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Issues and Trends in Librarianship

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Conference Impact

During the four day Alaska Library Association Conference in Sitka, I attended eleven instructional sessions. Each one showed me various aspects of library skills and different ways to approach and master them. Each were very interesting and valuable sessions to attend, but of the eleven I attended there were four that will have a great impact on the way I plan, work and instruct in the middle school/high school library I am employed.

One of the most informative sessions I attended was "Web Triage," presented by guest speaker, Gail Junion-Metz, columnist for School Library Journal magazine. She discussed the many uses of the Internet, even for the "tech-phobic," and showed several ways to implement its use into our work day, and how to efficiently manage the wealth of information found on the web. She also provided her course link page to reference when doing web research. I was very anxious to get home to apply her techniques to my workday duties, as well as to each patron computer.

The first thing I did when I arrived back at work was rearrange the format and layout of each patron computer screen. I used Gail's advice and enlarged the font, changed the color, and arranged the icons on the screen in a user friendly order. I was surprised at what a difference these steps made in the clarity of the computer screens. I tried to make each computer look similar, and it seems that making these changes helped students more comfortable moving from one computer to another.

Using Gail's tips on book marking and also incorporating the information I learned from the "Alaskana: Researching Alaska" session, with Kay Shelton and Tish Ore, I rearranged my bookmarks on the patron computers, as well as the front desk computer. I tried to mirror a reference desk as much as possible. I specially book marked and arranged web resources on Alaska Studies using the handout from their session, as well as other topics of research currently underway at our school. The handouts they gave out had a wealth of web resource information that will not only help in my assisting middle school and high school students, but also the University of Alaska distance students who regularly facilitate our library for research and study time.

Kay and Tish, during their "Alaskana" presentation, also supplied us with a list of published books and research materials that will help to build a strong Alaskana reference collection in the library. I have used this list, and plan to continue using it to evaluate our current collection on Alaska and I will refer to it often at order time. The two of them shared their strong background in both published book resources and very current and up-to-date web resources that will greatly improve our collection and its arrangement for students taking the Alaska Studies course.

Another session with Gail Junion-Metz helped me to feel confident our library is encouraging and implementing good Internet evaluation skills, while it also taught me a few things I had not considered. Domain name registries from around the world, she demonstrated, can make a big differences in the type of information you recieve from the net. Gail gave us a list to refer to when evaluating our sources and determining their biased or non-biased views on various issues. Country domain names for each country will be something I will be aware of now, and will share with other librarians and library patrons.

Another session that will have a great impact on my work was "Making Reading Incentives Work," with Sue Sherif as the presenter. At this session many ideas were

exchanged and many examples were given on ways to encourage recreational and academic reading. Now, as I plan and implement my second reading program for the middle school students, I will use their suggestions to: 1.) Plan the rules of each reading incentive program in advance and post for students and staff. 2.) Write and distribute the rules of each reading program. 3.) Develop sponsor lists and contacts, and 4.) Plan a yearly calendar of interesting, fun, educational programs each year. Sue's presentation helped to clarify the validity of reading programs and the various ways they can be implemented in school and public libraries.

Examples of reading programs that have been used throughout the state ranged from the traditional academic types to the outrageous and silly. Several people had used various forms of the travel around America, the world, and so forth, and they seem to be popular themes for students. The one I believe will be very popular for middle school students is the "Crazy Hair Day" reading program. I have already started to ask for volunteer teachers who would allow the winners of this reading program to fix their hair for a day. I plan on starting out next year with this program. The session showed us how varied and original ideas can enhance a library's reading program.

This library conference was a great opportunity to reap the benefits of other librarians' knowledge and skill and their willing to share their experience and expertise in managing and working in libraries today. The "Web Triage," "Web Evaluating," "Alaskana: Researching Alaska," and the session on reading incentives, as well as all the other sessions I attended will help to greatly improve and enhance the services I can help provide library patrons here in Wrangell.