

TO: Northern Lights Library Network  
Att'n: Kathy B. Enger, Executive Director

FROM: Laura Schafer, librarian - Red Lake Falls branch of Northwest Regional Library

DATE: October 17, 2011

RE: MLA 2011 Annual Conference (October 12-14) summary report

First of all, my sincere thanks for the NLLN scholarship, enabling me to attend my first Minnesota Library Association Annual Conference, after years of working within Northwest Regional Library. The conference met and exceeded my expectations in many ways and soundly reinforced its theme of "Libraries: Superior Value for Life."

The conference provided a vast array of subject areas – exactly what libraries do for their communities and patrons. I attended workshops on historical/ intellectual topics (such as history of copyright,) technology (such as e-books /digital collections,) literary picks (such as 50 in 60: book recommendations,) and hands-on programs and services (such as "Growing Readers" and book club tips) among others. Each session gave ample practical information to convey back to my own branch library.

The keynotes featured accomplished authors whose presentations I enjoyed over wonderful luncheons together with hundreds of fellow library workers from all over our state, Wisconsin and Ontario, to name a few. The exhibit hall was a treasure trove of resources and information, too.

There were also several fun, unique events that gave me the opportunity to visit with Minnesota authors in a casual setting; what a rare treat to chat individually with writers about their work, ask questions, gain insight on particular genres, and acquire signed copies to enhance a library collection. And the Legacy Showcase provided some valuable programming ideas & resources (as well as some laughs) which will be put to good use in the upcoming months.

Finally, adding to the "superior value" of this year's event was its location in Duluth, situated on the great and captivating Lake Superior; I took this opportunity to visit some of the city's signature sites during unscheduled hours.

In these few days packed full of amazing resources & materials, speakers, authors & librarians, and sites/sights & sounds, both conference and the city lived up to their names and reputations. I am very grateful to have had this superior library experience, and I hope to translate the benefits to my branch of Northwest Regional Library.