

## WVLS Post-Conference Report

*Erica Brewster  
Demmer Memorial Library*

1. *Please highlight three sessions from the conference. What were the session topics? Who presented them? What made these presentations effective and meaningful to you?*

### **A. Stork Story Time, Jennifer Jordebrek, North Liberty, Iowa**

A fully packaged program that promotes daily routines while families are still expecting. The toolkit materials make it possible for any library to rebrand the program and an online portal provides a resource for accessing information and podcasts, etc. The presentation described the types of partnerships the library pursued to identify expecting parents in the community. The toolkit program is an entirely out-of-library information delivery program, but there are in-library programming ideas as well.

For the Demmer: Unlike North Liberty, Iowa, we do NOT have a blossoming population of expecting parents. However, it is even more important that we help engage the young families we do have. Most young parents are still new to the idea that reading to an unborn child can be as important as reading to a child before kindergarten. The 100 books before birth approach could be used with families already active in the Demmer Library. Something we do have in our population is a large number of new grandparents. The in-library classes (infant CPR, etc.) could be a good expansion on the program to provide early literacy and engagement for grandparents who haven't been around an infant in a long time.

### **B. The Smart Spaces Process: co-create and transform with your community, Betha Gutsche**

Session introduced the principles of design thinking and how it is used with libraries to engage communities in describing what programs/facilities they want to see in their communities or library.

For the Demmer: The library may have just completed a building project, but the community of Three Lakes is reeling from a winter where two anchor businesses were lost to fire in one month, one alone representing 13% of the entire sanitary district's income – right after the sanitary district completed a multi-million dollar upgrade project.

Our community is struggling with some big questions about the viability of the downtown area and how best to approaching rebuilding and redesigning. I am part of a UW-Extension program that is working on a community engagement process. This session had some very specific ideas and techniques for using and interpreting results from design thinking activities done in the library which are now immediately applicable to our process. Simultaneously, our library board is taking on strategic planning and we are planning to incorporate activities in our process.

### **C. From Paper Airplanes to Critical Thinking**

Not all STEM and coding learning requires a computer or even electricity. Session used basic, offline, non tech-based techniques to demonstrate the essentials of the language of coding:

algorithm, decomposition, pattern recognition, abstraction, etc. Folding a paper airplane is following an algorithm – writing an algorithm to perform a basic real-world task is basic coding.

For the Demmer: we partner with the school FAB LAB and volunteers from the Model Railroad Club to present an annual “Make It! Camp” to 12 – 18 year-olds. This session had applicable techniques, tools, and resources for the camp curricula, plus for other activities done without the high-tech resources of the FAB LAB.

2. *Please highlight a conference experience, other than attending a conference session. Did you talk to someone you didn't know at a session? Sit next to someone at a luncheon and have a meaningful conversation? Visit with an exhibitor? How did **this** experience affect your overall outlook of the conference?*

I specifically focused on time with other WVLS and Wisconsin librarians/staff to talk about how they are dealing with challenges small and rural libraries face specifically in our part of the world – and what resources they found from sessions or exhibitors that they thought interesting or useful. It is extremely useful for me to have a better understanding of how other libraries are addressing real issues and creative ideas that others are using.

I also enjoyed spending time exploring Burlington and seeing the lifestyle amenities in a community that (other than mountains) that resembles northern Wisconsin. One of the biggest threats to small, rural communities is the aging population and attrition of young people. Burlington resembled a “Madison, WI of the north” and it was interesting to see what sorts of infrastructure and social/recreational services were being used by the more age-and-culturally diverse population while still retaining a small-town feel.

3. *As a result of attending this conference, what three things do you plan on implementing at your library in the next six months?*

- Incorporating specific “design thinking” approaches to several initiatives: our library’s own strategic planning initiative, strategic planning at Antigo Public Library and into a “kit” being developed in a pilot project with WVLS, and a Design Wisconsin initiative being implemented in Three Lakes in partnership with UW-Extension throughout 2019 and 2020.
- Adding “off-line” coding activities to the 2020 Make It! Camp curriculum.
- Engage recently retired elementary and literacy teachers in implementing the Stork Storytime early literacy initiative and engaging grandparents in promoting early child literacy. May seek to collaborate with all libraries in Oneida County.
- Bonus item: as the WVLS training coordinator was reviewing presenters to invite for upcoming webinars, I’m now familiar with some topics and speakers and will be more likely to encourage my staff to participate in online training opportunities.

