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ALA/CLA Conference Report

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ALA/CLA Conference Report

by Ellen McGrath, Head of Cataloging, University at Buffalo Law Library

Thanks to the generosity of ALLUNY, I was able to attend the American Library Association (ALA)/Canadian Library Association (CLA) Annual Conference in Toronto, June 19-25, 2003. I was awarded an ALLUNY Miscellaneous Grant to cover the cost of conference registration. My sincere appreciation goes to Grants Committee Chair Laura Suttell and to the ALLUNY Board! I am so grateful that I was able to experience it.

Even though Toronto is so close to Buffalo, I decided to take the train so as to avoid the sometimes-crazy traffic in Toronto and the extra cost of parking my car at the hotel. The train ride was fun, though there is quite a delay at the border to inspect the train and view the documentation of all passengers. Toronto is a very friendly city. We were welcomed with open arms and thanked repeatedly for disregarding the overblown media hype about SARS. There was no sign at all of SARS in Toronto and to top it all off, the weather was absolutely beautiful, sunny and warm every day. As a sports fan, I was also fortunate enough to be able to tag along with my UB serials colleagues to receptions hosted by vendors at the Skydome and the Hockey Hall of Fame.

I had not attended an ALA annual conference since the late 1980s and while this year's seemed like a big conference to me, colleagues who are "regulars" told me that attendance was way down. I was fortunate in that none of the sessions I attended were cancelled; though it seems that was a common occurrence for others. At some sessions, however, replacements read papers for speakers who did not attend. The exhibits seemed extensive to me, though the number of exhibitors was apparently way down from the norm. In addition, the exhibits were split into two separate parts of the exhibit hall, thus making it difficult to tour both parts easily. The Metro Toronto Convention Center was quite massive and with the shuttle buses picking up and dropping off at opposite ends, we all got lots of exercise walking the length of it!

There were a number of very high profile speakers, including Ralph Nader and Gloria Steinem, although I was unable to attend their sessions. There are some big differences between an ALA and an AALL conference, which make it impossible to get to a lot of sessions at ALA. First, the meeting venues are spread out

geographically and there is a good deal of travel time on shuttle buses between those venues. And secondly, the sessions are longer than those at AALL, which tend to top out at 90 minutes. At ALA, I attended mostly two-hour sessions, but also some that lasted three hours. The combination of these two factors basically means you can get to only one session in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. I do not mean this as a complaint; the content of the ALA sessions was excellent and all were well worth attending. But there is a high level of frustration at having to miss out on so much else that was happening at the same time and I can attest to this personally. I have to say, it really makes the complaints about conflicts that are heard during AALL conferences seem laughable by comparison.

I began by attending the Association for Library Collections & Technical Services (ALCTS) Directors of Technical Services of Large Research Libraries meeting. This is commonly known as "Big Heads" and it is a great place to hear about issues and trends in large technical services departments. And that is good, since often these issues later trickle down to our comparatively smaller law technical services shops. This Big Heads meeting included:

- A report on the University of California Collection Management Initiative given by Brian Schottlaender (San Diego)
- A report on a batchloading survey given by Lee Leighton (Berkeley) and OCLC's response to it given by Glenn Patton
- A report on Cornell's benchmarking analysis given by Karen Calhoun
- A report on electronic resources management metadata given by Tim Jewell (University of



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- Washington)
- A short discussion on digital archiving and specifically on the LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) model.

For detailed notes on these reports as recorded by Judith Hopkins (University at Buffalo, Central Technical Services), see <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~ulcjh/bhmin062003.html>

In cataloging circles at this conference, the buzz was definitely about the changes to the cataloging code that are in the works. We are at a critical point in time when AACR2 is poised to undergo a major revision, possibly even turning it into AACR3! And this is hot on the heels of the changes already made to AACR2 last year, when Chapter 12 was renamed Continuing Resources. That seemed like a big one at the time and we are still adjusting to it, but it was nothing compared to what is coming down the pike in the not too distant future. The influence of FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) is being felt and will eventually show up in AACR, whatever its number. It will be a long process of incorporating all these changes within AACR, but it was exciting for me to attend a number of meetings and a program at the conference where discussion of these changes took place.

I attended one of the ALCTS Committee on Cataloging: Description & Access (CCDA) meetings, as well as a meeting of the CCDA Task Force on Consistency Across Part I of AACR2. I think the title of the latter group imparts well the level of detail that is being focused on in terms of the cataloging rules. At the full CCDA meeting, Matthew Beacom, ALA's representative to the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC), gave a report. CCDA is the American conduit to the JSC, which also has representatives from Australia, Britain, and Canada. I was continually amazed at the knowledge of AACR2 displayed by the members of these groups during their detailed discussions. We working catalogers are fortunate to have such committed people guarding our interests, as well as those of our library users, in these standards-making bodies. Our AALL official representative to CCDA, Kathy Winzer, was present at the meetings and afterward it was helpful for me to ask her about some of the more detailed portions of the discussions.

