

RBMS Conference Development Committee

ALA Annual Meeting (Chicago) * Sunday 12 July 2009

8:00 am – 10:00 am * Palmer House, Monroe Ballroom

Members Present: Elizabeth Johnson (chair), John Cullars, Mark Dimunation, Erika Dowell, Jane Gillis, Mary Lacy, Arvid Nelsen, E.C. Schroeder, Daniel Slive

Members Absent: Susan Allen, Kelley Wolfe Bachli, Heather Cole, Christian Dupont, Kris Kiesling, Jeffrey Makala, Alice Schreyer, Steven Smith, Victoria Steele

Others Present: Martha Conway (recording), Danielle Culpepper, Jackie Dooley, Maggie Gallup Kopp, Ruth Hughes, Deborah Leslie, Tory Ondrla, John Overholt, Nora Quinlan, Nina Schneider, Elaine Smyth

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Johnson welcomed the group and we introduced ourselves.

2. Selection of Recorder

Conway volunteered to serve as recorder.

3. Approval of Agenda

We approved the agenda.

4. Approval of Minutes: 2009 Midwinter Meeting

The minutes of the 2009 Midwinter meeting were approved.

5. Preconference 2009 (Charlottesville VA)

Nelsen reported on the following about our 50th annual preconference, which took place June 17 through June 20 in Charlottesville:

The preconference program featured 5 plenary sessions providing an audience for 11 speakers. One scheduled speaker (of a panel of three) was a no-show. The program also featured 9 short paper presentations, 9 seminars, 5 open discussion sessions, and resolutions in honor of Marjorie Wynne and Terry Belanger. Preconference participants received a keepsake publication documenting (in considerable detail) the 50-year history of the RBMS preconference. Attendance was the largest of any preconference and included a number of first-timers as well as many who had not been to a preconference in years. Photographs and audio recordings from the preconference will be made available in a few weeks, the manner to be determined. We discussed formally thanking ACRL with a resolution for their generous, last-minute support for the publication of the keepsake. Nelsen and Johnson will draft the resolution to take to RBMS Exec on Monday. Distribution of the remaining 100 or so keepsakes was also discussed. We agreed that we should provide institutional copies to Alice Prochaska (for the Yale University Library), Frank Turner (for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library), and the Library of Congress. We should also make sure that two copies are deposited in the RBMS archive.

Ondrla shared highlights from the preconference evaluations. 62% of the preconference participants completed an evaluation. Overall the evaluations were very positive; 94% of the respondents indicated that they would attend another preconference. Additionally:

- Nearly 70% of respondents are special collections librarians, with almost 60% working as administrators, curators, or in reference/public services/outreach.
- 29.9% of the respondents have been in the profession for 1-5 years; 28.6% for 20+ years.
- 28% of respondents were attending their first RBMS preconference.
- The 50th anniversary was a big draw for respondents, with over 50% marking it as one of their top two attendance factors.
- The Booksellers' Showcase was considered an important part of conference with over 70% agreeing that it contributed positively to the preconference. Attendees were concerned about mixing food/beverage with the Showcase.
- Remarks about the plenary sessions included wanting more time for questions and answers and perhaps limiting the number of plenaries.
- Several respondents requested more virtual content for the preconference due to budget constraints.
- Nearly 50% expressed no preference for timing the RBMS Preconference with ALA Annual. Of those with a preference 67% would like it held a few days before Annual. Some commented that Charlottesville was a small and difficult location to get to.
- A focus on technology was mentioned several times in comments regarding possible future themes, along with collaboration and outreach.

We discussed making the RBMS preconference available as a Virtual Conference. ACRL uses virtual conference technology to provide access to the national conference content in order to enhance and extend the conference experience for those attending and to provide an important professional development opportunity to those who are unable to travel to the conference site. In the ACRL virtual conference model, access to the online content is free (for a specified period of time) to attendees and available for a fee to non-attendees.

6. Future Preconferences

2010: Philadelphia PA (ALA in Washington DC)

Overholt and Hughes reported on the 51st annual preconference, which will take place June 22 through June 25 in Philadelphia:

The theme of the preconference is “Join or Die: Collaboration in Special Collections.” The preconference hotel is the Broad Street Doubletree. Dormitory housing will be at Drexel University, a very convenient subway ride from the Doubletree. Private single rooms opening into a 2-person common area will be available for \$50 per night.

In an effort to provide more opportunities for discussion and interaction, the preconference program will feature only 3 plenary sessions. We noted the distinction between a “keynote” address (which does not include an opportunity for questions) and a “plenary” (which does). It was pointed out that, even when the opportunity for questions is provided, it is still often difficult to accomplish a successful discussion.

Hughes let us know that a number of tours will be offered, including a Friday afternoon tour to several sites in Delaware. On that tour participants will have the option to return to Philadelphia or to catch a train to Washington DC for the ALA annual conference. Organizations that have already committed to sponsoring the preconference include the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSL) and the University of Pennsylvania libraries.

The Preconference Program Planning Committee approved two proposals for workshops. One is “Latin for Catalogers,” which will be led by Jennifer MacDonald, Kate Moriarty, and Jennifer Nelson. It is a full-day workshop that covers the basics of navigating a Latin title page. The other is “Working with Book Dealers,” which will be led by E.C. Schroeder and Daniel Slive. It is a half-day workshop that will culminate with a visit to the Booksellers Showcase. There is interest in a repeat offering of Joel Silver’s “Reference Sources for Rare Books” workshop from the 46th annual preconference (2005) in Saint Louis. Dowell will contact Silver to see if he is willing. The “Short Papers” programming block will feature case studies that report on collaborative projects, initiatives, and accomplishments. The committee will issue a call for proposals in September.

