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Serials & E-Resources News

Report on Electronic Resources & Libraries 2011 Conference, Austin, Texas

Valerie Ryder, Wolper Subscription Services

The 6th Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L) Conference was held February 27 – March 2, 2011 in Austin, TX, returning to the same venue as in 2010. This conference is planned by academic librarians to discuss issues concerning electronic resources and to share best practices. The 400 attendees were primarily from the academic library community, although libraries in government agencies, institutions, and corporations were also represented, as were participants from the information industry. Registration is capped to maintain the collegial atmosphere of the conference and to facilitate networking and open exchange of ideas.

Preconference seminars on February 27th covered how to develop effective library assessment projects, preparations for implementation of an Electronic Resource Management (ERM) software package, techniques for clean-up prior to moving data about library resources among systems, and an in-depth overview of the University of Notre Dame's open source ERM system, CORAL.

Three keynote speakers challenged attendees to think beyond their current assumptions and beliefs to better position libraries for the future. Amy Sample Ward, a blogger, facilitator, and trainer focused on leveraging social technologies for social change, discussed libraries as the heart of their communities, and encouraged

librarians to engage their communities in driving change. Dr. Amanda French, THATCamp coordinator at the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, inspired librarians with the vision of a national digital library for the U.S. by sharing images of the National Digital Library of Korea. Michael Porter, Webjunction.org communications manager and president of LibraryRenewal.com, exhorted librarians to reclaim their role as “the place to go” for access to content in order to survive and thrive in the eContent world.

The 51 sessions presented over two and a half days were organized into ten tracks:

- Collection Development
- E-Books
- Electronic Resource Management (ERM) Systems
- Emerging/Future Technologies
- E-Resource Delivery & Promotion
- Management Track (new in 2011)
- Managing E-Resources
- Scholarly Communication
- Standards
- Statistics & Assessment

Most of the presentations were case studies discussing how these issues are addressed at the presenters' institutions and offering best practices and lessons learned.

Prevalent themes of this year's conference were:

- Calculating and using Return on Investment (ROI) data to demonstrate value of academic libraries to their institutions

- Using electronic resources usage statistics to evaluate the collections and determine renewals
- Librarians' roles in digital scholarship and digital publishing
- New models for collection development and acquisitions, such as patron driven acquisition (PDA) and social media as a selection tool
- Rethinking expectations and requirements for Electronic Resource Management (ERM) systems to support and streamline workflows in Technical Services departments
- Realigning workflows and staffing when moving from print collections to e-resources
- Standards for data and system interfaces
- Technology trends, such as electronic books (e-books), e-readers, mobile access to content, web-scale discovery, streaming media, and cloud computing.

ROI and the Value of the Library

Doralyn Rossman of Montana State Library explored different methods of assessment and measuring value so that ROI data tells the library's story in a way that connects with the mission and vision of the institution in which the library operates.

Usage Statistics and Metrics

Similar themes were reflected in presentations on effectively applying usage statistics to evaluate collections. Jamene Brooks-Kieffer of Kansas State University Libraries illustrated how to translate quantitative data, such as in a spreadsheet, to a data story that could be anecdotal or graphical. John McDonald of Claremont Colleges Library cautioned attendees to choose their statistics wisely and to choose their images wisely to tell the right story to the intended audience. Michael Levine-Clark of the University of Denver emphasized knowing why you are telling the story when determining the correct context and format for the audience. Chan Li of the California Digital Library described their approach and statistical methods to analyzing journal usage which employ a variety of metrics that represent important evaluation factors. In a similar vein, Hana Levay of the University of Washington discussed their method of using a

combination of products to gather, compile, and analyze usage and impact factors of journals to assist in making renewal decisions.

Digital Scholarship and Digital Publishing

Michael Boock of Oregon State University and Deborah Ludwig of the University of Kansas explored the changing role of academic libraries from collecting external resources and providing access to becoming engaged in the life-cycle of scholarship produced on their campuses through partnership with faculty researchers, cultural heritage digital initiatives, digital publishing, and data management.

