

PLA Conference 2014, Indianapolis Indiana: A Report from the OPLA Grant Recipient

I was honored to be chosen as the OPLA grant recipient to attend the 2014 Public Library Association conference. As a “newly-minted” librarian but a long-time branch head at the Toronto Public Library, I was eager to explore both global trends and nuts-and-bolts issues that inform and influence front-line library service to communities

Wednesday

Wednesday was taken up with a comprehensive tour of the Central Branch of the Indianapolis Public Library. The impressive building has a formidable history and reflects the city and community’s respect for architecture, art and culture.

The Daily Morning Plenaries

These Thursday to Saturday big room presentations set the tone and framed my perspective for the day. Daily presentations were from Simon Sinek (Thursday); Megan McArdle, David McRaney and Clive Thompson (Friday) and Amy Cuddy (Saturday). Each speaker focused on various aspects of leadership philosophy, issues of new media technology, and the pressure on leaders to sustain themselves. Amy Cuddy’s lecture on the “Personal Power Pose” was intriguing.

Thursday, Friday and Saturday – Choices, Sessions, Conversations

It was a challenge to choose from the number of sessions, but I determined two themes of special interest:

Theme 1: Front-Line Service to the Disabled, Special Needs and Underserved

The presenters of Thursday’s “Providing Services to People with Alzheimer’s & Related Dementias” shared information about ASCLA – The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies. A division of ALA, ASCLA’s mission is to enhance and support library service provision for people with “special needs”. My fellow round table participants – all librarians – shared a variety of experiences of serving adults with dementia.

Friday’s late afternoon session “Serving the Underserved: Patrons with Special Needs in your Library” asked the questions: “Who are your non-users with disabilities?” and “How do you involve needs people in planning and consultations?” This relatively small group were passionate advocates for their users and eager sharers of resources and tales.

Douglas County (Colorado) Library staff presented Saturday on their successes with Sensory Enhanced Story time. They placed particular importance on the program’s holistic requirements. Staff at all levels must have awareness and understanding of the

program and the participants; partnerships and collaborations with community agencies are critical for successful implementation and outcomes.

Theme 2: Leadership, Leading Change, Outcome Measures

I attended Thursday's session on "Demonstrating Success through Outcome Measures and Community Scans" facilitated by staff from the Martin County (Fla.) Library System. The question to participants in this session was "What outcomes can we generate to show that our services are changing communities?" Bricks and mortar issues, community scans and community engagement, and non-profit organization examples of measuring outcomes were discussed at the roundtables.

The Friday session "Turning Outward to Lead Change in Your Community: Sustaining Yourself" was one of four presented by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. Participants were asked to consider "What Rejuvenates You?" Here participants reflected on what they do and were challenged to name three rejuvenative activities and three people who support us unconditionally.

Penny Talbert, Executive Director of the Ephrata (PA) Public Library led an inspiring session on staff competencies, capabilities and accountabilities. She covered several practical strategies for ensuring excellent staff performance and maintaining a pro-active and collaborative team-based public service staff. Check out her "Guerilla Librarian" blog for inspiration.

The Cornerstone – Readers' Advisory

I sat in on the "Top Five of the Top Five: Non-Fiction", with "subject experts" Rebecca Vnuk, Barry Trott, Kaite Stover, David Wright and Jessica Moyer. Each covered their chosen theme: Memoirs of the Non-Famous, Science & Nature, Pop Culture, Self-Help and Food & Home. Many good suggestions for the non-fiction reader.

Saturday with Sedaris

Saturday's closing plenary with David Sedaris was a perfect end to a vibrant conference. Brutally forthright and bitterly humorous, Sedaris read from his work, shared some bittersweet stories, and commented on the importance of libraries in his life. He was a wonderful conversation catalyst for attendees.

I returned from Indianapolis enthusiastic and eager to use the knowledge and insight I gained from PLA 2014. I thank OPLA for the opportunity to attend, and I encourage my colleagues to apply next time for PLA 2016 in Denver.

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Further Information of Interest:

Public Library Association Conference 2014 Sessions & Handouts

www.placonference.org/programs (@ALA_PLA)

Plenary Presenters

Simon Sinek: www.startwithwhy.com (@SimonSinek)

David McRaney: www.davidmcraney.com (@DavidMcRaney)

Clive Thompson: www.smarterthanyouthink.net/bio (@Pomeranian99)

Amy Cuddy: www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/profile.aspx?facId=491042 (@amyjccuddy)

Session Presenters

Penny Talbert, “Guerilla Librarian” www.pennytalbert.com (@VirtualEphrata)

The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation: www.theharwoodinstitute.org

(@HarwoodInst)

The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), a division of the American Library Association: www.ala.org/ascla (@ala_ascla)

Douglas County (Colorado) Sensory Enhanced Story time

www.douglascountylibraries.org/storytime/blog/announcement-sensory-enhanced-storytime (@DCLcolorado)

Indianapolis and the Public Library

Indianapolis Public Library, Central Branch: www.imcpl.org/locations/central

(@IndyCENLibrary)

Mike Williams, Area Resource Manager, Indianapolis Central Library (@Lectriclib)

Visit Indy: The Official Host of Indianapolis: www.visitindy.com (@VisitIndy)