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MLA Conference, 2010  
Professional Engagement Award Report

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I have just returned from the Minnesota Library Association Annual Conference in Rochester and am re-energized! Thank you, Northern Lights Library Network, for providing financial assistance for professional engagement activities!

As the 2010 Chairperson for the Children's and Young People's Section (CYPS) of MLA, I have worked all year assisting in the planning of the conference and in putting out the call for youth-related program proposals for the conference. It was great to see that work pay off! I believe many of the CYPS members, and other library personnel, in attendance benefited from the variety of CYPS sponsored programs on topics such as serving homeschoolers, the Caldecott Awards Committee, storytime planning, book-themed parties, teen and tween programming, school and public library partnerships and more! I, personally, attended a number of these sessions and was able to take back some great ideas to my library.

On Wednesday, I co-presented the program on book-themed parties, sharing my "Kitchen Science" program for gradeschoolers. Kitchen Science is a program based on a nonfiction book of the same name by Shar Levine. It was a fun and educational experience co-presenting this program with three other Youth Librarians from Washington County Library, Scott County Library, and Chanhassen Library. As a result of this program, we were able to share our best practices from around the state with our colleagues and I was able to add three new names to my professional network. I, for one, plan to host more book-themed parties at the Fergus Falls Public Library now that I have some great ideas on how to create inexpensive, effective and relatively easy programs. I think we'll tackle a Diary of a Wimpy Kid party first.

On Thursday, I introduced Sally Walker, the Sharon Lerner Breakfast Lecture speaker and author of a variety of acclaimed nonfiction books for youth. Throughout the year, I have worked with MLA President, Kathleen James, to coordinate the lecture and, once again, it was great to witness the culminating event. Following the breakfast and lecture, I received many compliments from those in attendance. Walker's presentation

was inspiring, educational and entertaining—a success! I also attended presentations on Thursday on Serving Teens and Tweens @ Your Library and on Distance Tech Tools.

The Serving Teens and Tweens program focused on the creation of Teen Advisory Boards and teen programming kits. The teen programming kits shown were funded by an LSTA grant, so the program also served as a bit of a refresher on and reminder of LSTA grants for libraries. At the Fergus Falls Public Library, we struggle to implement teen programs partially because of funding and partially because of staff time. After attending this program, I was reminded that grant funds are available to help with funding and also, because the teen programming kits were created by a public library system (SELCO), that something might also be possible on a system level for the Viking Library System. One of the other Viking Library System Library Directors in attendance also enjoyed the program, and we plan to present the idea to the Viking Library System Director.

I attended the presentation on Distance Tech Tools with a desire to learn more about “how to use technology to serve distance patrons in a way that ‘makes sense’”, as the program summary stated. This session was fantastic! I walked away with a number of new ideas to try, including providing jump drives for cost for our customers (a great way to help customers download software and applications for future use and also to save documents). I also want to try posting videos and podcasts on our website, including videos and/or podcasts of library programs, how-to videos, and a general library introduction. I would also like to include library “testimonials” from customers to help with fundraising efforts. This presentation also helped make me more aware of applications such as Issuu, a self-publishing platform for newsletters, etc, and Jing, a simple way to create screenshots and screencasts. I plan to use both of these tools to publish library newsletters, booklists, etc. and for creating cataloging searching how-to screencasts for our website. I concluded Thursday by attending the annual MLA Board meeting. It was my first MLA Board meeting and a great learning experience on how these meetings work.

On Friday, I presided over the annual CYPS meeting. This was also a great learning experience in how to conduct a meeting and on how to stick to the agenda and accomplish tasks in a timely manner. We were able to cover a fairly lengthy agenda in

less than an hour. In preparation for this meeting, I had created an agenda, working with a variety of CYPS members in gathering updates on various CYPS events that had been going on throughout the year. Once again, this experience helped me develop new contacts and expand my professional network. Also, our working together benefits the library community as a whole by helping us to accomplish tasks that we would not be able to accomplish individually, such as working on state-wide reading programs that benefit youth like the Minnesota Youth Reading Awards (MYRA) and Ready4K. I also wrote an annual summary of CYPS events, worked with the CYPS Executive Committee to update the CYPS section of the MLA Procedures Manual and website, and worked with CYPS members on an early literacy resolution, which was presented at the annual MLA Board Meeting. Once again, it was great to see all this work in action!

After the CYPS annual meeting, I attended a session on Homeschooling at the Library and on the Caldecott Award Committee. The homeschooling program was led by a librarian, who is also a homeschooling parent, and the past president of the Minnesota Homeschoolers' Alliance. It was great to hear both perspectives in how homeschoolers relate to and use their public libraries. I have led homeschooling tours and classes on searching the library's catalog and databases and was excited to learn more about how our library can better serve our large homeschooling population. I walked away from the session with a great resource list of materials to add to our library and a list of homeschooling organization contacts. I plan to include homeschooling information on our website and also plan to purchase a number of the suggested materials for our collection.

The Caldecott program was fun and informational. The two presenters, who are currently serving on the Caldecott Committee, gave us an insider's view (as much as they were able!) of how the committee functions and also provided background information on how they were selected to be a part of this prestigious committee. The presenters also shared how they learned to evaluate picture book art and gave us examples. The session concluded with a hands-on activity. We were able to evaluate a batch of picture books in small groups, using our newfound knowledge. At the current time, I do not have the time to apply to be a part of this committee, but it was fun and educational to get a behind-the-scenes view of how books are evaluated and chosen for the award.

As I mentioned in my introduction, I was re-energized by my conference attendance, and it was wonderful to see months of hard work in action. I truly enjoyed being a part of the MLA Conference Planning Committee and learned a lot during the process! I still have a few months left as Chair of CYPS and will fill them with some final housekeeping activities before I pass the hat to the 2011 Chair. Thank you, once again, for your financial assistance; it helps make my involvement in these types of professional development activities and roles possible!