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Serials & E-Resources News

Report on Electronic Resources & Libraries 2012 Conference, Austin, Texas

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This year's Electronic Resources & Libraries (ER&L) conference was held April 2nd through April 4th at the AT&T Conference Center in Austin, Texas, with an opening reception on the evening of April 1st in the University of Texas-Austin Library. This was the first year that ER&L also had an online conference, in which numerous sessions were available streaming live as well as recorded for those who registered.

In addition to the conference itself, three four-hour workshops were held; one the day before the conference and two in the afternoon of April 4th. Designed to provide more in-depth information than possible to cover in the regular session times allotted, the three workshops focused on usability testing in digital libraries, negotiation with vendors and internal constituents, and a crash course in licensing for those new to the field.

Keynote presentations started off the day on Monday and Tuesday, and the conference closed with a panel discussion on library leadership. Monday's keynote was presented by Andrea Resmini who discussed cross-channel experiences in the context of the library. He noted that librarians need to re-examine and rethink how we use our physical (circulation desk, reference desk, etc.) and digital (website, mobile site, Facebook, etc.) channels of communication, and ensure that all of our channels of communication are appealing and inviting to our users. Resmini's session can be viewed from the ER&L website: http://www.electroniclibrarian.com/erl-keynote-speakers-live-session. Tuesday's keynote was presented by Peter Jaszi and Brandon Butler. They discussed ARL's new "Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Academic and Research Libraries" and provided guidance on how to use the document to address local issues with copyright and fair use. The closing keynote panel discussion focused on inspiring leadership wherever you are in your career.

In addition to the keynote presentations and session offered, attendees also had the opportunity to participate in lightning talks on Monday after lunch, as well as an informal discussion group on the new TERMS (Techniques for ER Management) project on Tuesday. More information about the TERMS project is available here: http://6terms.tumblr.com/

There were over forty sessions offered this year, broken into ten tracks:

- Collection Development
- eBooks
- Emerging/Future Technologies
- eResource Delivery & Promotion
- ERM
- Managing Electronic Resources
- Scholarly Communication
- Standards
- Statistics Assessment
- Workflows & Organizations

Summaries of some of the sessions I attended are below. Anna Creech, who writes the blog, Eclectic Librarian, has also posted summaries of the sessions that she attended during the conference.

All you can ERMS: Laying out the Buffet of eResource Management Systems

This two-session question and answer panel presentation was facilitated by Jill Emery, and participants in the panel were librarians who implemented and currently use a wide variety of different electronic resource management systems (ERMS), including the free and open source CORAL created by the University of Notre Dame, Ex Libris' Verde, Innovative Interfaces' Millennium III ERM, OCLC's WorldShare License Manager, and Serials Solutions' 360 Resource Manager. The length of time that participants had been using their ERMS ranged from several months to over five years. The questions to the participants focused on three areas: the "appetizer" (implementation), "entrée" (current practice), and "dessert" (future directions).

The reasons participants gave for choosing a particular ERMS ranged from the desire for the tool to integrate with other library systems, including their ILS, to the modularity of the product. One librarian who had implemented an ERMS in 2005 noted the lack of choice then in comparison to now. When asked the number of staff using ERMS on a regular basis, most librarians noted that there were definite differences between those who used the ERMS daily (generally one to two users) and those who used it monthly (many more staff). When asked if implementation was considered successful at their libraries, most noted that while there had been problems, they were fairly satisfied with the result. Several librarians noted that entering the licensing data and other information was what took the most time, and that an ERMS is always a work in progress.

The "entrée" section of the session focused on current ERMS workflow. Some libraries started with workflow they had created prior to implementation of an ERMS, but noticed that as the ERMS matured, it began driving workflows in acquisitions. One librarian found that working out best practices for the library before implementing the ERMS was important and helped to identify new workflows. When asked what was considered essential for ERMS, respondents named a variety of features including reports, tracking and alert systems, ILL functionality, usage statistics, and the web-based source of contact information. Some underutilized tools mentioned by participants included note fields, usage statistics, and the ability to show licensing terms to users. Panelists noted some problems with the ability for their ERMS to integrate with other products, including SUSHI services and tracking the different naming systems for the same database in different vendor products.

The "dessert" portion of the session focused on future directions for ERMS. The most discussed and requested direction from librarians on the panel was the need for more seamless integration of all services, including the ERMS. The session concluded with vendors of the products discussing future directions for their products, and a short question and answer period with the audience.

Coming to a Desk near You: The Millenials!

This panel discussion began with a review of the three major generations within the library workplace: the Baby Boomers (born after WWI), the Generation X-ers (born in the mid-1960s-late 1970s), and the Millenials (born in the early 1980s-2000s) and the perceived differences between them, including their career values and rewards. These generational differences were then discussed in three areas of managing electronic resources: workflows, technology, and leadership.

In terms of workflows, it was noted that everyone has some shared values as well as unique talents, and regardless of generational gaps, leaders within the library should recognize individual differences, make accommodations when necessary, and ensure that everyone is effectively doing their job. It was noted that Millenials who are being hired are looking for acceptance of who they are, respectfulness of theirs and other's differences, and want coworkers to be interested in and excited about what they do.

