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ALA Annual 2009: 3M/NMRT Professional Development Grant Report

By Linda Crook

The American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference 2009 in Chicago, IL, was an excellent conference and a great experience. I want to thank 3M for their generosity and the 3M/NMRT Professional Development Grant Committee for selecting me. Particularly I would like to thank David Pointon, 3M National Sales Manager; Pam Putzier, Senior Administrative Assistant; and Catherine Collins, Committee chair, for their help in making this happen. Without this grant I may not have been able to attend this important meeting.

Friday, July 10

I was lucky to start my conference by participating in the Unconference, part of ALA President Jim Rettig's "Creating Connections" initiatives. Seventy-five participants collaborated ahead of time to identify the topics to be covered and took part in the program. The program consisted of group discussions lasting fifty minutes and presentations lasting seven minutes on subjects such as the future of libraries in a ubiquitous computing world, Web 3.0, and gaming in libraries. I led a discussion of the future of reference, which was a fascinating conversation. We agreed that, whatever the future brings, we'll be moving farther from the traditional reference desk and, in academic libraries, the fate of reference will be closely connected to the future of library instruction.

I had to miss the other group discussions as I raced between hotels to present at the New Members Round Table (NMRT) Conference 101 session. I had a good time giving the large audience suggestions about how to get the most out of their conference and how to get involved with ALA. My favorite tip: librarians are easy marks – don't wear your badge outside of the conference!

Saturday, July 11

Saturday morning I began with a trip to the exhibit hall and a visit to the 3M Booth. I was glad to meet some of the 3M staff there, and I even enjoyed being interviewed on video. From there I went to the Association of College and Research Libraries Science and Technology Section (STS) All Committees Meeting to meet with the rest of the Continuing Education Committee, which I co-chair. We discussed upcoming, ongoing, and new projects, and we prepared for our role in Sunday's All STS Meeting and Breakfast.

In the afternoon I attended the Emerging Leaders Salon, which is a venue for all Emerging Leader alumni to come together to discuss the future of the program and to continue engagement with the Association. In the evening I attended the Proquest Scholarship Bash, held at the Art Institute of Chicago. It was a great opportunity to see some modern and contemporary art as well as their amazing Impressionist collection.

Sunday July 12

Sunday morning I arrived early to help set up for the All STS Meeting & Breakfast. During the first hour, attendees got to enjoy a free breakfast while at the same time hearing quick reports on STS business. For the second hour, the Continuing Education Committee had identified several hot topics, and each table chose a topic for small group discussion. Everyone seemed to have a good time, and we received good feedback for next year's program. After I helped clean up, I was on to my next committee

meeting.

I attended the Emerging Leaders Subcommittee meeting as NMRT representative. It is a small committee, but several guests had been invited to provide additional perspectives. There were some very good suggestions for making the program stronger. I brought to the table an NMRT proposal to co-sponsor the Emerging Leader program, which would provide free NMRT memberships to all Emerging Leaders. It's an exciting opportunity.

The highlight of the conference, of course, was the NMRT Awards Reception on Sunday evening. Many people attended and there was lots of great food. I enjoyed meeting the other award winners, as well as many library school students, new librarians, and supporters. I'm very grateful to everyone who helped plan the event and to everyone who came to support us. My acceptance speech was very succinct, but I think it says it all, "Thanks." I really like my plaque.

Monday, July 14

Monday morning's NMRT Executive Board meeting is traditionally my last event of the conference. It's a wonderful way to wrap things up, getting together with colleagues I like and respect and talking about issues that are important for new members. There's always so much more that I would have liked to have done over the course of the conference, of course. I'm particularly sorry to have missed the NMRT President's Program, Leadership Development in Transition, and the Facebook after-hours party. I look forward eagerly to the 2010 Midwinter Meeting in Boston. Thanks again to 3M for this opportunity.