

NLLN Continuing Education Scholarship Report 2007/2008

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The chance to attend a national library conference was a wonderful experience. I attended the Meg Cabot Author Luncheon. She is a wonderful, funny speaker who is as down to earth as her books. It was good to hear first hand what Meg has planned for future books and which series are now completed.

I attended mainly technology workshops in order to improve my knowledge of the current and upcoming technology trends for libraries. In the Digital Revolution workshop they spoke about the survey's that have been conducted recently to find out what libraries are offering for internet and what they need. Many of their points about slow connections speeds are the issues that I find our rural libraries reporting. Library patrons get frustrated that we do not offer faster working computers, when the real issue is what speeds of internet connection are even available in some rural areas. Adding more and newer computers is not always the answer to some patron's internet problems but rather it is the need to add faster bandwidth speed to those locations.

Technozoo workshop was a fun and fast look at what is out in the technology world that younger patrons have grown up with and are accustomed to using in their everyday life. I learned that libraries need to acknowledge how these technologies connect young people and work that into our libraries as best we can so that we do not disconnect with the young people but rather have technology that draws them in. The simplest step to take is in the attitude and signage in the buildings regarding cell phones. Ask people to silence their phone rather than turn them off and provide locations where they can answer their phones. Libraries need to continue to look at the emerging social websites and find ways to use them in our libraries and on library websites as a means to draw patrons to our buildings. Library websites need to experiment with different ways to reach people using blogs, flickr, and active sites.

Gaming is a big draw for people of all ages that libraries need to learn how to use to draw patrons in the front doors. It can be as simple as hosting gaming nights with different age groups or creating book displays that connect current favorite games to authors to creating gaming labs with special computers. I hope to share some of the ideas that I heard in this workshop at our next branch meeting with the staff that do programming and book displays.

Overall I got a good sense from the workshops about where to spend time on the web to be current with the latest trends, where the IT budget should be spent and that everyone else is working just as hard as I am trying to keep up the fast changes in the world of technology.

The bonus of the conference was meeting the staff in the vendor booths with whom the library does business and personally being able to thank them for all their help in getting an accidental techie up to speed.

Pauline Helgeland