

Report on MLA Annual Conference attendance 2011 by Susan Sanford.

The MLA annual conference in Duluth kicked off with what turned out to be one of the highlights for me: a talk by Anita Silvey, author of *Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book*. To write this book she interviewed over one hundred successful individuals, some of them quite famous. Each one talked about the children's book that most influenced them in their life and how it influenced them. The book is formatted in such a way that there is an excerpt from the book on one page and on the facing page an essay explaining why and how the book influenced the person, plus a sidebar telling who the person is and in what way they are successful. I went to a breakout session led by Anita Silvey where she encouraged us to use this method in our communities and gave us many ideas of how to do so, using locally "famous" and successful people as role models for reading. It was very inspiring.

Because I am the facilitator of our adult book group here at the library, I attended a session on book clubs where I learned about the Minnpost Book Club Club that is a website community for readers and writers made up of over 200 public library book clubs and 180 private book clubs. This could be a good resource for us. Also learned about various on-line book clubs and ideas for "jazzing up" book clubs. I loved one suggestion they gave to choose to read something that you are pretty sure you are going to hate!

I also attended a session on helping our older patrons become more comfortable using computers and learned that older patrons prefer older teachers, which does make sense. Some libraries have set tutoring hours at their library when patrons can get free help. I skipped the end of this session and attended the last part of a session on using children's financial literacy and picked up some great resources.

Another session that was a real eye-opener was called "Children of Incarcerated Parents: Who's Counting and Why Should We Care". The presenter is a pediatrician doing research at the U of MN. The session was not specific to the role of libraries but helped me see the myriad of influences these children are experiencing and to feel even more compassion for them. Even in our little town I know of several young patrons whose parents have been in and out of jail. Sometimes that was a really good thing as the kids were then safe, and other times it was not a good situation to have the parent gone.

I loved Jenna Blum, the author of this year's 'One Book, One Conference' title *Stormchasers*. She is very fun, articulate, open and offered to come speak at a book club gala we are creating for nearly free!

I did go to one of the "50 in 60 Bookblasts" but did find it very useful as the reviewers for the most part did not tell their opinion of the book but just a synopsis. Kent Krueger spoke at the closing luncheon but I wasn't too impressed with his talk...

Overall it seemed that this year there were fewer sessions that I felt could be of use to me at our library. I think there were also fewer sessions overall so that the division meetings, annual MLA meeting, and other meetings could be held during regular session time and I don't usually attend those. I felt there was too much time to spend with vendors, too...

VLS took all its employees out to dinner one night at a great Italian restaurant, which was definitely the culinary highlight. I walked to the Duluth Public Library and checked it out. I also attended the Legacy performers show and saw, I think, six groups and/or individuals who we could hire to come to our library to do shows. I was surprised by all the talent and the fun!

Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend MLA again.