

## NLLN Scholarship Report for *Spotlight on Books 2010*

April 27, 2010—Submitted by Amy Soma

Thanks to generous support from NLLN's continuing education scholarship program, I was able to attend the 22<sup>th</sup> annual *Spotlight on Books* conference in Grand Rapids, MN. As usual, the conference was informative and enjoyable amidst the backdrop of beautiful spring days in the great North Woods.

The Friday afternoon workshop featured Makato, MN based library and technology guru, Doug Johnson, who presented on three different topics. His discussion on using technology to promote reading allowed conference attendees to lay hands on an iPad, a first for many of us. I don't think I am the only participant who was left wanting more of this amazing new gadget! Perhaps Doug's most important points of the day were regarding intellectual freedom, where he maintained that the overuse of filters is a bigger threat to intellectual freedom than book challenges. While filters are not an issue where I work, I worry about what seems, at least on the surface, a strict filtering policy at the public school my children attend. Mr. Johnson has inspired me to investigate this issue thoroughly and take action if necessary. Finally, Doug's discussion of copyright issues pertained specifically to my job duties. In addition to making sure the library adheres to copyright law as it pertains to course reserves and interlibrary loan, I talk to faculty about what they can and cannot do in regards to posting copyrighted materials within course management software. Doug's idea that librarians need to transition from "copyright cop" to "copyright counselor" is a notion I'd been mulling prior to this presentation. Now I will have to find some ways to put this theory into practice as I continue my work. Friday afternoon's workshop also included, for the first time, back channel conferencing via Twitter. I had never participated in this activity before and found it an interesting way of sharing thoughts and impressions with other conference participants in real time. I hope this aspect of the conference can be enhanced in the future.

Friday evening's new "lightning round" format at *Spotlight on Books* was a faced paced, exciting and informative event. I felt like I was on pins and needles all night as talented librarians and educators presented lightning fast speeches on books, library programming, and online tools. Featured guests Henry Cole and Ben Mikaelson also participated in the "lightning rounds", much to the delight of conference participants.

Saturday was all about books and authors. Another lightning round featuring nine regional authors kicked off the morning and woke everybody up. We have some amazing talent right here in our own back yard and it is always good to be reminded of that. Featured guests included Dara Dokas, Henry Cole, and Ben Mikaelson, all of whom highlighted their literary works and shared heartwarming stories of the work with children through teaching, school visits and volunteer work. This part of the conference is always a real treat, and this year exceptionally inspiring and entertaining!

This conference provided ample opportunities for learning, laughter, and networking and I appreciate the opportunity that NLLN provided.