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Joyce L. Ogburn
Old Dominion University Library

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Acquiring Minds Want to Know — CAUSE
by Joyce L. Ogburn (AUL for Information Resources and Systems, Old Dominion University Library, Norfolk VA 23529-0256; Phone: 757-683-4189; Fax 757-683-5767) <jogburn@odu.edu>

Going to a conference not dedicated to libraries can be daunting. Will I know anyone there? What should I attend? How do I know what programs will be good and relevant? What do I really want to get out of this conference?

In 1996 I attended EDUCOM for the first time and found that I didn’t have a focus and went to meetings that sounded interesting or relevant. Sometimes the meetings were about libraries, sometimes they weren’t. It was an interesting conference, but I felt that I didn’t get as much out of it as I could have.

This year I went to CAUSE in ORLANDO, FL, DECEMBER 3-5, for the first time to see how it differed from EDUCOM (at the CAUSE meeting the two organizations voted to merge next year). The content seemed similar and some of the same attendees and vendors were there. Typical topics covered campus information policies, applying new technology to teaching and learning, intellectual property, mergers of computer centers and libraries, improving customer service and support, Web publishing, and the nature of concurrent sessions addressed practical applications and gave valuable information about the speakers’ triumphs, trials, and errors from which others could learn.

Librarians were there in small numbers as attendees and presenters. Some of their presentations included the work at Virginia Tech on their electronic scholarly publishing activities, developing the digital library at Michigan, and creating instructional materials on the Web.

The keynote speakers ranged a bit more freely in providing entertainment and in giving opinions. Helen Samuel of MIT defined information as forms (activities that generate information) and types (publications, catalogs, research) and as “an asset that needs to be managed.” She urged everyone to clarify ownership issues and assign responsibilities for the custodianship of information. She viewed custodians as the creators AND the users of information.

Tom Davenport of the University of Texas discussed “infoculture,” as opposed to “technoculture,” and asked, has it improved, and who’s in charge? In his view infoculture is the water and technoculture is the plumbing.

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