4. *What kind of support is needed for you to implement these three things? Support from your staff? Your Board of Trustees? Assistance from WVLS?*

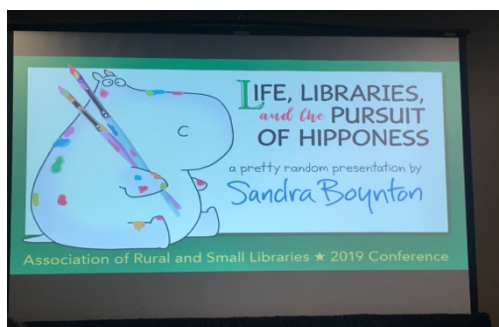
- Cooperation from our strategic planning workgroup (including library board), facilitator, and staff to add and implement select design thinking activities and interpretation to the overall strategic planning process.
- Training on “unplugged” coding activities for staff and volunteers implementing the Make It! Camp.
- Cooperation from local hospitals and county health department in identifying pregnant women for Stork Storytime program and collaboration with other Oneida County libraries (Rhinelander, Minocqua).

5. *How might your conference experience have been improved to be more beneficial/impactful to you?*

Overall, this is one of the better conference experiences I have had in my professional career. It was generally well-organized, the ARSL conference app was very useful for quick references and updates to the daily program, and we received plenty of support from Jamie Matczak at WVLS to make sure we were able to make the most of our conference experience. The sessions were relevant to work in a small, rural public library, and presentation quality was mostly good – or it was easy to leave a session and find a more useful session to attend.

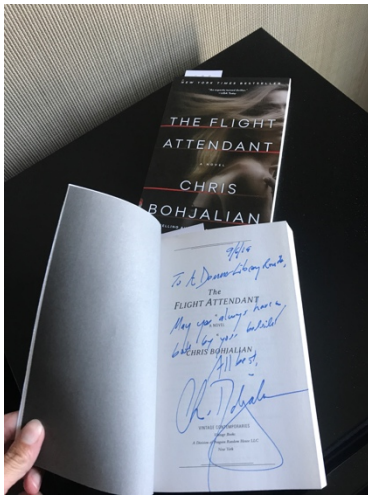
If the topic conference pre-session had been more relevant to my daily work, I may have chosen to attend the additional day-long session. As it was, however, I feel I got as much as I could as a first-time attendee. I thank WVLS for this opportunity and how it will impact library services at the Demmer Memorial Library in the near future

### Pictures

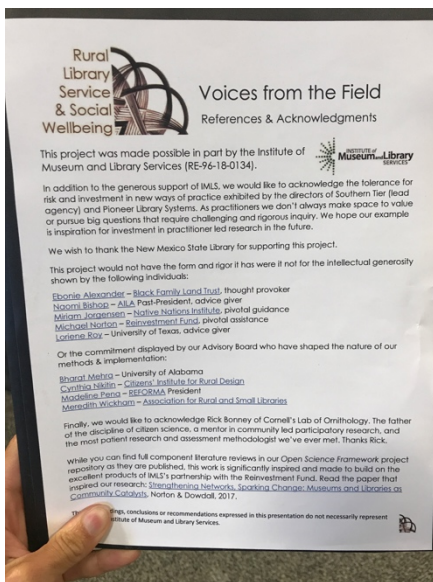


*Sandra Boynton keynote  
and book signing*





Chris Bohjalian keynote  
and book signing



Current IMLS study on  
impact of rural libraries  
as "anchor institutions."  
Includes Plum Lake  
Library in Sayner, Wis.



*"E" is for Erica and an Engaged library*



*Fun directional signs in children's area at the Fletcher Free Library in Burlington, Vermont*



*Beyond maple syrup - Vermont cans sap!  
Why didn't we think of that?*



*A bikeable city - amenities of a northern city.*