

*The Florida Library Association would like to thank Micah Vandegrift for permission to reprint his blog post about the 2010 FLA Annual Conference held April 7-9 in Orlando, FL.*

# The Conference in the Life of a Professional

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tags: [conference](#), [FLA2010](#), [Library](#), [Twitter](#), [web 2.0](#)

by Micah Vandegrift

Indie Scholar

Although I don't mention it often, I am on track to become a professional librarian. I am enrolled in the [Master's in Library and Information Studies \(MLIS\)](#) here at FSU, with a focus on Museum Studies and digital media, and am thoroughly enjoying the course work and the degree. In addition, for the past 2 1/2 years I have been working part-time as the communications director for the [Florida Book Awards](#), an annual best books competition, which is sponsored by and housed in the Florida State University's own Strozier Library. So, be that as it may, I am deeply involved in regular library stuffs. Last week the [Florida Library Association](#) held its annual conference in Orlando, and as a good MLIS student, and since the Florida Book Awards had 2 programs at the conference, I hopped on my trusty motorbike and took in the first conference of my professional career.

Now, I have attended and presented at conferences before, during my American Studies degree. But, this one had a different feel – I was there because I was 'working' for the Florida Book Awards and for myself as a future professional in this field. Therefore, as a newbie/first-timer I'd like to take a minute and rehash the things I learned, liked and loathed about [FLA2010](#). (I'll try to make this short...)

## Learned:

The library profession is alive and well. YAY! Job prospects, right? Well, maybe. There were more than a few recent graduates wandering the halls, hoping to meet the right person and get a job offer. It was encouraging to see so many folks absolutely excited and pleased with their jobs, something we all hope for! Although I missed the panel on "Interview and Job Application Strategies" my dear friend Jessica took some great notes, and the bottom line is... get experience. Volunteer. Now all I have to do is find a way to do that while working full time in student services. <image002.gif>

Also, I learned that Web 2.0 is not just a catch phrase in the information professions. This is the wave of the future people. The great thing about being involved in libraries is that Information Literacy is being taken seriously and we are receiving the training to be able to share that knowledge with the "have-nots." One of my favorite sessions was the "Tagging Your World" tutorial with [The Shifted Librarian](#), Jenny Levine. I didn't necessarily learn anything new in the

session, but it made me feel good to know that Web 2.0 tools that I am proficient are going to be integral parts of the library of the future.

### **Liked:**

The conference felt very well put-together. There were a broad variety of topics covered in the sessions and after leaving the conference I feel like I have a better grasp on the field of librarianship. That's the whole point of a conference right? Kudos, Florida Library Association. I tend to be pretty narrow minded in my studies/career goals/interests and being around all different types of professionals interested in different areas of the same field was really great.

I enjoyed meeting [Lauren Gibaldi](#) in real life (Twitter friends for a while, dating a former college buddy of mine!) and hearing her point of view on Young Adult specializations in libraries. Of course, the highlight of many conferences is exactly that – meeting new people, colleagues and friends. To be honest, as social as I may seem via media (here and tweeting) I am actually quite shy and am ashamed to say I didn't meet half as many people as I would have liked. There was some conference tweeting going on, and I would have loved to have a face to face conversation with some of my fellow twitterers. (Sorry all... next time? KIT!)

Perhaps the highlight of the 3 days was seeing Marilyn Johnson speak about her book "[This Book is Overdue: How Librarians and Cybrarians Can Save Us All.](#)" Although her talk is usually geared toward convincing people that libraries are and will remain useful, facts she didn't need to prove to us, it was still insightful and great to hear that the journalism folks recognize and respect the work we do daily in the stacks. And she was just plain funny.

### **Loathed:**

No free wifi. What?! Really? What kind of hotel hosts a conference knowing there will be hundreds of professional people chattering online and potentially saying good things about them, and yet doesn't offer free wifi? Dislike, Rosen Plaza Hotel.

The structure of conference-going is exhausting. And I'm a young, healthy dude to boot. The constant shifting from room to room, taking in loads of information and short breaks can be very draining. I propose that all conferences from now include a siesta/yoga/nap session in the afternoon.

Overall, I had a great time and am looking forward to many more opportunities to attend and present at conferences in the future.

ps. How important are conferences in your field? While I was at the conference [this post came across ProfHacker](#) discussing the usefulness of conferences.

pps. I was absolutely inspired and totally excited about what is going on at the Jacksonville Public Library. They are collecting and circulating zines (subcultural, short run publications) and are writing about it [here](#) and tweeting about it [here](#).