

The View from the (not so) Ivory Tower

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Arizona Library Association Annual Conference: A First-Timer's Perspective

by Katherine Clemens, Guest Author, Arizona State University Libraries

The AzLA conference has a lot to offer academic librarians.

Last month I had the privilege of attending my first Arizona Library Association annual conference. As a new librarian working in the Science Reference department at Arizona State University Libraries, I was eager to attend the conference. I welcomed the opportunity to learn what other libraries are doing and to network with other librarians. I had been told that the conference was not well attended by academic librarians, due to the lack of programming in that area. Clearly, that was not the case this year. When I started planning which conference programs to attend months in advance, I found myself making tough decisions about which ones to sacrifice so that I could attend the others. I was delighted with how much the conference had to offer academic librarians.

The majority of the conference programs I attended were for the College and University Division, although a few were for the Reference, Public Services and Instruction Special Interest Group. There were also several programs in the Public Libraries and Teacher-Librarian Divisions that interested me. I tried to select the programs that would provide me with information that would be relevant and useful for my current position. Each of the programs I attended offered me an idea or some information that I could really use in my job. For those programs that I wanted to attend, but could not due to scheduling conflicts, I was able to get an overview from a friend who attended.

In addition to attending the conference programs, I really enjoyed the other features of the conference, such as the exhibits and poster sessions. Although I would have liked to attend the pre-conference sessions and the meals, they were a bit of a financial stretch for a new librarian. However, this was not necessarily a bad thing, as my meals turned out to be opportunities to socialize with old and new friends. I must say that one of the best things about the conference was meeting so many great people who are doing great things in their libraries.

As I reflect on my first AzLA conference, I am really glad that I was able to attend. I learned quite a bit that will help me in my job; and I came away with new ideas and different perspectives on academic library issues. I also met or reconnected with people I can possibly collaborate with on future projects.

I thought the programming for academic librarians was very appropriate, and I commend the College and University Libraries Division for working to ensure that appropriate programs were available. I am already looking forward to attending next year's conference in Mesa and am tossing around ideas for a conference program or poster.

In closing, I hope that all academic librarians, especially those who are new to the profession, will consider attending the AzLA conference in the future. It offers a chance to meet people who share a passion for libraries, and it presents plentiful opportunities to learn and contribute.