



NASIG Newsletter

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Serials & E-Resources News

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

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The 2012 Electronic Resources & Libraries Conference was held April 2-4 in Austin, Texas. ER&L, which began only a few years ago in 2006, brings together a diverse group of information professionals to discuss the many issues surrounding managing electronic resources. Big themes at this year's conference included e-books, particularly PDA and DDA programs, statistics and assessment, scholarly communications, and electronic resource management. Below I describe a few of my favorite sessions of the more than 50 offered over the three days of the conference.

The conference began with a keynote presentation by Andrea Resmini, an information architect and user experience designer from Sweden. Andrea's talk centered around the idea that the virtual world is not separate from the physical world, but instead is "tightly integrated into the world around us." Users want to be able to find information and accomplish tasks through multiple channels, and they want to be able to start in one channel, such as the physical stacks, and end the task through another channel, such as through the library website on a mobile phone. These types of experiences are called "cross channel" experiences. As librarians we need to think about how we can integrate all of the different channels that our patrons use to access library services and resources so that they can move between these channels easily and seamlessly.

Some key concepts to remember about cross channel experiences:

1. Information architectures are becoming ecosystems— No artifact stands alone; instead they are all interrelated and connected.
2. Users become intermediaries—Users are becoming more and more involved with content creation.
3. Content and user interfaces will never be "finished"—they will continue to change constantly (this seemed to me to be particularly relevant to electronic resources – titles change publishers, aggregators add and drop titles seemingly at random, interfaces are updated all the time).
4. Dynamic becomes hybrid—Boundaries between different artifacts are becoming fuzzy and thin; interfaces need to integrate information coming from different sources.
5. Horizontal prevails over vertical –More informal structures of categorization, such as tags, will take over more rigid hierarchies of categorization, such as cataloging rules.
6. Products become experiences—We shouldn't design an experience with only that experience in mind; it is necessarily linked to many other experiences that we must take into account with our design.
7. Experiences become cross channel experiences— Cross channel experiences will be ubiquitous.

The advent of cross channel experiences seems is a big future challenge for people designing the experience of the library. We have put a lot of focus on the library as a physical space as well as a virtual space, but have not put a lot of effort into connecting the two. On the

virtual side, electronic resources are particularly difficult to pull together seamlessly because of the number of publishers, vendors, platforms, etc., as well as all of our silos for managing them, such as discovery layers, catalogs, ERMS, digital collections, and institutional repositories. How do we bring all of these different pieces together into one seamless experience? That is quite the challenge.

Designing a Copyright Outreach Program for Your Campus

This session was presented by Angela Riggio and Diane Gurman, two librarians from UCLA who work in the library's Scholarly Communications and Licensing unit. While many libraries are not large enough to have their own department devoted to scholarly communications and licensing, the presenters gave some good tips for how to get started with designing a program suitable for other institutions. They emphasized starting small and letting a program grow over time, as well as to make sure that whatever you do is in line with the mission and goals of your institution. They also recommended finding other parts of campus that could be interested in partnering with you to educate about these issues, for example the Graduate School, or student groups. The primary audiences for this sort of education and outreach seem to be faculty and graduate students, mostly because they are involved in publishing, though undergraduate students could probably benefit from instruction on the basics of copyright and plagiarism. The presenters found that word of mouth was probably their best marketing tool, and suggested that programs still in their infancy should concentrate on offering incentives to get attendance to their sessions and grow the program. Finally, they emphasized the importance of getting outside of the library physically – going to speak to people in other departments and areas of the school rather than expecting them to come to you.

Collaborative Marketing for Electronic Resources

In this session, Marie R. Kennedy from Loyola Marymount University described a study she undertook

to determine if certain marketing techniques for electronic resources are actually effective. While there is a lot of literature detailing different ways that libraries can and do market different kinds of resources and services, there is not much data supporting many of these practices. Kennedy recruited dozens of libraries to participate in a study that attempted to benchmark a single marketing technique – in this case e-mailing e-resource tutorials to library staff to see if the tutorials increased the staff's understanding of the resource (in the hopes that these staff would then be more likely to promote the resource, but that was not evaluated in this study). All of the participating libraries went through the same process of developing marketing plans and collaborated on a wiki to ask each other questions and share ideas. After the plan was developed, they all sent out e-mails to library staff that encouraged staff to complete a tutorial for a particular electronic resource. A reminder e-mail was sent out a few weeks later, and then was followed up with a brief survey. Each library chose its own resource to promote and wrote their own e-mails, but all followed the same timeline.

Unfortunately due to a high drop-out rate, not many conclusions could be reached from this study, but the data does suggest that sending out tutorials in e-mails can be a good way to familiarize library staff with an electronic resource. Kennedy also wanted to do a more sophisticated analysis of what type of e-mails and tutorials were more effective, but again there was not enough data. Overall this was an interesting presentation, and I'd love to participate in a future study of this nature in order to help the profession create strong best practices for e-resource marketing. This topic is going to become increasingly important as more and more of our collections and services move online.

Trials by Juries: Suggested Practices for Database Trials

Three librarians (one each from Golden Gate University, University of Nebraska – Kearney, and Clemson University) discussed how each of their institutions dealt with setting up and gathering feedback for

database and other resource trials. Their workflows were all pretty similar and seemed to be in line with standard practice of most libraries for these kinds of trials. A couple of interesting ideas did, however, emerge. One librarian uses a blog to post and gather feedback for database trials in the comments. Some of the librarians used spreadsheets to track both trial requests (to help remember if they have been requested before), as well as trial results. Some also push out several e-mail reminders to pertinent people to increase the amount of feedback for a particular trial. I also liked the suggestion of offering small incentives in order to get feedback; this can be done at public service desks or via e-mail. All three presenters initially stated that it was better not to advertise trials very widely for fear that a library user who found the resource useful would be disappointed to discover that the trial database they used once was no longer available. However, someone questioned this during the Q&A period the presenters seemed to have reconsidered their initial position, admitting that they actually could see how promoting trials more widely might be useful to get more feedback on them.

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

My favorite session from the conference was probably The Biggest Winner: “An Urgent, Social, Blissful, and Epic” Competition to Promote Underused Databases. The presenter, Amy Fry, from Bowling Green State

University in Ohio, discussed a competition that she organized between librarians to promote underused databases. The driving idea was that using competitions and games is a great motivator to get people to do things, so instead of just asking librarians to promote databases, Fry made it fun by turning database promotion into a game. Each librarian or group of librarians in the competition selected a database from a list of underused databases created by Fry and then had an entire semester to try to increase use of that database compared to the previous fall semester. Whoever had the largest percentage increase of use for their database at the end of the semester won the competition and received a \$100 gift card that Fry provided (incentives are always helpful to encourage participation) as well as the knowledge that they may have saved their database from the budgetary chopping block. While some people actually saw their database usage fall overall (possibly because of Summon being implemented during that same semester), the competition revealed some of the more effective strategies for database promotion. These effective strategies include pushing the database with subject area faculty, promoting the database at services points and giving people a small incentive (e.g. candy) to try it out on their own, and teaching the database in bibliographic instruction sessions. Fry considered the project a success and wants to repeat the competition in the future.