DIGITALCOMMONS
—@WAYNESTATE—

Wayne State University

School of Library and Information Science Faculty Research Publications

School of Library and Information Science

2-1-2009

And They Were There: Reports of Meetings — Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)

Robert P. Holley
Wayne State University, aa3805@wayne.edu

And They Were There

Reports of Meetings — Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)

by **Bob Holley** (Professor, Library & Information Science Program, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202; Phone: 313-577-4021; Fax: 313-577-7563) <aa3805@wayne.edu>

Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)
14th National Conference — March 12-15, Seattle, Washington.

Reported by **Bob Holley** (Wayne State University) <aa3805@wayne.edu>

The **Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)** held its **14th National Conference** on March 12-15 in Seattle, Washington. This conference was similar in format to the **Charleston Conference**. It focused on subject content without the committee meetings that take up so much time at **ALA Annual Conferences** and the **Midwinter Meetings**. The conference offered keynote speakers, invited presentations, referred papers and panels, workshops, poster sessions, table discussions, and a Cyber ZED Shed for technology demonstrations plus social activities such as the exhibits opening and an all conference reception at the **Experience Music Project/Science Fiction Museum and Hall of Fame**. Preliminary registration was 3,036 according to *Library Journal.* The 225 vendors accounted for 900+ exhibitors for a total count of almost 4,000 attendees.

As perhaps the only person in the world who has attended all fourteen conferences since 1979 in Boston, I have seen this conference acquire a focus on topics of interest to public services librarians. **Mary Ellen Davis**, **ACRL** Executive Director, told me that the **ACRL** does not keep demographic statistics on attendees. I would nonetheless stake a large bet that the attendees are younger, earlier in their careers, and more likely to be academic librarians in four year and community colleges than would be true at the two **ALA** annual meetings. As an indication of this, over one-third of the registrants (1,150 out of 3,036) were first time attendees. While some librarians and deans/

directors from the large research libraries attended, they have much less influence than at the **Charleston Conference**.

I systematically examined the conference schedule to find sessions of interest to *ATG* readers. I was surprised to find some promising titles whose descriptions then showed a focus on other areas. For example, a panel session titled, "Subject Librarian 2.0: Emerging Trends and Future Challenges for the Liaison Librarian," included the following description: "Topics include interdisciplinary research, technology, scholarly communication, instruction and curriculum design, e-science and more." Collection development apparently is no longer a major responsibility for subject librarians. In summary for all session formats, *ATG* type papers accounted for thirty sessions, 9.5% of the 316 total. After grouping these sessions into three large topics, collection development had the highest number with seventeen. Within this group, the emphasis was on collection formats with seven papers: serials (3), eBooks, graphic novels, grey literature, and media. Collection building had four papers with two each on cooperative collection development and patron driven purchasing. Three were on preservation broadly defined with the subjects of last copy identification, weeding, and off-site storage. Collection analysis, subject specialists, and a general question about whether the academic collection is worth saving accounted for the final three. I classified nine papers as dealing with scholarly communication. Three dealt with open access; three with institutional

repositories, two with general issues, and one with academic library publishing. Finally, I put four papers into the category of digital issues of which only one had a specific focus — map collections. I was surprised at the lack of attention to publishing and the creation of scholarly knowledge.

Overall, the dominant topic was outreach to faculty and students with a strong focus on information literacy. "Information literacy" appeared in the titles of thirty-one sessions from a keyword search on the conference schedule. Reference came somewhat behind with fifteen sessions including one with the title "But We're not Dead Yet."

The exhibits attracted "over 225 vendors" who were much the same as those who come to **ALA** conferences to sell to academic libraries though specialized markets such as foreign language jobbers were less well represented. To help build traffic for the exhibitors, **ACRL** used free food and also required walking through the exhibits to get to the poster sessions.

Overall, the **ACRL National Conference** provided the opportunity to get away for four days to concentrate on professional topics. Even with the invited papers and the keynote speakers, who were "celebrities" chosen for their entertainment value in areas of non-library concerns. I found this to be an inward looking conference by librarians for librarians. We heard how great and innovative we are and spent the time patting ourselves on the backs. Perhaps hearing about a few failures and getting perspectives from the outside world, a strength of the **Charleston Conference**, might be more useful in the long run. 🎤