New Models for Collection Development and Acquisitions

Several sessions discussed experiences with Patron Driven Acquisitions (PDA) for e-books including a collaborative effort to provide a PDA model in a library consortium, a comparison study to examine differences between librarian-preferred titles and actual purchases of patrons through a PDA program, and a panel discussion on demand-driven acquisition (DDA) model implications for academic libraries, approval vendors and e-book vendors. Mary Ellen Pozzebon and Suzanne Mangrum of Middle Tennessee State Library conducted an environmental scan to determine how libraries are revising their collection development policies to support e-resources management. Sally Krash and Laura Venhaus of Southwest Research Institute blended new acquisition models in order to expand resource access while significantly reducing their budget. Steven Harris of the University of New Mexico addressed how social media can serve both patron-driven and selection models simultaneously and collaboratively.

Rethinking the ERM

Librarians are re-examining their needs and requirements for Electronic Resource Management (ERM) systems. Susan Davis of the State University of New York at Buffalo revisited the question of whether an ERM could solve all of the problems associated with

managing electronic resources. Kate Silton of North Carolina A&T State University and Anne Rasmussen and Qinghua Xu of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside shared their experiences in employing a combination of tools to solve workflow issues and challenges of managing individual e-journal subscriptions. A panel of librarians presented their innovative solutions to improve e-resource workflow using open source, internally developed, and repurposed software.

Realigning Workflows for E-Resources

Several sessions dealt with the issues involved in realigning workflows and staffing levels when migrating from purely print collections to a blended and eventually to almost totally electronic content. Kate Seago of the University of Kentucky retraced their journey and outlined key actions taken to redefine workflows, processes, staff skills and staffing levels. George Stachokas of Indiana State University Libraries shared their criteria for handling free e-resources by creating separate workflows with different levels of effort based on factors such as scholarship level of the content, persistence of access, entity who maintains the content, compatibility with local systems, and convenience of access. As part of the Management Track of sessions, John McDonald of Claremont College Library addressed issues of reorganizing staff to support e-resources at a higher level of focus that would be appropriate to upper management, directors and administrators. Carolyn DeLuca, Dani Roach and Kari Petryszyn of the University of St. Thomas took a pragmatic approach to realigning staff in describing their process of defining a new e-resource librarian position as well as hiring and training the individual. Cheri Duncan of James Madison University shared the results of a year-long investigation into revising the organization and workflow of their Acquisitions department for optimum efficiency required by new paradigms in library acquisition, such as streaming media, patron-driven selection, and just-in-time purchasing.

Standards for Data and System Interfaces

Two panel sessions were conducted on standards impacting e-resources: KBART, IOTA, CORE, and ESPReSSO.

Technology Trends

E-books, e-readers, and mobile access to content remained high on the interest list for attendees. Danielle Pollack of Sandia National Laboratories presented results of their pilot study on how their library should support researchers who want to use e-readers to access their collections. During the pilot researchers identified features that they desired in an e-reader by using any of five different e-readers. The study also identified issues that the library must resolve in order to provide support for this access mode. Naomi Eichenlaub and Laine Gabel of Ryerson University Library and Archives discussed how e-books are impacting work processes for acquisition, cataloging, management, and troubleshooting. Angela Dresselhaus and Flora Shrode of Utah State University researched whether college students are using mobile devices for academic purposes, future needs of students for mobile access, and the types of mobile services that libraries are currently offering or plan to implement.

Athena Hoepfner of the University of Central Florida presented an overview and comparison of features for four of the web scale discovery platforms in the marketplace. Presenters at several sessions shared their experiences in implementing web scale discovery products and described how web scale discovery systems are increasing ROI and the library's prominence at academic institutions by simplifying searching options for students and revealing more of the library's content.

Cyrus Ford of the University of Nevada discussed the technical aspects of how libraries can create an online video library that provides streaming videos to users.

Ronda Rowe and Jim Irwin of the University of Texas Libraries related their experience of moving their ERM system from a locally loaded software environment to a vendor hosted one as an instance of cloud computing in the academic library world.

Once again the ER&L Conference provided a venue to share knowledge and experiences with electronic resources, learn of new developments and potential solutions, and debate challenging ideas in an open dialogue between the library community and information industry partners.

About the Author

Valerie Ryder vryder@wolper.com is director of information strategy for Wolper Subscription Services in Easton, PA. She has over 30 years of experience in managing business and research libraries in the corporate sector, has spearheaded the migration from print to electronic information resources at a Fortune 300 company, and has been a solo librarian. She has an MLS degree from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master's degree in International Business Management from Point Park University, and a Bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of Rochester.

Relevant Links

Electronic Resources & Libraries 2011 website
<http://www.electroniclibrarian.com/>