

NLLN Continuing Education Scholarship Reports for 2008/2009

Virginia Connell MLA Annual Conference November 19-21, 2008

From November 19 to 21, I attended the Annual Conference of the Minnesota Libraries Association meeting, held in Bloomington, Minnesota. This is the first time I have attended a professional meeting for librarians, and I left the meeting energized and with a larger sense of the issues and applications of librarianship. In addition, I met many librarians who will be excellent resources for my future career.

As a Distance Education student earning my MLIS through the University of Alabama program, I have had the opportunity to gain intimate knowledge of many of the technologies that I will use in my career. I have also benefitted from the University's policy of using synchronous classes, as this provides for real-time interaction with my peers and my professors. However, I have missed the face-to-face component of learning about library science. Going to the MLA conference was like attending and intense, 3-day class, surrounded by expert instructors who were willing to answer any question I had about the subjects being discussed. Despite the "Student" designation on my name tag, I was made to feel welcome to contribute to seminar discussions and encouraged to become part of the library community.

Over the course of three days, I attended:

- New Member and Conference Orientation
- 23 Things: Better Than a Deep Fried Twinkie
- Growing Through the Bush Grant
- Bridging the Divide
- Creating a Jimmy Choo Staff Wiki on a Shoestring Budget
- Public Library Services for Special Needs Youth
- What Do College Students Learn in High School About Research?
- Wikipedia and Us

All of these presentations, as well as the discussion that followed them, will be very useful to my understanding of the challenges and excitement of librarianship. They will be particularly helpful in understanding more clearly the complex relationship that libraries have to their communities, to larger institutions, and to individual patrons. While most sessions I attended concerned academic libraries, I also attended one public library session because it addressed the ways in which a library can be helpful to persons with disabilities. Much of the information, context, and accommodations that the presenters suggested for younger children could also be usefully applied in an academic library setting. It was also a good example of the kind of collaboration that librarians are good at: two of the presenters had degrees in Occupational Therapy.

I am very grateful to have had this opportunity, and I plan to join MLA as soon as I gain employment in the field. I have already begun to think of ways that I could contribute to sessions or poster presentations at MLA in the future—what an exciting prospect! Thank you for allowing me the privilege of attending this conference.

Virginia Connell
Graduate Student, online
University of Alabama SLIS
Moorhead, Minnesota 56560
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