We discussed briefly the onslaught of post-preconference email from one of the Bookseller showcase participants in Charlottesville. We noted that access to the list of attendees is one of the primary benefits for booksellers participating in the showcase and that preconference attendees have an opportunity to opt out of special mailings and invitations from sponsors.

2011: Baton Rouge LA (ALA in New Orleans LA)

A chair for the Preconference Program Planning Committee has not yet been appointed. 2011 preconference attendance may be affected by budget and/or travel constraints in the home institutions of potential preconference participants. Given the special nature of the most recent preconference, which likely drew participation from many who would not otherwise have attended the preconference this year, we do not really know if and how the current and future economic climate will affect preconference attendance.

2012: ALA in Anaheim CA

We discussed several possibilities for both the location and the dates for the 2012 preconference. We considered the advantages and disadvantages of a hotel-only preconference (as opposed to one associated with and located at a “host” institution). We also talked about a one-and-a-half-day event in the same location as, and immediately preceding, the ALA annual conference (as opposed to a two-and-a-half-day event weeks before, and in a location away from, the ALA conference). A number of possible “host” institutions were suggested, including UC Irvine, UC Riverside, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, the University of San Diego, and the Bancroft

Library at UC Berkeley. We noted that it is possible -- even likely -- that uncertainty stemming from the current and future economic climate will affect not only attendance at the 2012 preconference but also our ability to determine an appropriate location for it.

7. Conference Programs

2009 Chicago

No report.

2010 Washington DC

Schneider reported that the ALA Conference Program Planning Committee approved "To Catch a Thief: Cataloging and the Security of Special Collections" as the RBMS conference program for ALA annual in 2010. ALCTS and MAGERT will cosponsor the program in name only. Next steps include identifying and securing commitments from speakers and launching publicity. Regarding speakers, the committee is hoping to line up three: one from a criminal investigative body (such as the FBI) or other crime/theft-related organization; one from a library (for example, a curator or other collection specialist); and one representing the research community (for example, a scholar).

2011 New Orleans LA

No report.

8. Seminars

Dowell reported that the Seminars Committee has received several proposals for seminars for the 2010 preconference. The current plan is to present nine seminars in twelve time slots – three seminars will be presented twice. Proposals on hand cover a variety of topics including collaboration between artists and librarians, between archivists and librarians, and in exhibit preparation; online tools for collaboration; working with the RBMS Diversity Toolkit; and born digital collections.

9. Future Preconferences

Draft Questionnaire (sent separately)

We discussed the draft of a survey that will be used to solicit and collect input from RBMS members on the future of the RBMS preconference. The survey includes questions about preferences and opinions regarding location and timing of the preconference; reasons why members don't attend; most and least favorite aspects of the preconference; interest and in and willingness to pay for online content; and the importance of a preconference theme. Regarding timing and location of the preconference, we suggested adding questions that will help us understand if and how preconference attendance is related to ALA attendance. Some members, for example, do not or cannot attend the preconference because they have to attend ALA annual. Other members, however, attend both the RBMS preconference and the ALA annual conference because, or perhaps only when, the preconference is scheduled immediately before ALA. The draft survey will be sent to RBMS Exec for approval and as it involves "human subjects research" and will be distributed by e-mail to the entire section, needs to be approved by ALA. The goal is to distribute the questionnaire in September. Johnson will work with Ondrla on the questionnaire.

Discussion Session in Charlottesville

We discussed the “Making Preconferences Ready for the Next 50 Years” discussion that took place in Charlottesville. Johnson and Quinlan led the discussion session; Dooley took notes, which Johnson shared via the RBMS list.

Johnson described it as a good discussion in which a mix of first-timers and many-timers participated. It was suggested that we conduct something like a focus group interview with first-timers and maybe second-timers to better understand their preconference experience. First- and second-timers could indicate, when they register for the preconference, if they would be willing to provide more in-depth information about their preconference experience than the preconference evaluation form allows.

Several members questioned the value of the discussion that took place in Charlottesville, stressing that, because it was not sufficiently structured, the information that it yielded may not be entirely valid. It was suggested that a number of techniques for “structured group discussion” with trained facilitators exist and could be employed to achieve a better result from similar discussions in the future.

Web 2.0 and Virtual Conference Possibilities

Ondra suggested we consider using ALA Connect for the provision of online content. ALA Connect is a virtual, collaborative, workspace where official ALA groups can work together online. New communities (unofficial ALA groups) can be created as well, combining association work and the work of “communities of interest” in one place. Groups and communities on ALA Connect have access to tools including blogs, online documents (like wiki pages), a calendar, polls, a chat room, a discussion board, and images (logos, pictures, etc.).

We noted the distinction between using Web 2.0 technologies (especially blogs) to “enhance and extend” the preconference experience and making the preconference available as a “virtual conference” [see notes from earlier discussion under “Preconference 2009 (Charlottesville VA)” above].

Old Business

RBMS Traveling Workshops

A report on the pilot project of RBMS traveling workshops will be presented at RBMS Exec on Monday.

Manual Revisions

Johnson will work on the manual revisions with assistance from Schroeder and the 2009 preconference team. Several sections need to be revised, including those on evaluations, fundraising, and the booksellers showcase.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 am. We thanked the following regular committee members whose term of service has ended: John Cullars, Mark Dimunation, Alice Schreyer, Heather Cole, and Daniel Slive.