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Thoughts From A Public Librarian

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Conference Reflections 1999

Thoughts From A Public Librarian

I am fairly new to the Association of Christian Librarians and librarianship. This year, the 43rd conference, was my fourth ACL conference. I have been a reference librarian for about the same number of years. I felt a bit lost at my first conference. I would imagine most people do. I was just beginning to pursue my MLS and, most of my experience had been in public libraries. So, classes that focused on academic issues didn't mean too much to me. However, other conference goers helped me choose a few subjects that could be adapted to public library service and it was clear sailing from then on. Now I choose subjects that I know will either expose me to something that will soon become a part of the public library scene, or a training session in some technical area that I can adapt to my needs.

What I have come to value most from ACL is the Christian fellowship and shoptalk. This mentoring, both spiritual and vocational is the best reason for attending a conference. That's where I learn the most. That's what

helps the most. And that's how I rejuvenate. It is a real treat to lay aside the politics, the political correctness, the neutral approach necessary in the public library and rejoice together as we share the triumphs and trials we have come through during the past year.

We all have stories that can enrich our Christian experience and broaden the scope of our library service, be it public or academic. Every person we serve benefits from service tempered

and enlightened by the Savior's presence.

In my opinion, the service that an academic and public librarian provides is not all that different. The time has come for much more cooperation between academic and public libraries. Sharing materials is only the beginning. In Pennsylvania, where I live, the state has put together a new network called Access PA. It provides access to the electronic catalogs of many high school, private and parochial schools as well as colleges and universities. This service also provides selected full text document delivery through Ebsco. It is obvious from both my experience and the current library literature, that many more people are using their PCs at home or work or at the library to locate material. A reserve is easily transacted via the telephone, and pick up is only a few hours away. What more can a librarian provide? I am sure there are

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ACL members in public libraries who can provide a long list of services they provide. It could be interesting to compare lists with a few academic librarians. I'll bet they are practically identical.

There are plenty of excellent reasons for Christian librarians in public service to

join ACL and 300+ (our members) reasons to come to a conference. Our academic librarians put together about 35 classes and roundtables. I get to reap the benefits and don't have to do any of the work. What more could one ask?

Keep up the good work! See you all in San Diego if the Lord tarries.

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