

Where People and Cultures Meet : AKLA Conference 2001, Sitka, AK

Introduction

Without a doubt, the best learning experiences at the 41st AKLA Conference in Sitka were the opportunities to reconnect with “old” and make connections with “new” colleagues across the state. I attended my first AKLA conference in 1985, my first year as a school librarian and also my first year in Alaska. There I met Lois Peterson, the current School Library Coordinator for the Alaska State Library, and we have been friends and conference roommates since. Anticipation for this annual event helps me endure the winter with a “working vacation” on the horizon and finish up the school year with renewed energy towards my professional goals. Even the rain in Sitka couldn’t dampen my enthusiasm as I went back to work at Lake Hood Elementary’s library.

Summary of Conference Sessions Attended

Gail Junion-Metz wins the “Conference Click Chick” award for two of her sessions that I attended. Thank goodness she has a well organized web site to search (<http://www.iage.com>) so I didn’t have to write down and remember everything she said!

Web Triage was an all day pre-conference session focusing on utilizing Windows and Internet browsers to streamline work routines at the reference desk and user workstations.

Ideas for Implementation of New Ideas & Information

Implementation

Make your computer "work smarter" and think "user-friendly" were two phrases that would apply to nearly all of the ideas presented by Gail Junion-Metz during her full-day Web Triage presentation. The following lists of ideas will help you streamline your use of Internet resources.

Ongoing...

Efficient Use of Windows and Browsers (Netscape or Internet Explorer)

Added Google and KidsClick to library computer toolbars immediately!

- *Start the day by opening multiple browsers and a word processing program;

- *Save toner by using copy/paste from Internet into word processing and TEACH this skill to patrons;

- *Utilize the Windows quick-launch toolbar for frequently used applications to avoid having to minimize application currently in use to launch new program;

Efficient Searching Ideas

*Use the "Find on page" feature of your browser to refine search results ("Using this feature will Rock Your World!," says Junion-Metz);

*Use a field search in Alta vista to target images or words in the title. (Alta Vista field search examples, but don't type the quotes: A search for "image:snow leopard" will retrieve pictures of snow leopards, "title:Women's History" will retrieve web page titles that contain Women's History.)

*Use the "What's Related" button on browsers to find other relevant sites;

*View current search engine comparison chart at www.infopeople.org/search/chrt.html.

Copied page for staff members.

Recommended "Best-On-The-Planet" Reading About Searching

*Glossbrenner. Search Engines for the World Wide Web. 2nd ed.

*Hock. Extreme Searchers Guide to Web Search Engines.

Visit Gail Junion-Metz on the web at <http://www.iage.com>.

Evaluating Web Sites, as the name implies, focused on the necessity of finding and using the best information available on the Internet and characteristics of the best sites.

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My notes from this session shout, "SPEND SOME TIME @ HIGHLY EVALUATED WEB SITES!!! Starting points include Kathy Shrock, Berits Best Sites, Librarian's Index to the Internet, and KidsClick.org.

At our first staff meeting after the conference I presented Junion-Metz recommendations Google and KidsClick as "Best on the Planet" searching starting points.

The **AkASL Business Meeting** covered the usual business of the organization: minutes, executive board transitions, committee reports but the best part was the information presented by Teresa Paulsen on how to create PDF files. She has created and posted PDF files for the Battle of the Books Handbook and grade level book lists, a much appreciated effort by Battle of the Books participants.

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I knew that our school had previously purchased software for creating PDF files and I knew where the software was located, still in its shrink-wrapped package. It occurred to me that the use

During March, Women's History Month, I designed a lesson for 4th grade students, created a .pdf version of this lesson file and emailed it as

of this software would make sharing lesson plans and worksheets with other librarians a snap. an attachment to all the elementary librarians in ASD.

Lynn Hallquist presented **Books Around the World : Library Service Projects** in her usual professional and inspirational manner, describing a recent trip to South Africa. Poverty or near-poverty conditions in the villages she visited made library services at all seem like a nearly unimaginable and unattainable goal. I did admire and agree with the overall goal of the sponsoring agency to provide materials published in Africa, rather than importing of American made materials.

In **Retelling Folktales : From Word of Mouth to Words on the Page and Back Again**, Judy Sierra revealed the fascinating results of searching for folktale variants and checking the authenticity of cultural details when retelling/rewriting folk literature into stories. Why does she do this? So the tales will be read and enjoyed, of course! Often folktales may not be complete, may ramble, may not make sense to a modern reader so editing is needed. Tasty Baby Bellybuttons was shared to the audience, beginning with details of the research to presentation of the final product.

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I will, I will, I will stop feeling guilty about buying so many different folktales for LH and continue/expand teaching opportunities that introduce readers to the interesting genre of folk literature!

Develop and distribute bookmarks or some user-friendly bibliography of different types of folktales; regional, topical, traditional, etc.

Switching Channels : Same Career, Different Path was presented by Susannah Price, a professional with quality, if basic, career information to share.

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Straight from Susannah's notes - she recommended reading The Plateauing Trap by Judith Bardwick. This books recommends that workers can "take control" and "take action" in their careers by growing where they are, doubling professional contacts, writing or speaking for the profession, seeking new training, or transferring.

I have decided to focus on adding professional contacts and seeking new training in the parallel field of technology. I recently attended an informational seminar presented by Apple Computer and the annual ASTE conference in Anchorage and feel a welcome rejuvenation for technology in the school and library.

Tour of Historic Print Shop

Walking down the trail in head-to-toe gortex, carrying an umbrella through an old growth forest to an peaceful print shop - ahh, that was a Sitka experience. The printmaking and bookbinding done at this print shop were of art quality - I wanted to run away with a box of the reject pages!! Archivist Artemis BonaDea also attended this tour - I promise I will take a bookbinding class from her at the next presented opportunity!

Vision of Future Implementation Plans

Consider a meeting with the usual outcome of a lengthy “to-do” list. Now consider the conference as an extended meeting and the length of the “to-do” list increases exponentially. Mine now includes:

1. Increase professional contacts state wide in the role of AkASL Battle of the Books Grade Level Coordinator for the 5/6 grade book list;
2. Stamp out Web-Search-Time-Warp by spending more time online learning about and studying whoop-de-do educational and kid safe web sites;
3. Make my own web site into a whoop-de-do web site that points library patrons quickly to the best sites and most useful sites I know about;
4. Change all the library computers to reflect my new knowledge of how a user-friendly workstations should look and operate;
5. Developing new online reference routines and teach some of these routines to Lake Hood staff and students;
6. Promote reading of folk literature as a socially acceptable habit; and
7. Make plans to attend AKLA Conference, 2002.