

## **ILA 2017 Conference Summary**

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Rise Up! – The 2017 Illinois Library Association Annual Conference, was held from October 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> in Tinley Park, IL. Here is the key information from ILA 2017 the Board should know:

### **Highlights**

- No doubt seeing our own Debbie Hoffman receive the Readers' Advisory Service Award at the Awards Luncheon was the highlight of the entire conference. Debbie is so amazing at her job and it was gratifying to see her recognized at the state level.
- I teamed with Eddie Kristan to present "Every Person That Works in a Library is a Librarian (Yes, Even Security Staff!): How to Establish a Culture of Service and Excellence within Your Library". Eddie was phenomenal as a presenter and the presentation received excellent evaluations.
- One of the best things about attending a professional conference is the networking opportunities. From spending a lot of time in the exhibits hall to afterhours networking events and everything in between, I was able to spend a lot of quality time talking with fellow library leaders and library vendors to discuss current trends in libraries, library issues, new products and services, and so much more.

### **Programs that stood out**

- **Strategic Planning That Doesn't (Time) Suck:** The program description indicated that attendees would "learn a new way of strategic planning that is responsive and usable in a time on constant change in our libraries and communities." Essentially, this program was all about simplifying the strategic planning process and I got a lot out of it that I want to apply to our next strategic planning process. Major takeaway: One-page plans aren't only okay, they are better than the traditional multiple page plans that people tend to forget about and file away after they are adopted. Less is more. Make the plan more transparent and more inclusive.
- **Let's Do Lunch! Serving Summer Meals at Your Library:** I was interested in this program because the Gurnee Park District and District 56 collaborated to start a Tuesday/Thursday free lunch program last summer, and I think it is worth considering if this is something we should do at WNPL. Hunger is a real issue for a lot of children in our library district, and it is hard to prevent summer slide when children miss meals. Behavior, cognition, and well-being are all affected when children miss meals. The program focused on public libraries that had partnered with both local food banks and the Illinois State Board of Education to offer free summer lunches. Major takeaway:

There are a lot of options for how public libraries can participate in this program to offer free lunches, and a library can offer a program on any scale (e.g., one day a week or five days a week, feed 10 kids or feed 50 kids, etc.)

- Podcasting for the Beginner: This program was presented by the team that does the “Shelf Understanding” podcast for the Bloomington Public Library. I attended this program mainly because I thought I could learn some things that might help us grow the our “More Than Just Books” podcast. It was an excellent program and I shared with Latoya, the producer of our podcast, what I learned to improve our podcast. Major takeaway: Focus less on what is happening in the library and more on what is happening in the community.

### **Library trends/issues**

- Serving the diverse populations in our community: Not only were there a lot of sessions that covered this topic or some subset of this topic, but it was a topic of discussion that came up with colleagues at other libraries. Major takeaway: leverage community partnerships to extend reach and target specific diverse groups in the community.
- Dealing with patron incidents: We have noticed an uptick in incidents involving patrons violating our Standards of Public Conduct Policy. This is not unique to WNPL and is happening everywhere. Major takeaway: more libraries are paying attention to those libraries that have added social workers to their staff to gauge the effectiveness of social workers in libraries.
- Fine free libraries: More and more libraries are moving away from assessing overdue fines for materials. There are several nice aspects to eliminating overdue fines, including improved customer service, fewer patron conflicts with staff at the circulation desk, and reducing barriers to library use for low-income households. Major takeaway: despite our tight budget, I want to do more to inform the Board about this trend and at least keep it in mind as a future possibility for WNPL.