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Continuing Education Report for ACRL Conference 2011

At this year's ACRL conference, I attended sessions on information literacy, scholarly publishing and copyright. I was most looking forward to the information literacy panelists that discussed working with composition instructors to more closely link writing and research. One panel, unfortunately, seemed more bent on telling the audience they wrote a paper than on explaining how the contents of the paper may be useful at other libraries. I did, however, enjoy the panel "You Talkin' to Me?: Composing a New Information Literacy." I won't claim to have understood and retained the information on composition theory, but it did reinforce and help me think about some questions and issues that arise in library instruction at Dominican. A priority in our embedded information literacy program should be synthesis – teaching students not only to find information but to *use* it in a way that will help their writing. The panelists even suggested that, instead of "information literacy," librarians may want to say "informed learning" or "critical thinking about sources."

Another information literacy panel, "Letting Go," persuaded the audience that, with the right tools, librarians can transfer some responsibility to faculty and/or TAs. The panelists, like many if not all librarians, were reluctant to give up instruction. They wanted it done well. Therefore, they wanted to do it themselves. But with limited instruction staff, it was hard to spend ample quality time in the classroom with all students and avoid seeing the same students more than once. They created a toolkit for faculty who wish to develop assignments that use the library but who will not have a librarian come to her/his class. Several faculty members, the panelists reported, knew it was not always feasible to have a librarian in class and made good use of the toolkit on their own. This session also touched on some of the synthesis issues addressed by the other presentations I attended.

The most practical session, i.e. one that was not merely presenters talking about their projects but one that gave the audience useful advice to take back to their libraries, was "We're Not an ARL Library . . . Why Should We Bother with Scholarly Communication Initiatives?" Panelists laid out 5 steps – awareness, understanding, ownership, activism and transformation – for building a scholarly publishing program, and gave examples of activities for each stage. There was also a panel on scholarly publishing for undergraduates that helped me to think about how we are preserving and showcasing undergraduate research at Dominican. Students can be some of the best advocates for author rights and open access. Plus, the amount of research undertaken by our students has grown so much in the last few years. Scholarly publishing's sister, copyright, was the subject of the most passionate presentation I attended. Push the boundaries of fair use. If we don't, we lose it.

I echo Jennifer Paliatka's words about spending time with colleagues. Some of the best conversations were had informally over drinks or between sessions. I enjoyed spending time with LIBRAS librarians, friends from library school, and librarians I met for the first time at the conference.