

ALA Annual 2012 Anaheim, CA June 22-25

Notes from Patty Myers

It was my last ALA as the Wyoming Chapter Councilor, which is sort of a shame because I have finally figured out the sheer enormity and process that is the governing body of the national library organization. It has been a great joy for me to serve WY Library Association as the representative, and it has been entertaining and a learning adventure for me to share national and international issues with WY librarians during my three years in office. I know Carey Hartmann will be an outstanding successor, and I'll bet she enjoys ALA as much as I have.

Unlike the continuous attendance at programs and events that are like Christmas gifts for the heart, the Chapter Councilors are 53 of the 186 member council, much like state senators in Congress. And like them there is a continuous series of meetings to discuss policy and objectives for ALA. There is a voting process that includes our roll-call so anyone can track a councilor's presence or absence. Being the nosey-parker that I am, I don't think I missed much in my three years. And the breaks between meetings gave me opportunity to visit the vendor show and listen to author presentations.

Friday evening, June 22, opening session, journalist and Internet policy specialist Rebecca MacKinnon reminded us that we need to continue to be the guardians of information and civil liberties rights. Author of *Consent of the Networked* emphasized our role in protection of individual rights on the internet. Whether it used to overthrow governments or to imprison the innocent for speaking their minds, the power of the internet is here to stay. Her final thoughts: Are we returning to print to protect ourselves? Maybe. For security, remove all batteries.

I think this year was the strongest cooperative effort that I have seen between presidents: Molly Raphael and in-coming Maureen Sullivan. Or maybe I have finally become acquainted enough with the personalities to be interested in the connections. Sullivan is from the Mountain Plains Library Association. What I have seen is the serious, continuing theme of transitions and the concentration on fulfilling the strategic plans for ALA that really do affect Wyoming libraries. Molly Raphael reviewed her year as president at the opening session.

Saturday morning, June 23, began at 8:00 a.m., with an Orientation for Councilors to introduce the newbies and to remind the returning members of our responsibilities. Through the morning I attended "Putting Laughter in Literacy," geared to graphics in youth literature; then attended some poster sessions (about 100 of them this year); and finally "Mystery Chicks" on the vendors stage where I listened to two writers new to me. At 1:30 I attended a LLAMA program "Leading at all Levels" which was okay, but not as great as I usually find the Leadership and Management trainings.

Saturday afternoon ALA Council Membership Information began at 3:00 ran to 5:00 and continued through a 5:00 to 6:00 membership meeting. This was a new schedule built to increase participation by members, and it worked. The quorum was met; the financial reports were discussed, and committee reports were made.

The Saturday finale was an exuberant two hour concert by the Rock Bottom Remainders:

<http://www.csmonitor.com/Books/chapter-and-verse/2012/0619/Author-band-the-Rock-Bottom-Remainders-calls-it-quits>

Sunday morning Council 1 began at 9:00 followed by the ALA-APA meeting. The APA is the certification nonprofit attached to ALA which requires a separate meeting. Council members spent time reviewing the effectiveness of Council based on a member survey taken on-line last month. The increasing effort to meet member needs and to judge ourselves for effectiveness can be contentious. But the face to face discussion led to numerous valid suggestions that I believe will be explored and will improve meetings. As much as I admire our young librarians, I was surprised at their vehemence that we are not doing enough or moving fast enough into the digital age. Hmmm.

A Resolution on Voter Suppression in America was passed, supporting our right to vote and opposing laws which restrict voting privileges. Fifteen states currently have laws that affect the aged, students, and people of color, and five more are under consideration. The two Intellectual Freedom awards presented last year to commend wikileaks and in support of whistle blower Bradley Manning were again overwhelmingly rejected by the council. A Resolution that School Libraries and Librarians are Critical to Educational Success was approved with considerable corrections to a document that was way too long. It's hard to write the perfect "whereas" clauses when there is so much to say. The final document can be used nationwide in support of school libraries.

The Roadmap for Change group is reviewing annual conference procedure, facing square on the declining numbers for conference attendance, the possibility of cutting some of the 300 programs which would tentatively cut rental space cost. Joint programs and other avenues of change were a serious part of this year's conference discussion.

Sunday afternoon was the PLA President's program with Sherman Alexie, author of 22 books, a bare knuckle fighter, a poet, and a sometimes comedian. It was the comedic Alexie who talked to the librarians using sarcasm and satire to describe his childhood and writing. PLA presented their awards at this event.

This was followed by the ALA President's Program, awards presentation and reception for award winners and incoming officers. The very first Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence for Fiction and Nonfiction were presented: ***The Forgotten Waltz***, by Anne Enright, published by W. W. Norton & Company and ***Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman***, by Robert K. Massie, published by Random House, an imprint of the Random House Publishing Group. <http://www.pio.ala.org/visibility/?paged=2>

The program was a conversation with Jodi Piccolt and her daughter Samantha Van Leer who collaborated on *Between the Lines*. It was a charming, funny program, and I was quite taken with the whole concept, until I read a review on Chris Colfer, the young actor from "Glee," who was also at conference with his book, which sounds like it has a similar premise. Another hmmm.

Monday , ALA Council II was all morning with reports from the Treasurer. The Neal Schuman purchase has gone smoothly, and it looks financially stable according to the treasurer. I see it as a strong asset for ALA, so I hope the success continues. A variety of committees and the ALA Policy Manual review were reported. There had been a two year review of the manual which resulted in updates, not policy changes, but removal of repetitious and confusing language. That's like a miracle to policy manual writers everywhere!

<http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual/updatedpolicymanual/tableofcontents#section>

1

I peeked into several meeting rooms to see the format for Conversation Starters, some were panel discussions, some were round tables, but they all included audience sharing and feedback. ALA is promoting Conversation Starters, Ignite, and Poster Sessions to involve more participation, and I think it is working particularly well with new librarians who are enthusiastically sharing. I did see one wretched - session: Style & Stereotypes, perceptions of librarians which should have been fun because the panel had significant master degree power representation for anthropology, cultural studies, librarianship, and corporate organization. Sadly it was not.

By 3:00 the Exhibit area was closed. I attended a Chapter Councilor forum at 4:00. As the WY Councilor I was interested in the shared concerns for increasing ALA membership, our role in developing state skills, the reminder to become committee members, a literary landmark program, a recommended speakers list, school resolution support.

That evening I attended the 8:30 to 10:00 Council forum which spent a lot of time discussing a possible increase in dues, the exploration of which has barely begun so I expect will take another three years before it is a real issue for membership. Again it is part of the fear factor of losing numbers.

ALA has taken on a hugely significant fund raising effort: Legacy -- \$15 million by 2015.

Tuesday's last meeting, Council III was scheduled for 7:45am to 9:15 am. This too is new scheduling, I think to allow cross country travelers to get home. I love this session because of the lovely memorials and appreciations created by ALA. Russell Shank, ALA president 1978-79, made a weekend appearance, but was hospitalized Tuesday, and died the week after. ALA has a true appreciation of its mentors and history. The Intellectual Freedom Committee reminded members that 2013 is the 30th Anniversary of Banned Books Week, and it plans a virtual State Salute. A resolution on Homelessness and Libraries was declined, probably because of a clause declaring the request for addresses was unacceptable. The argument is free services is free to all, even if it means losing books. I expect this issue to be revisited.

Anaheim 2012 attendance stands at 16,700 compared to New Orleans 25,754 and Washington DC 20,060. ALA press release: <http://www.ala.org/news/pr?id=10915>