

FLA 2015 Conference Summary

By Grace Kaletski

I was thrilled this year to have the opportunity to attend the 2015 FLA annual conference this May, thanks to a generous grant provided by the Suncoast Information Specialists. I have attended a number of smaller conferences in the past, but this was my first statewide conference and it was a very enriching experience. It is easy to get stuck in my routine as a student and graduate assistant at Florida State University, and it was great to get out of Tallahassee to see firsthand how many exciting and innovative things are going on in libraries across the state.

As a new conference attendee and FLA member, I kicked off the conference by attending the New Member Orientation session on Day 1. Here I got to hear tips for making the most of the conference experience from FLA president Linda McCarthy and other library leaders across Florida. One of my favorite pieces of advice from this session encouraged new attendees to attend sessions outside of our comfort zones. I was so focused on finding sessions that were directly related to my career goals that I didn't even think about taking the time to listen about programs and initiatives in other areas of librarianship. I took this advice to heart and attended a few sessions that I probably wouldn't have considered otherwise. Doing this allowed me to meet interesting people, learn valuable new things, and generate ideas that I might not have had the opportunity to encounter.

One highlight from the conference was keynote speaker Peggy Cadigan, a state librarian in New Jersey and member of the Association of Professional Futurists. She shared some of the innovative ideas she has implemented, including hiring a casino to provide customer service training to librarians and hiring a troupe of actors to teach presentation and body language skills. Cadigan shared many other cool, unique ideas for library outreach such as "snapshot days" that highlight library usage in a single day, having road crew wear t-shirts advertising the local library's summer reading program, hosting dental clinics or HIV testing, employing nurses or social workers, and even allowing users to check out people! Overall, Cadigan was a great choice for keynote speaker and shared many ideas that I am sure will inspire even more innovation in Florida libraries.

Another favorite moment for me was attending the FSU iSchool's reception. Since FSU's MLIS program is fully online, I have never met most of my peers and professors in person. This reception was a great opportunity for me to meet a number of people who I previously only knew online. I really like my online program, but it was refreshing to finally meet some of my colleagues face to face. I also got to network with many FSU alumni and learn more about where their career paths took them after leaving FSU, which was inspiring and encouraging to me since I will soon be an alumna myself.

There were a lot of interesting breakout sessions to choose from, and during almost all of the time slots I had a difficult time deciding which session I wanted to attend. I learned about implementing health literacy programs, librarians' role in protecting users' privacy, got a breakdown of ACRL's new information literacy framework, discovered how some libraries are tackling digitization, using 3D printers, building digital studios, and partnering with other departments in new ways, and much more.

Overall, attending FLA was an invaluable opportunity that stoked my enthusiasm for our profession. My library school education was enriched by the things I learned during the sessions, my professional network was expanded by the many librarians, professors, and fellow students who I met, and the

innovative projects going on throughout Florida libraries inspired me. I can't wait to implement some of the ideas that sparked in my mind when I begin my professional career. Thanks again to the Suncoast Information Specialists for giving me this opportunity!