience and one which I would be glad to do again in the future.

The Exhibit Hall was pretty typical with a variety of vendors and I was able to talk to the all the representatives I needed to with questions about their products. And I also enjoyed seeing the variety of vendors, because it is mostly geared toward public libraries so some of the items do not apply to academics but more for patrons of public libraries. The free food was really good and plentiful and the place was clean and laid out nicely.

The IACRL, annual luncheon and business meeting included the annual report, as well as, updates on the current issues and plans for the IACRL conference in March of 2012. We also recognized those who had received recent awards. It was good to see old friends and new faces and I sat with people not from Elmhurst which is good to find out what is going on around the state.

Paula Poundstone, the comedian and library advocate, was the speaker for the closing general session. I enjoyed her humor and her love of libraries. She was quick witted and did not disappoint her audience.

I am sure there is more that I have missed but I hit the highlights of my conference experience. And on a closing note, the habitrail from the parking lot to the conference hall was odd. While it kept one from the rain, it also roasted you alive and it was amazingly long. And once while in a crowd of people who were there for other shows, I got lost and found myself at a hotel on the other side. Also, note to self, pay for parking in the beginning because the line to pay at the end of the conference was just crazy.