

1999 Fall Conference Report

The Millennium Librarian: Information Mediators still Needed!

1999 Annual Fall Conference
Friday, November 12, 1999 8:45 am - 3 pm
Center for International Trade Development
Oklahoma State University-Stillwater

The Fall Conference was a great success. The presenters challenged and informed attendees, making it a valuable professional experience for all. In the program listing below, you will find website addresses that were mentioned by our presenters.

Morning

Session One: **Claire McInerney**, Assistant Professor, School of Library and Information Science, University of Oklahoma

Session Two: **Ed Meachen**, Associate Vice President for Learning and Information Technology, University of Wisconsin System

Session Three: **Larry Hardesty**, 1999-2000 President of ACRL, College Library Director and Professor, Austin College

Conference Summary

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Each of the three speakers at the 1999 fall conference addressed the theme **The Millennium Librarian: Information Mediators Still Needed!** The conference was held at the Center for International Trade Development building at Oklahoma State University-Stillwater on November 12.

Claire McInerney, Assistant Professor, SLIS, University of Oklahoma titled her presentation "Cybrarians, Ontologists, and Knowledge Managers: A Brave New Century for Librarians." She identified several critical social trends that are affecting our profession, including the increase of knowledge-based work, growth in lifelong learning and virtual libraries, information economics and commerce, many rapid changes in the social fabric, and the World Wide Web. Librarians may move into new roles because our skills involving an understanding of data, information and knowledge are in demand. University Library and Information Studies programs are changing to meet the challenges, adding courses in areas such as systems, information ethics, instructional

design, and the economics of information. To meet the future, we must try to find the opportunities that exist in many new areas of information management.

Ed Meachen is a former academic library director who is currently the Associate Vice President for Learning and Information Technology, University of Wisconsin System. He spoke on "Finding Order in Chaos: Academic Libraries in an Age of Change." He discussed the cultural differences between academic libraries and administrative computing centers before the rise of networks. Meachen discussed a study of the UW System which found that if Chief Information Officers came from a library background, they were more successful than if they came from administrative computing. The key issue seems to be an understanding of the relationship between technology and the mission of the institution. As the role of the academic library changes, as it certainly will in the near future, we must "think outside the box" while always focusing on the services we provide. New librarians will have a good general education and public service philosophy; be technologically literate; be a translator between technology and teaching; and will assume management and leadership roles when the digital convergence occurs at their institutions.

The final speaker was Larry Hardesty, Library Director at Austin College in Sherman, Texas and current president of ACRL. His presentation focused on faculty attitudes and culture regarding the academic library, and relationships between faculty and librarians. Unfortunately, the values of faculty culture may preclude seeing librarians as partners. Faculty culture values research and content of knowledge in a subspecialty over teaching and the process of learning. Other faculty characteristics are the need for professional autonomy and academic freedom, and resistance to change. They resist the idea of bibliographic instruction either because they don't even think of it, or they don't want to give up control and feel they must cover a large amount of material within their own disciplines. They also believe that librarians have lower status than faculty, and they are not self-critical enough to see what library instruction could add to their courses. He discussed several methods of reaching out to faculty, and emphasized that overwhelmingly, the most important factor is personal contact.