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Conference Report--10/16/09

I attended the 2009 Minnesota Library Association Conference on Wednesday, October 14. While at the conference, I attended two sessions: *How to Build Sensational Storytimes* and *Developing a Facilities Master Plan*. I felt both sessions were valuable.

How to Build Sensational Storytimes focused on infusing the 6 Early Literacy Skills from ALA's Every Child Ready to Read program into Library Storytimes. I am familiar with the ECRR program and have taught classes on the program at the Fergus Falls Public Library and have been including the Early Literacy Skill set into my Storytimes at FFPL, but it had been awhile since I had attended a session focused on the skills, and I thought a refresher would be valuable.

I was able to take away new book and song ideas from the session, as well as ideas on how to more effectively involve parents in the Storytime experience. For example, the presenter, Susan Bard, suggested librarians begin each Storytime with an introduction that encourages parents to participate with their children during Storytime. Also, Ms. Bard encouraged librarians to help parents become advocates for libraries and library programs. She suggested that while many parents enjoy and understand the entertainment value of library programs, like Storytime, they do not always comprehend the educational value of the programs. According to Susan, informing parents of the early literacy skills their child is developing while attending Storytime and other library programs will help parents view the Library as not just a fun place to take their children, but also a source of educational development for their pre-K child. This was a fun and informative session.

The second session I attended, *Developing a Facilities Master Plan*, centered on the process the Ramsey County Library System underwent when it renewed the system's Master Plan and built and remodeled some of its libraries in the process. The Fergus Falls Public Library is currently planning an expansion and/or relocation and I was interested in learning more about Ramsey County's planning process. The session covered building site evaluation, using GPS mapping to determine service coverage, and using focus groups to determine library needs. I was especially interested in hearing about the focus sessions Ramsey County held with a wide variety of people--library staff, library users and non-users, government officials, etc. According to the presenters, Sandy Walsh, Jane Dederling and Susan Nemitz, the focus groups helped garner support for the building projects amongst the public and also helped administrative staff and the architects when designing the buildings themselves. Using modern technology, such as GPS mapping, to determine service coverage and library usage also seemed to provide valuable information, such as, where to place new buildings, how large should the buildings be, what to do with older library facilities in neighborhoods with declining usage/populations. Of course, The Ramsey County Library System is a system and some of the issues they dealt with while creating a master plan and undergoing building/remodeling projects at various branches do not directly translate into what FFPL will be facing with its expansion/relocation project, but I feel I took away valuable information from this session. The presenters did not speak much on fundraising during the session, which was something I spoke with Deputy Director Sandy Walsh about after the session. She offered to provide me with more information via email, so I look forward to learning more about fundraising from her as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the 2009 MLA conference! I attended some valuable sessions and also met up with some old friends and colleagues. The experience was informative and fun!