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Something's Gotta Give: A Report on the 31st Annual Charleston Conference, Nov. 2-5, 2011

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The ever expanding Charleston Conference was once again a hotbed of ideas pulled from some of the best and brightest librarians, publishers, and vendors on the planet. Almost 200 presentations ranging from the practical to the ruminations of starry eyed visionaries transfixed the nearly 1500 participants over the four day event. Below is just a small sample from the many distinguished sessions attendees were able to experience.

In one of the earliest plenary sessions, Mark Dimunation of the Library of Congress gave an overview of hidden collections in his presentation titled, "Everything We See Hides Another: Coping with Hidden Collections in the 21st-Century Research Library." Dimunation explained that since 2001 libraries have been working diligently on uncovering invisible collections with some success, but it has always been seen as a finite problem and a project based endeavor. In reality the processing of these concealed collections needs to be moved to the mainstream as they are some of the most important materials libraries own and there is an almost limitless supply of work. Libraries need to re-focus on this issue and adapt as new formats and technologies shape our ability to bring these collections to light.

A surprisingly entertaining and informative plenary session, "The Long Arm of the Law" featured Ann Okerson of CRL as the moderator and three lawyers- Jack Bernard of the University of Michigan, William Hannay of Schiff Hardin LLP, and Lauren Schoenthaler of Stanford University. The speakers provided updates and insights into some of the most important copyright and anti-trust cases of the day including the never ending Google settlement, SkyRiver v. OCLC (SkyRiver and Innovative claim OCLC has monopolized the market), and Wiley v. Kirtsaeng (Kirtsaeng, a student from Thailand, re-sold substantial amounts of inferior, but less expensive textbooks on e-Bay that were intended solely for the Asian markets).

Brad Eden, Dean of Library Services at Valparaiso University, wrapped up the plenary sessions on the final day with a rousing presentation titled, "The Status Quo Has Got to Go!!" in which he emphatically urged librarians to take action and be risk takers. Failing to act will leave libraries vulnerable to other entities that are trying to wrestle away the leadership roles in providing information. Eden went on to explain that staff levels will continue to shrink and will never return so one of the key responsibilities for library managers is to train and develop the existing talent. In addition libraries should focus on unique collections that are hidden and stop activities that are no longer financially sustainable such as local copy cataloging, print serials check-in, and print journal binding.

As usual the Charleston Conference delivered an infusion of cutting edge ideas and revealed new

developments of interest to librarians and others in the information industry. It was a truly thought provoking and intensive gathering that can barely be summed up in a few scant paragraphs, but it's safe to say it was highlighted by great colleagues, old friends, and new acquaintances.

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