

## ACRL 2013 Conference: "Imagine, Innovate, Inspire."

I had the wonderful opportunity to attend the biannual Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) conference in Indianapolis in April this year. This conference opportunity was made possible in part by the professional development grant awarded by the Nebraska Library Association's C & U section. The ACRL conference offered a career-affirming introduction to the vibrant community of higher education information professionals in the United States and around the world and was an invaluable experience for a new librarian and recent MLIS graduate.

The highlight of the ACRL conference for me was attending the THATCamp sessions on Friday. THATCamp, The Humanities and Technology Camp, is an all-day camp of open meetings where information technologists, librarians, and students meet together to combine their knowledge and skills. 2013 is the first year that THATCamp was a part of the ACRL conference. This camp stands out from every other offering at the conference because of its interactive activities that challenge participants to work together and create digital humanities' projects within each session. Before the first meeting starts, the entire room of participants collaborate by determining the daily agenda, from deciding which topics to cover to assigning an appropriately skilled group of people to work together, to finding a moderator for each concurrent session. What each session will cover is determined spontaneously and collaboratively by whoever decides to join the camp. New to the concept of digital humanities (DH), I chose to attend two sessions on DH 101. By the end of the second session I had not only contributed to the creation of a group wiki, but learned about the Annual Digital Humanities conference held at UNL this summer which I hope to attend. I also made plans to implement a discussion on DH between the library and the instructional technology committee.

Before I attended ACRL, I hoped that one of the major benefits of participating in this conference would be discovering my best fit within the academic library. What I discovered instead is that there is no need to fit into a narrow definition or restrictions of one position or even to limit myself to one role or location of the library. More importantly I realized it is not a limitation to be interested in multiple areas of the library, nor does it diminish one role to dabble in another. Keith Gilbertson's presentation "Mutant Superheroes, Contained Chaos, and Smelly Pets: Library Innovation through Imaginary Anarchy" dared attendees to imagine their dream job and present it to their boss. The first DH 101 session moderator challenged attendees to discover ways to re-arrange staff duties so that every employee is spending more time on activities that emphasize their strengths.

Four days of roundtables, panels, interactive sessions, and keynotes has provided me with a wealth of information to apply to my job as an academic librarian. I look forward to attending the next ACRL conference in Portland in 2015. I am thankful for the financial award of this grant and the opportunity to share my experience with others through the NLA C & U section website.