

## Afterthoughts of the 2010 Florida Library Association Conference

By Anne Larrivee

After attending the 2010 Florida Library Association Conference in Orlando, Florida, I can confidently say that I have a better understanding of some of the popular trends within the Florida library systems. I also had the opportunity to broaden my social network circle and gain library advice through several engaging discussions. The sessions, the exhibit hall and my poster sessions all provided new lessons, experiences and opportunities for social exchange.

The task of selecting only a limited number of sessions was difficult; I tried to focus on those sessions that would be most beneficial for my own professional development. I tended to choose sessions that focused primarily on library services and outreach. Some of the most memorable session highlights included the opportunity to meet the Florida Library incoming and outgoing president at the New Members Roundtable, and the chance to see two reference instruction librarians in action as they explained how a game of jeopardy increased their students' likelihood to participate. I saw how active Florida librarians are with Ask a Librarian services, learned how one library strategically built up their baccalaureate core collection, heard more about library government advocacy initiatives, and leaned about embedded librarians working with university faculty. On Wednesday I participated in a roundtable discussion with the Academic Instruction and Information Literacy group, which helped me feel more involved; now I can rely on this group as a valuable resource for reference instruction advice and support.

The exhibit hall was bit more overwhelming than the sessions, but I was still able to take advantage of learning opportunities. The exhibits helped show me the variety of products that exist for librarians of all sectors. Librarians, especially those with administrative powers, must make many decisions on how they would decide to allot money in their budget. Salesmen and saleswomen eagerly explained why their product was worth the investment. It's all very predatory; if I am ever in the buying position, I might slip on a student nametag so I can innocently assess the product.

The sessions and the exhibits were not the only attraction at FLA, the poster sessions also provided a strong presence. I feel fortunate that two of my posters were chosen. I presented the first poster entitled " No Country Left Behind: Literacy Needs Around the World" on Wednesday, outside the hotel salons. This location provided lots of people traffic as everyone went in and out of their sessions. I presented this poster with Ava Iuliano, another University of South Florida, Library and Information Science student. Ava and I were motivated to present on this topic after we heard the keynote speaker of the American Library Association MidWinter Conference keynote speaker, Yohannes Gebregeorgis. His non-profit, Ethiopia Reads, has helped libraries pop up all over rural areas of Ethiopia. We used his practical model of using available resources, matching cultural interest needs, and promotion of literacy empowerment to explain how the rest of the world could benefit from some of the same literacy initiatives. Ava and I were constantly busy explaining the purpose of our poster, and our passion for the topic made it easy to provide countless explanations.

My other poster session titled, "The Team Gibbons Project: Shrinking Down the Collections," was not privy to quite as much traffic in the Exhibit Hall. By Friday, the Exhibit Hall had emptied out; most people were busy attending a few last sessions and had possibly exhausted their visits to the Exhibit Hall. However, I was able to catch a few wanderers and was able to advertise an important archival collection and beneficial working method. My topic focused on the impact of using graduate workers to help weed down large archival collections. This efficiently reduces the size of the collection and provides experience for the students. I used my own experience, working on the Sam Gibbons political papers collection at the University of South Florida, to help me create this poster. The collection began with a total of over 1,500 boxes in 2007 and now there are roughly 100 boxes left to weed. From this experience I have developed great relationships, learned how to process and weed through an archival collection, and most importantly, I've learned patience.

On the ride home from the Conference, it was hard to believe that three days had already passed. The combination of activities kept me active and engaged. This conference has helped prepare me to take on the American Library Association's Annual Conference in Washington, DC, June 2010. It has also provided me with more knowledge and experience to include on my resume. The additional professional experience of a Conference and poster sessions will help me feel affirmed as I prepare for my first round of job interviews. It has also developed my appreciation of state library associations to bring librarians and library advocates together to learn from one another.

I would like to thank the Suncoast Information Specialists for providing me with this enlightening opportunity. As a student it is often difficult to find the means to attend these types of professional development activities. Scholarships for student advancement are definitely worthwhile, so I encourage this kind of investment to continue in the future.

Thanks again for making the investment for my professional and educational advancement.