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Serials & E-Resources News

Report on the 31st Annual Charleston Conference, “Issues in Book and Serial Acquisition” November 2-5, 2011

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The 2011 Charleston Conference’s theme was “Something’s Gotta Give!” and the keynotes and presentations aimed at projecting a future world of libraries, publishers and vendors racing to keep up with rapid changes in environment and organizations. The keynoters offered high level visions of the status quo and why it must change and the session presenters provided the nuts and bolts. One of the things a new attendee will notice is the variety of session formats: “Happy Hour” sessions, “Fast Tech Talks,” Pecha’Kucha-like “Shotgun” sessions; poster sessions, Dine-arounds, vendor showcases, juried product development forums, and “Lively Lunches.” One can try to follow the “threads” to focus on subjects most dear to one’s heart, or sample the entire smorgasbord and expand one’s borders a bit.

In plenary sessions, on the first day we learned about the semantic web (Michael Keller, Stanford); data papers in the network era (MacKenzie Smith, MIT); hidden collections (Mark Dimunation, LoC); the Digital Public Library of America by the director and board of DLF; (Robert Darnton, Rachel Frick, Sandy Thatcher); new initiatives in open research (Cliff Lynch, CNI and Lee Dirks, Microsoft). By the end, we were hearing finally why the “Status Quo Has Got to Go!” (Brad Eden, Valparaiso University).

The meeting rooms for the plenary sessions were filled to overflowing, so remote meeting spaces were necessary, which somewhat hampered audience feedback and reactions, however, the keynotes inspired much debate and comment as the audience left the rooms and dispersed into the next sessions, so the visionary spirit was evident throughout.

The Charleston Conference is always a great place to find out about new product development, new technology and applications, making it much easier to keep up to date on collection development and acquisitions. There were product “showdowns,” fast tech talks and innovation sessions presented by publishers and vendors and librarians. One could focus on new tricks to teach an ILS; going to the “cloud;” how services and collections are being tailored to the patrons’ needs now and in the foreseen future. The atmosphere was relaxed and informal; attendees were offered many opportunities to meet one’s contacts and colleagues face-to-face. It is clear to everyone in the library world today that we all benefit from a flow of information to help us make important decisions about licensing, acquisition, services, and of course, costs.

One of the best advantages of the Charleston Conference is the chance to customize the program that interests YOU, because all organizations are not alike and a one-fits-all approach does not work well. However, those who have gone to CC many times do see drawbacks to much larger size and complexity it has developed into; the conference organizers try to retain the personal and familiar feel that linked participants

together, while coping with more than 450 persons instead of the small number that founded the CC in 1980.

The Charleston Advisor

<<http://www.charlestonco.com/index.php>>, *Against the Grain* – both the publication and the website <<http://www.against-the-grain.com/>> – and the MultiGrain discussion forum <<http://www.against-the-grain.com/2011/11/multigrain-discussion-whats-going-on-in-the-penguin-overdrive-amazon-affair/>> are an additional plus for those of us who need our “fix” between Charleston Conferences. I, for one, can’t wait to see what amazing discoveries we’ll make at the next Conference!