

ARSL Annual Conference - September, 2017
Dixie Convention Center - St. George, Utah
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I am so thrilled and thankful to have received one of the six scholarships offered by WVLS this year. Attending the ARSL national conference in Utah has been one of the highlights of year. I was very excited to attend a national conference to learn about the struggles and successes of other libraries that face the same challenges as our small rural libraries here in Central Wisconsin. A bonus – the beautiful setting of St. George, Utah. In my “past life” as a teacher, I have attended conferences with a similar format: Key note speakers, exhibitors, and breakout sessions. The difference that I found with this conference, is that many of us faced the same challenges and obstacles. It seemed that we had more common threads and thus, more ways to connect with each other. I met some great people, had some wonderful conversations and took away a plethora of information that I will be able to adapt and implement at my library.

I attended some great breakout sessions, including the following:

“Voices for Young Authors: Empowering Children through Libraries”

This session really connected with me. Though, this librarian had collaborated with an art center, which we do not have, I feel that I can use many of the ideas to collaborate more with our local schools. I have two 4k classes that come in monthly for check out. I have been looking for ideas to use the resources from our library to connect with this class and teacher. I have another reading teacher that I know would be open to more collaboration with the local elementary school. I’ve listed ideas that I believe will work well with local classes.

- Read themed story and then students work on related writing activity.
- Students create their own book – paper bag books.
- Make a simple snack and then have students list ingredients and draw pictures of the steps.
- Photoplay – Students take pictures with disposable cameras and then create their own photo albums.

This librarian incorporated state Common Core Standards in her planning which I feel is very important. These were 4-6 week sessions, but I feel that I can adapt these activities to boost our community involvement.

“Bursting at the Seams: Extraordinary Service in Limited Space”

Small, rural libraries typically suffer from a lack of space. This session gave some great tips and tricks to utilize the space that is available. They discussed the importance of connecting with the community. “Progress is built on relationships.”

- Declutter – get rid of things that haven’t been used in years.
- Lighten the room to make it look bigger.
- Carts – Store things on carts that can be moved around to different spaces and then stored, if possible.
- Remove Obstacles – Remove curtains, overhangs, vegetation, shelves, etc.
- Go to “them” – Service groups that can’t come to you.
- Weekly crafts/activities/STEM challenges – Keep these in small totes that can be easily stored.
- Go to the schools to do programs.
- Interactive bulletin boards

“Book, Line & Sinker”

This guy really knows how to promote books! He was a lot of fun to listen to and had a tremendous amount of ideas. Some of my favorite ideas were:

- “Gold Nuggets” – If you like... (This book), you’ll Love this!
- “Get Caught Reading” – take pictures of staff reading their favorite books in silly situations.
- Share staff recommendations on Facebook.
- Place book reviews of new authors throughout the library.
- Hold book challenges and then have a special event for them.
- Promoted *Chase’s Calendar of Events* and *Holidayinsights.com* for event/activity ideas.

“Destination: Your Library”

It is important to keep our libraries relevant in a digital world. These ladies gave a wide array of ideas to showcase things that can be done at the library, to keep people coming. There were some ideas that we do, but many more that I have never thought of and would still be “doable” at a small library. Some of those ideas include:

- Interactive bulletin boards
- Learning/activity stations – writing, knitting, board games, interactive activities, creation Station, etc.
- Flip chart/chalk board (patron interaction) – ex. “What’s the last time you couldn’t finish a book before the due date?”
- Build a City – Jar with ideas and then all kinds of materials for them to create
- Light Table – interactive toys
- Utilize community members as story time guests.
- Read with a Therapy Dog – we do this!
- “Tuesday with Tweens” – special activities geared for tweens
- What else can we “check out?” – Fitness kits, Arts & Crafts kits, Book bundles
- Survey adults as to what they would like to “see” at the library.

“Technology for Seniors”

This session focused on different ways that a small rural library can get technology into the hands of seniors. I came away with many ideas (a bit overwhelmed) of what is out there and how it can be made available.

SCOPE Technology - Senior Citizen Outreach Program & Education

A place for seniors to get their technology questions answered and hands-on training in a comfortable atmosphere, while connecting with other seniors.

5 Major Barriers Seniors Face with Technology

- Lack of Home Access to Internet – only 50% of people 60-69 have access to internet.
- Inappropriate Design – Tech products are designed for young buyers.
- Inadequate Marketing – Generally market “gimmicky” elements that don’t appeal to seniors.
- Low Awareness of what Technology can Offer – They feel digital technology has no relevance for them.
- Anxiety/Fear – Cost, Security and “I might break something.”

Benefits of SCOPE Technology

- Maintain contact with family, friends and a wider group of individuals
- Gain access to information about activities and services that meet their interests and needs
- Learn
- Engage in paid work and volunteering
- Participate in debates and have their say on issues
- Find the best prices for products and services.

4 types of Classes

- iPad and Smartphone training
- Technology “Petting Zoo” – “Open House concept on how to work different devices (grant).
- Basic Computer Classes – Monthly 90 minute classes
- Smart Home training – Benefits of a “Smart” device for seniors

There were wonderful, inspiring keynote speakers as well. Probably the highlight of the conference was getting the chance to meet and speak with Richard Paul Evans. His story really “touched” me and gave me a sense of peace. I’ve mentioned my favorite keynote speakers and the inspiration they left me with below:

Keynote Speakers

Jill Nystul – Blogger – “One Good Life”, recovering alcoholic

- “Find Your Passion.”
- “Always be employed but never have to work.”
- “Your life story influences your work...not the other way around.”
- *20 Creative Exercises for Finding Purpose & Passion in Life*
- *Jilly Bean & the One Good Thing* – Awesome children’s book focusing on service

Richard Paul Evans – NY Times Best Selling author, suffers from Tourette syndrome

- “Every Revolution started with a book.” Because of this, “books are scary.”
- Juvenile fiction character “Michael Vey” gives children strength and hope.
- An important thing about being a writer, “to put thoughts in people’s minds.
- Emphasizes to people that no matter what, “There was a reason you were born.” **AND**
- Do not give away your power to anyone else. **AND**
- Every challenge is a gift. **AND**
- Take chances.

Brandon Mull – Best Selling juvenile fiction author and comedian (among other things), ADHD

- Why do I write fantasy stories? “I’m a dude!”
- He loves day dreaming – it’s a coping mechanism.
- He wants to leave behind a “bunch of worlds.”
- I want people to react to my writing.
- Sometimes my mind is confusing.
- A book is a mirror (to seeing ourselves).
- Writing is very public, and private.