On a related note, I attended a program sponsored by CCDA entitled "Don't Be Dysfunctional: How to Put the Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records (FRBR) in Your Future." Thanks to the efforts of Kathy Winzer, virtually the same program was given at the AALL Conference in Seattle in July. One difference was that Barbara Tillett was unable to speak in Toronto, so Matthew Beacom read her paper there. But she was in Seattle. Yes, I attended the program in both places, since it is a complex topic to understand, at least for me. I have written a more detailed report of the Seattle FRBR program which should be in the September 2003 issue of the *Technical Services Law Librarian*. Check for it on the web at <http://www.aallnet.org/sis/tssis/tsll/>

In keeping with cataloging standards as my chosen theme for this conference, I observed a meeting of the Machine-Readable Bibliographic Information (MARBI) Committee, which focuses its attention on the MARC format. There was only one meeting of MARBI in Toronto, which is rather unusual. But in the scheme of standards changing, the rules (AACR) must be changed first, before the related MARC format changes can follow. MARBI always has some MARC work to be done, but right now it is experiencing a bit of a lull as compared to its normal workload until the AACR changes are nailed down. This was explained to me by Susan Goldner, AALL's official representative to MARBI.

I also attended a meeting of the Subject Analysis Committee (SAC), which focuses on subject headings and classification. Just to give you a flavor for the work of this group, here is a list of its current subcommittees: Subject Reference Structures in Automated Systems, Fiction Guidelines, Subject Analysis Training Materials, Semantic Interoperability, and Program Planning. The SAC meeting also included reports on the Sears List of Subject Headings and Dewey Decimal Classification, as well as liaison reports from the Library of Congress, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, Music Library Association, and AALL, given by Marie Whited, our official representative.

I was fortunate to be able to see the work of one of the SAC subcommittees in action at the program "Training for Effective Subject Cataloging: A Preview of an ALCTS/ Program for Cooperative Cataloging Initiative."

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This was a test run of a module of a larger training program on subject cataloging, which should be ready for delivery at the ALA Conference in Orlando in June 2004. I was very impressed by the part I saw demonstrated and it is evident that a huge amount of work has gone into this effort. Training a new cataloger to assign Library of Congress subject headings is always the biggest challenge for me in the overall training process. And that fact was very clear in my mind since I was in the midst of supervising a library school student in a summer practicum focused on copy cataloging. This training effort will help by providing another place to receive that training and possibly also training materials, if they can be obtained without attending in person. It would be wonderful if AALL could offer this training in conjunction with an AALL Conference, particularly since it seems the AALL Basic Cataloging Workshop is now on hiatus.

As an aside, AALL's funding of the attendance of our official representatives to these cataloging standards groups is essential. The addition of the separate program slots for the MARBI, CCDA, and SAC reports during the AALL Seattle Conference clearly shows the importance of these groups and that law catalogers need to know what they are doing. The timing is fortuitous and I hope the report program slots at AALL are permanent.

I did have a little time left to take in a few more general sessions. I attended "Cliff's Notes 2003," a regular session given by Clifford Lynch, the director of the Coalition for Networked Information. His wide-ranging remarks were thought-provoking, though they often raised more questions than they answered. He touched upon the reconsideration of scholarly research, repositories, cyber infrastructure, funding, open scholarship, life logs, and much more.

Unfortunately I had to leave this program early to travel to another session, the ALCTS President's Program, "Minding the Gap: Generational Issues in Recruitment and the Work Place." This was a terrific program with very dynamic speakers, Lynne Lancaster (co-founder, BridgeWorks) and Jessica Albano (Communication Studies Librarian, University of Washington). Ms. Lancaster addressed what happens "when generations collide," both in terms of our library patrons and our coworkers. The different groups are the traditionalists (born pre-1946), the baby boomers (born 1946-1964), generation X (born 1965-1981), and the millennials (born 1982-). She used funny commercial clips and stories to illustrate the clashes

that occur and to show that individuals in these groups instinctively have different values and goals and therefore need to be dealt with accordingly. Ms. Albano then followed with her personal perspective as a "cusper" as she described herself, with characteristics of both a gen-Xer and a millennial. As a parting gift, all attendees received a copy of the book Ms. Lancaster co-authored with David Stillman, *When Generations Collide: Who They Are, Why They Clash, How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work*. For more information, check out the BridgeWorks website at www.generations.com

I ended the conference by attending the Public Library Association's President's Program, with its guest speaker, Margaret Atwood. Her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* was the focus of the ALA/CLA "One Book, One Conference" event, which also featured discussion sessions about the book. I was not able to make it to any of those sessions, though I had spent my time on the train to Toronto re-reading the book. But being able to hear Ms. Atwood speak about her work, as well as her heartfelt appreciation of libraries and to experience her dry wit was a real thrill for me.

I hope my report has clearly conveyed the idea that the cataloging standards are definitely not static. They are always evolving to stay abreast of the changing needs of our users, as well as the changes in the material we collect and access. Standards changes do take time, but that time has shortened considerably compared to the length of time needed to revise a cataloging standard 20 years ago when I first became a cataloger. Back then, before the Internet and e-mail, the delay in seeing changes made to AACR2 and the MARC formats was significant. Things are completely different today and there is no better place to see that than at the ALA cataloging meetings and programs. Thank you to ALLUNY for making my attendance at the Toronto ALA Conference possible!

