

The 2009 MLA Annual Conference, "Challenges, Choices & Change" was a very educational experience for me and I am grateful that I am able to bring back some great ideas and insights to my co-workers, board, friends group and patrons.

I actually started out the conference with *Northern Brights Jewelry-Making Class* and I would have to say it was probably one of the most relaxing, creative, enjoyable activities I have ever participated in. We were a small group made up of no one that I new previously, however one woman and I did meet briefly at breakfast that morning. As luck would have it we ended up not only at the jewelry making class together but also attended three additional sessions together, always pleasantly surprised to run into one another again. At the closing luncheon as we passed each other and said goodbye, she commented that the jewelry making class was the perfect way to start the conference and I would have to agree. I strongly suggest that conference attendees to take the time to explore the surroundings of the city in which the conference is located; I have always enjoyed the special tours feature local attractions; after all this is educational.

I attended the session "Access to Justice for All" and was amazed at all quality of legal reference services that are available in Minnesota which can be accessed by phone or the internet. The ability to point people in the right direction for legal information and forms is a very important and valuable service.

"Easy, Cheap, Flexible School- Age Programming" was a great way to realize that we are not alone in our quest to provide meaningful learning experiences for young people. It was interesting to learn what others are trying and I was thrilled to create a list of recommended books from the session.

The Keynote luncheon that day was also wonderful. I can hardly wait to plan my own trip down Highway 61.

I felt validated during the "Excellence in Customer Service" session. The presenters were right on (in my mind anyway) about the importance of customer service and the need to touch our patrons as well as respond to their needs. I love my patrons and I want them to know that. James Lund had my favorite quote of the conference "You've already paid for it you might as well come in and check it out."

"Gay Penguins, Atheists, and Barefoot Evangelists" was very informative and reaffirms this feeling I frequently have "Why don't people just leave us alone so that we can do our jobs." Then I remember protecting the First Amendment is a part of my job and this is important work we do here at the library.

On Friday I was privileged to be a presenter with a good friend and collaborative partner, Deb Hengel. We received very good feed back and were asked great questions from those in attendance. I love spreading the word about our successful collaborative projects and I am also happy to get out and talk about our "Friend, Family & Neighbor" grant especially the "Ready to Learn" backpacks.

The closing luncheon speaker was a great way to end the conference. I love when people move us out of our comfort zone and perhaps confront us with our own prejudices or hang-ups. Freedom of speech is a big deal and sometimes we get a bit complacent about it so I am glad to be reawakened from time to time.

With Sincere gratitude,

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