

ASLA XXII National Conference 2011 Report
Sydney 2 -5 October
Saint Ignatius College, Riverview

The **ASLA XXII Biennial Conference** website promised big ideas:

Innovation

How do we understand innovation in our teaching practice?
What new tools or programs could we use?

Instruction

What new methodologies or teaching & learning activities can we incorporate into learning environments?

Integration

How do we integrate digital literacy / transliteracy into a holistic teaching & learning sequence or program?

The conference was both an exciting and daunting prospect as I headed off to Sydney in the October holidays. I was looking forward to being challenged and informed.

The conference program was smorgasbord of stimulating ideas and innovations. I really valued the opportunity to network with delegates from across Australia. I found the new knowledge consolidating as we shared ideas, reflected on the sessions we had attended and explored possibilities for implementation.

The keynote sessions were all outstanding. The sessions were all so appealing that it was really difficult to choose one to attend in each timeslot. I have chosen to report on the sessions and keynotes that have impacted directly on the actions I undertook on returning to work.

The first keynote: **Global Learners = Global Leaders** set the scene for the conference.

Jeff Piontek, Head of School, Hawaii Technology Academy urged teachers to be learners who then implement their learning. He went on to explain how embracing digital tools would eliminate the boundaries of time, space and culture. He believes this will encourage collaborative and customized learning experiences that will be enriching for students and teachers alike. He encouraged teacher librarians to give students the opportunity for students to experience safe, ethical and effective learning in a digital environment. <http://www.slideshare.net/jeff.piontek>

The next keynote: **A profession at the tipping point: time to change the game plan** was a kick start for anyone with lingering doubts as to the place of Teacher Librarians in the schools of the future.

Karen Bonano (Executive Officer for the Australian School Library Association) explained her Five Finger Plan for Success.

Thumb – Strength of character: Karen urged us to establish pre-eminence (the you that shows up before you show up). She believes blogging or some element of online presence is an imperative for Teacher Librarians.

Pointer – FOCUS: Karen urged us to follow one course until successful. Her advice was to know your outcomes, take action, and realign until you achieve success.

Middle finger – Brand: Who are you? What do you stand for? Are you who you say you are?

Ring finger – Relationships: Karen describes this as your circle of influence. Some staff within a school will never want to work with you. Don't water rocks.

Little finger – Little things that count: Karen asked us to think about what **we** do that others don't.

Karen believes the National education architecture will a boom or bust for Teacher Librarians. She had some suggestions for how Teacher Librarians can use the new Australian Curriculum as a tool for success.

For General Capabilities, particularly in the area of ICT, she encouraged us to ensure we strengthened the connection with teachers as to how we can contribute to student learning.

Karen argued the need for teacher Librarians to claim their space (eg History) to assist and support the teachers who have no training in that area.

Karen promoted complex online environments, such as Scootle, as an opportunity for Teacher Librarians to be a gateway, linking these to the classroom.

Karen left us with these questions: Do you want to be outstanding? Or do you want to be exponential. The choice is yours. <http://www.schoollibrarymanagement.com/index.html>

This keynote was immediately followed by: **Future (academic) libraries & social innovation.**

Mal Booth (Director, Education & Research Services Unit, at UTS Library) was an inspiration for me. He presented us with a host of possibilities and reminded us that '**An invisible librarian is a vulnerable librarian.**'

Some quotes he gave us to ponder...

'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.' Oscar Wilde.

'Who are you engaging with?'

'A merely well informed man is the most useless bore on god's earth.'

'Seduce, shape and perhaps evoke an emotional response.'

'Creativity is the defeat of habit by originality.'

He presented us with 'Dangerous ideas for libraries': **Arrange** – virtual shelves, crowd curation; **Describe**- folksonomies, ratings, artist in residence; **Provide** – exhibitions, collaboration, design thinking; **Play** - Treasure hunts, games quizzes, bbq; Open longer hours; **Blogging** – reading, how to argue, how to research; **Install** – art, atriums, natural light, randomness, comfy chairs, greenery , meaningful signage, intuitive technology, gaming spaces.

And the Teacher Librarian? He/she will be letting go, having fun, curating, delighting and encouraging creativity.

His presentation can be found at <http://www.frommelbin.blogspot.com/>

The keynote: **Learning without Frontiers: School libraries and meta-literacy in action** (Judy O'Connell, Charles Sturt University) described being visible and present as being up to date with IT. Judy encouraged us to remember that learning is not about a particular tool, but more about how we move across the ever expanding meta literacy environments.

Judy asked us to step slowly into the water – and then tossed us into the deep end with Rss feeds, Feedly, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Delicious, Evernote, Zotero, Flickr, Foursquare, Youtube, QRcodes, Gwige, Carrot cluster, Pandia.com, Pandora.nla.gov.au, Europeana.eu.

She showed this video http://www.youtube.com/v/7ECAVxbfsfc?f=videos&app=youtube_gdata– a good explanation of our current digital environment.

Judy's view is that the boundary between real and online is disappearing. She left us with these questions to consider: Am I managing my digital identity? Am I managing my digital network?
<http://heyjude.wordpress.com>

I have been wondering about the best ways to assist staff and students in using digital tools. Two of the workshops I attended have been influential in the changes I have made since returning from the conference.

Building your Professional Learning Network (PLN) (Mrs Bianca Hewes, Davidson High School, NSW) and ***Communicating for the 21st century: using tools such as edmodo and student blogs to connect students with an authentic world wide audience*** (Mrs Henrietta Miller and Mrs Prudence Thomas, Roseville College, NSW). <http://www.asla.org.au/pd/asla2011/program.htm>

Bianca showed us the importance and relevance of Twitter and Edmodo. She gave us time to explore and join up. Henrietta gave us the opportunity to explore some classroom and school librarian blogs. She shared examples of units she has worked on with her class using Edmodo, Weebly and Edublogs. <http://www.classroomchronicles.net/2011/10/02/asla11-using-blogging-and-edmodo-in-the-classroom-and-library/>

I left the conference enthused by the generosity and insight of the presenters at the conference. I felt it was important to put this new learning into action as soon as possible.

On returning to school I set up a Bookchat using Edmodo. The focus is War stories, and involves students 3-7. I am currently working collaboratively with a classroom teacher to run a unit of inquiry that uses Edmodo and Weebly.

I have also trialled collaborative session that involve staff. The first was called Techiebrekkie. This was to be a quick session before school where staff at the school could share the digital tools they are currently using. This idea came from Henrietta's session.

This was not successful. The staff were enthusiastic about the idea, but were too busy before school to fit this into their schedules.

The next idea I trialled was based on ideas gleaned from the keynote address made by Mal Booth. The idea was for Teacher Librarians, Classroom Teachers and SSOs to meet and share ideas. The discussion centres on websites, use of software and Web2.0 strategies. Those wishing to share have between 2 and 10 minutes to inform the group.

The first Bytes2eat session was held at the Mitcham Primary School's Library. It was a really good sharing session. We enjoyed coffee, chocolate and hearing new ideas. Six people attended and there was interest in having further sessions.

The next Bytes2eat session on Thursday 24/11 (Week 6) has attracted twenty people interested in attending, and offers to host the sessions next year. There has also been contact from teachers planning to set up a session in their district. Attending the conference gave me the confidence to try new digital tools. It also gave me encouragement to try something that was very much outside my comfort zone - advertising and hosting Bytes2eat.

The presentations are available on the ASLA website:
<http://www.asla.org.au/pd/asla2011/program.htm>