Review of the Second Annual New Librarian Summit Conference

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Abstract:

Authors' review and reflections on the Second Annual New Librarian Summit Conference.

Introduction

The second annual New Librarian Summit (NLS) conference was held August 2-3, 2018 at San Jose State University's Martin Luther King, Jr. Library in San Jose, CA. The organizers of the NLS conference encourage graduate students, early-career librarians, first-time presenters, and those who have experienced a recent career transition to attend or to submit a proposal to present at the conference. The first year of the NLS was open only to those within the California State University system, but the NLS was expanded this year to include professionals from across the nation. Other notable changes to the conference include expanding from one to two days, the addition of a poster session, and a shift from a single track to a parallel session format. Sessions were divided into three categories each day: academic libraries, public libraries, and workshops on day one, and on day two, a career development category was offered in place of the public libraries sessions. One-hour time blocks, with 15 or 30 minute breaks in between, included workshops with active learning and dialogue on a topic, and single or paired presentations followed by Q & A ("NLS 2018 program," n.d.). In addition to this brief summary of the history and format of the conference, we present an overview of the parallel presentations, workshops and posters that piqued our interests as academic librarians. We then offer reflections on aspects of the conference that were particularly salient to our experience, and conclude with insights for those who might consider attending the conference in the future.

Parallel Presentations and Workshops

The overall conference theme for the 2018 NLS was *Exploring New and Innovative Approaches in LIS.* Proposals were solicited in six topic areas: (a) new forms of outreach, collaboration and liaison, (b) new approaches to digital scholarship, digital curation and publishing, (c) new modes of instructional design, pedagogy and assessment for librarian-teachers, (d) engagement in practice-based research and publishing for librarian-scholars, (e) new challenges and solutions in technical services, and (f) skills development in public speaking, writing, and visual communication ("Call for Papers," n.d.). The workshops, presentations and posters presented at the conference were well-aligned with the theme and topic areas, and reflected diverse interests in several areas of practice such as access services, collection development, reference and research services, teaching and learning, assessment, and digital and emerging technologies. Notable examples among the sessions we attended include the following:

- *Integrating Circulated Technology into the Library Collection Development Plan*
- *iLab: A Sustainable Instruction Journey*
- *Expanding the One-Shot: Collaborating with Disciplinary Faculty to Create an Information Literacy Workshop Series*
- *Virtual Worksheets for Student Engagement*
- *Using Observation for Outreach, Collaboration, and Liaison Opportunities*
- *Pop-Up Peer-to-Peer: Students Helping Students Meet their Library Needs*

- *DS? We Do! The Expanding Role of the Digital Liaison*

- *Metadata as a Pedagogical Exercise*

Despite their varied foci, what many of these sessions had in common was the implementation of new or innovative approaches to perennial problems, services and programs in libraries to enhance learning and engagement. For example, in the *Expanding the One-Shot* workshop, Irene Korber and William Cuthberts guided participants in analyzing sample syllabi to develop learning outcomes and scaffolding to turn one-shot instruction into a workshop series. Other presenters spoke about innovative approaches to using collaborative online editing and metadata for student engagement and learning. In *Wikipedia in the Library: Using Edit-a-thons as a Tool for Outreach and Student Engagement*, Becka Cooling and Mary Wahl discussed their experiences with teaching edit-a-thons at a four-year university and at a community college. They noted that the events not only involve students in research and writing, but they are also opportunities to incorporate the ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, especially the Information Creation as a Process and the Scholarship as Conversation frames, into teaching and learning. Cooling's and Wahl's work can serve as a model for user engagement in other educational settings, and in fact, edit-a-thons have been hosted in a variety of other venues ("Wikipedia + Libraries," n.d.).

In *DS? We Do! The Expanding Role of the Digital Liaison,* Taylor Ralph described a training plan designed to address what she described as an evolving and expanding role for the liaison librarian as a problem solver, subject specialist, and facilitator, partner and/or leader in digital

scholarship. In *Learning to Describe the Elephant: Metadata as a Pedagogical Exercise*, Ann

Hidalgo discussed information empathy, which was defined as the ability to consider the

needs of others and to appreciate differences in how others access information. She argued

that instructors can guide students in cultivating this disposition through class assignments

such as creating hashtags for records in library catalogs to provide multiple access points to

information for a more inclusive information seeking experience.

Although diversity, equity, and inclusion were not specific presentation categories, the

NLS conference included several presentations that addressed those themes. Examples

include the Community-Library Inter-Action (CLIA) workshop, which is described below, *Take*

Back the Cite!: Librarians Engage Feminist Citation Practices and Feminist Pedagogy,

presented by Aliza Elkin, and *Mixed Feelings: Negotiating Mixed and Multiracial Identity, Racial*

Impostor Syndrome, and Passing for White While Serving Diverse Student Populations

presented by Aliza Elkin, Monika Chavez, Mallory Furnier, Mark Matienzo, and Elisa Rodriguez.

Postsecondary institutions are becoming increasingly more diverse. As academic librarians

strive to integrate diversity and social justice into their practice, these presentations were

timely, thought-provoking articulations of the diversity imperative in higher education.

