ATG Luminaries

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Working in a specialized area of any field can be isolating, and librarianship is no exception. I’m an electronic resources librarian at a large public university, and if it weren’t for a couple of colleagues who also work with e-resources or did so in the past, I’d have to drive a few hours to find someone who really understands my job.

Attending the Charleston Conference helps remind me that even though I sometimes feel isolated, I’m actually part of a large, vibrant community of information professionals who not only understand my day-to-day work, but also share the same bigger picture concerns that I do. Like many others, I attend Webinars, read blogs, and follow the listserv chatter, but there is something unique and special about the face-to-face interactions that happen at a conference. Conversations that would be laborious over email flow easily when chatting over coffee, and when presentations end you can chat with fellow interested audience members rather than simply close a browser window and return to work.

Conferences are a wonderful opportunity for professional development and networking, but they also serve an important community-building function that is sometimes overlooked. Standing in the crowded lobby of the Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston, surrounded by a diversity of colleagues, my sense of being part of a larger community is affirmed.

I’ve worked to help organize the Conference since 2005. It’s an exciting, ever-changing job, and I love the challenges presented by the logistics each year. We focus on being open, informal, and giving everyone an equal playing field to voice their ideas and opinions; this requires some “creative problem solving” at times to find a way to make things work, but these times of thinking outside the box often lead to our most popular new features. This year, for example, we had anordinate amount of plenary-level proposals that led to the creation of the “Charleston Neapolitan” sessions — three plenary presentations running simultaneously in the three main ballrooms of our headquarters hotel, all of which are being recorded for later viewing on our YouTube channel. I think this will be a fun way to prove our theme this year, “Too Much Is Not Enough!”

This year’s Conference will be held across five locations: the Francis Marion Hotel, Courtyard Marriott Historic District, Embassy Suites Historic District, College of Charleston Addlestone Library, and College of Charleston Science and Mathematics Building. We have around 500 speakers, and expect to have over 1,500 attendees. The schedule contains 10 preconferences, 15 plenary sessions, and over 200 concurrent sessions, lively lunches, posters, and “shotgun” sessions. I look forward to continuing the Charleston tradition of presenting the latest information industry content in a casual and open atmosphere.