All generations have grown up with advancing technologies; however, the Millennials have grown up during a period in which the rate of change in technology has increased dramatically. The presenters noted that even though the Millennial generation has grown up with rapidly changing technology, they are not necessarily more adept at using it than other generations.

In terms of leadership, as the Baby Boomers begin to retire, it becomes necessary for the Generation X-ers and the Millennials to work together and step into leadership roles within the library. The Millennials seem more interested in collaborative workspaces, and look to leaders or mentors that are not necessarily older, but may be their peers or librarians who they feel they can relate to. One of the panelists, Nancy Beals, noted that a restructuring of her library which moved to emphasize collaboration has worked well not just for Millennials, but for other generations as well.

Discussion during the session also brought up dealing with generational differences with library staff that were born before the Baby Boomers and how best to ensure that all generations within your staff are interacting together positively and working towards a shared goal.

Discovery Services: Reconciling the Idealist and the Pragmatist

This discussion session had audience members thinking and talking about discovery services as they relate to two very different perspectives: the idealist and pragmatist. Using the book *College Libraries and Student Culture: What We Now Know,* Eric Frierson began the discussion first with the differences between the idealist (who believes that students are motivated by the love of learning, with research being filled with discovery and contemplation) and the pragmatist (who believes that students are in higher education to train for the workforce, and research just needs to satisfice the current information need). Frierson argued that with the implementation of discovery services, libraries may be better meeting the pragmatist's needs, but are selling the idealist short. However, he and audience members noted that the skills of the idealist are still incredibly important for users, including evaluating the resources retrieved, differentiating between disciplines, and knowing how information within each discipline is organized. In order to satisfy the pragmatist and the idealist, discovery services and the librarians who use, tweak, and teach these services need to keep both types of users in mind when reviewing tools for implementation and use in the library.

The Biggest Winner: An "Urgent, Social, Blissful and Epic" Competition to Promote Underused Databases"

In this session, Amy Fry shared her experience with using a "Biggest Loser" style competition amongst librarians at her university to promote underused databases to students, faculty and staff. Fry drew parallels to this competition from Jane McGonigal's TED talk in which she noted that gaming can create a better world by fostering urgent optimism, encouraging social interactivity, encouraging blissful productivity, and creating a desire for epic meaning.

A total of twelve librarians at her university participated in the competition, and the database that showed the highest percent of increased usage from the same period the previous year would be considered the winner. Strategies that librarians used to promote databases included links on the library's front page and LibGuides, instruction sessions and workshops focusing on their database, signage around campus and handouts, and promoting use at the reference desk.

Some of the databases in the competition did see a large percentage increase in use. Unfortunately, overall there was a 6% decrease from last year's usage of the databases in the competition (other databases not in the competition saw a 10% decrease). This was, however, blamed on the implementation of Summon, which does not search within any database. With the inclusion of full-text retrievals and sessions, databases that provided full text content to Summon and were in the competition saw a similar increase in usage than those not in the project but also available in Summon. Databases in the project but not available through Summon saw a much larger increase in use than databases not in the project and also not in Summon.

During her presentation, Fry noted what worked well during the competition, including working with the faculty to promote the database, showing students databases at the reference desk, and teaching the database during instruction sessions.

Some of the reasons why, despite promoting the databases, increased usage was not seen were: some databases had barriers to use (including additional logins); there was one database that changed titles during the competition; there were some technical difficulties with another database; and students are still more likely to use the open web than a library resource for research. She notes, however that the project was fun and built collegial working relationships among librarians, and three of the databases in the competition are still showing stronger use.

Fry offered advice for other librarians who may be interested in starting this at their library: begin planning early and start with a smaller number of databases. She found that having twelve databases in the competition was too many, and there wasn't time to fully implement some of the promotional ideas she had had in mind. She also suggested encouraging teaching faculty members to consider entering in the competition.

Collecting Undergraduate Research: Challenges and Opportunities

During this session, three faculty members from UCLA discussed the opportunities and challenges in collecting undergraduate research. They observed that undergraduate research was previously a part of the hidden scholarly record, and that libraries need to start viewing these students not just as learners, but also as researchers. They documented some of the programs undertaken at UCLA to collect undergraduate research, including a capstone initiative that promotes and encourages undergraduate research. This has been particularly successful in the sciences.

Efforts in the library to foster undergraduate research have focused on a four-year service model, starting with the library as the academic service hub, where students can learn research and study skills, experiment with digital learning technologies, and engage with cultural heritage materials. Other components include promoting the library as a showcase for research and as a venue for student performances. A final component is promoting the library as the publisher of undergraduate research.

The discussion then moved to the challenges of collecting undergraduate research, including faculty anxiety about making students' research publicly available, problems with copyright and intellectual property, the often irregularity of student publications, and the capacity or lack of a digital repository on campus. The session concluded with audience members sharing the challenges and opportunities presented on their own campuses, as well as advice on strategies for increasing or starting the collection of undergraduate research.