On day two of the conference, participants interested in gaining deeper insight into the

global impact that libraries can have on communities attended the 3.25 hour Community-

Library Inter-Action (CLIA) workshop facilitated by Dr. Clara Chu, director of the Mortenson

Center for International Library Programs at the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-

Champaign. The workshop was a fitting bookend to Dr. Chu's opening NLS keynote address, in which she discussed how libraries around the world have partnered with local communities to empower them to use democratic dialogue for action toward social transformation and peace. Dr. Chu emphasized that in the CLIA process, libraries work *with* and not *for* communities. During the workshop, attendees brainstormed how the CLIA model ("CLIA," n.d.) can facilitate change and transformation in their own communities, and learned strategies for engagement that put the shared interests and needs of communities at the center of peace-building efforts. Attendees received a certificate of completion at the end of the workshop.

Poster Session

The poster session was held on the first day of the conference during an hour and a half lunch period. The poster topics were diverse, demonstrating how varied new librarian interests can be. Collaboration and digital resources were common topics in many of the posters. Examples include *Using Open Educational Resources to Advocate for Your Academic Library* by Monika Chavez, and *Increasing Transformation of Libraries Technical Services and Technological Changes* by Lavoris Martin. Emily Jones's and Melissa Hortman's poster, *New Librarian, New Opportunities for Collaboration*, described a partnership between the Medical University of South Carolina Libraries and the university's Director of Instructional Technology. Given the emphasis on collaboration and partnership in academic librarianship, this poster was a welcomed sight in the poster session. The collaborative effort was informed by Leeder's (2011) and Wildavsky's (1986) perspectives on collaboration. Jones and Hortman

also identified examples of collaborative projects such as the College of Pharmacy's

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Club, and an Educational Research Special Interest

Group Series. As explained in the poster, their work is an example of how new librarians can

leverage collaborative partnerships to fill gaps in institutional needs, such as for faculty

development programs and services, that cannot be met by working alone.

Tiffanie's Reflection

Although we attended some of the same sessions, Kimberly and I left the conference

with valuable and different impressions. One of the highlights of the conference for me was

the workshop *Spark it up: Rolling Active Learning Strategies into your Information Literacy*

Sessions by George Martinez and Michelle DeMars. The workshop challenged attendees'

reasons for infrequently incorporating active learning activities into their teaching, and the

presenters offered suggestions for overcoming barriers to using these techniques. One barrier

that many librarians identified in the workshop was the lack of time in an information literacy

session to incorporate an active learning activity. Martinez and DeMars suggested activities

that only take a few seconds, such as Boolean Simon Says. Charlotte Brun's poster *Servicing*

First Generation Students at a Small Liberal Arts College: A Case Study was one that really

stood out to me. As a new librarian interested in supporting first-generation STEM students

and developing my research agenda, it was great to hear from her about her experiences with

preparing to interview students about their research process and what library services they

use.

Another high point for me was the poster session. I was fortunate to have my first

poster accepted with my colleague Rashelle Nagar. As a first-time poster presenter, the

conference gave me a platform to share my current work in a supportive environment. The

poster, *Knowledge Not Found (404): Creating an Event to Demystify the Publishing Experience*,

highlighted our experience working within our university to create an event to help new

librarians understand the publishing process and how to get involved. During the poster

session, I had the opportunity to discuss our work and engage with other librarians and

graduate students about future projects ideas. Looking forward to next year's conference, I do

hope to see the poster session either scheduled during its own hour, separate from lunch, or

all in the same room. I believe one of those changes would allow the poster presenters a better

opportunity to engage more with the other posters and further encourage discussion.

Kimberly's Reflection

As previously noted, the New Librarian Summit is a conference for early-career

librarians, or those who have experienced a recent career transition. As an academic librarian

with over fifteen years of experience, I thought I might feel out of place attending a conference

designed primarily for those with much less experience. However, I am in a new tenure-track

position after spending time away from full-time librarianship working in academic affairs as a

planning and accreditation associate and as an adjunct librarian in a community college

library. Attending the NLS conference after returning to the profession was an opportunity to

consider new approaches to teaching, learning, and outreach, and to remain current on

emerging areas of librarianship such as digital scholarship. It was also an opportunity to once

again witness librarians excited about and engaged in research and scholarship to inform

professional practice.

Attending the Community-Library Inter-Action (CLIA) workshop was an eye-opening

experience, as it challenged me to re-imagine the role that libraries have played and continue

to play in social transformation. Libraries have a long history with community engagement,

yet they are frequently viewed as institutions primarily concerned with providing information

and educational resources and services. The CLIA workshop introduced me to a much more

expanded role and vision for libraries as not just service and resource providers, but as vessels

for communal action, empowerment and peaceful and mindful living. In addition, Dr. Clara

Chu explained that CLIA is process-driven rather than objective-driven. One of my takeaways

from the workshop is that although I am frequently engaged in outcomes-based thinking,

often as it relates to library instruction and planning, process and lived experiences also

matter.

Conclusion

The New Librarian Summit conference "provides a supportive opportunity [for] peers

to share knowledge about innovations, trends, developments, challenges and experiences"

("New Librarian Summit," n.d.). In addition to the dialogue in the workshops, presentations

and poster session, the break times between each session were filled with conversations

about the presentations, and about how to overcome challenges that new librarians face. The

presentations, workshops and posters at this year's conference reflected new and innovative ideas from librarians who are new to the profession and those who are taking on different roles in their career. If you only attend the conference once in your career, the NLS is likely to have a long-lasting positive impact on your professional development. Although it is only a two-day event, the organizers strive to curate a content-rich program that supports new and emerging professionals in acquiring the "training and skills to serve their communities and advance as leaders in their field" ("About the New Librarian Summit Conference," n.d.). Professionals seeking such an experience should strongly consider attending this conference.

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