

# **NLLN Continuing Education Scholarship Reports for 2008/2009**

## **Erika Rux MN Library Association Annual Conference 2008 November 19-21, 2008**

Last week I had the good fortune and great pleasure of attending the Minnesota Library Association annual conference in Bloomington. The three day conference was fantastic and I am very grateful to the Northern Lights Library Network for the financial support that allowed me to attend.

I attended several excellent sessions. The opening keynote speaker was Tim Spalding, creator of Library Thing. While I had heard of this "cataloging tool" gone Web 2.0, I was not aware of many of the fascinating features and tools. Tim gave an animated and informative presentation lauding the benefits of tagging and collective wisdom. Not only was I interested from a personal perspective, Tim opened my eyes to many ideas for using Library Thing in my library instruction classroom. I am excited to start using this tool to illustrate the differences between controlled vocabulary (LCSH) and user generated terms (tagging).

All of the concurrent sessions I attended were also interesting and useful. Three of my favorites were "AskMN: The Librarian Is In," "A Different Approach to Promoting Critical Thinking," and "What Do College Students Learn In High School." The "AskMN..." session was led by Carla Steinberg Pfahl from MINITEX and two librarians who participate in the AskMN service. The presentation provided an introduction to the new 24/7 chat reference service that MINITEX began providing last spring. While my library is currently providing a chat reference service, I think the availability of a librarian 24 hours a day, seven days a week is very appealing and we plan to investigate participation, either as an additional service for our patrons through the MINITEX web page, or as a full participant, providing reference assistance ourselves for our patrons and others from around the state. "A Different Approach..." was a fascinating session on soliciting thoughtful discussion from a group. The presenters, Jeanne Iverson and Barbara Cox from the Perpich Center for Arts Education, invited the group to participate in a "protocol for reflection" that first created an open and accepting atmosphere and progressed to a group discussion that was informed by critical thinking by all members of the group. It was a strategy that holds a lot of potential for me as an instructor who sees students only one time and is not able to build a cohesive group through sustained interaction. The final session I want to highlight, "What Do College Students..." was a very interesting report on one librarian's project to learn more about the background knowledge her students have. Kellian Clink from MSU Marshall reported on literature she had read and personal interviews she had conducted and gave an eye-opening presentatuin on the information literacy skills that are taught in Minnesota high schools. Though I had heard some of the statistics and themes she shared, it is good to be reminded of the reality we face as library instructors. Additionally, Kellian shared some practical strategies for helping these students, and I look forward to implementing several of them.

Overall, the conference was a great way to spend three days! I return to my office today energized and excited to share the things I learned with my colleagues and to implement some of the great new ideas people shared. Thank you for making this possible!

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