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Notes from Mosier-Reports from the Mountains

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Notes from Mosier — Reports from the Mountain

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This month's column will report on both the **2009 and 2010 Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge** conferences.

The **Ninth Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge** was held May 16th-19th, 2009. Our keynote speaker last year was **Terry Reese**, Gray Family Chair for Innovative Library Services at **Oregon State University**. His address was titled "Open Data: Encouraging Open Source and Integration Between Vendors and the Library Developer Community."

Given that I'm one of the conference planners, I don't want to indulge in too much self-promotion, and besides, the program will be reviewed and reported on elsewhere. However, in the interest of informing those of our readers who may not know about this little gem of a conference (I didn't say there wouldn't be *any* self-promotion), I thought a few words about the **Institute** — and the **Lodge** — might be in order.

First, the program. In addition to the keynote address, we had nine presentations, running 45 minutes each. A question-and-answer session followed each presentation. All presentations are made before the group as a whole; we do not have breakout sessions.

Program content is the cornerstone of the conference. In addition to **Terry's** keynote, other topics last year included collaborative collection development, streaming video, re-aligning budgets to support new access models, electronic resources, **OCLC Worldcat Local** and Acquisitions, gift operations, and coordination of library liaisons in small academic libraries. We're in the process of establishing an additional Website with previous conference programs and links to presentations — more on this later.

Next, the **Lodge**. **Timberline** was built in 1936-37 as a project of the **Works Progress Administration**. The **Lodge** sits at 6,000 feet on the south slope of Mount Hood, a little over an hour east of Portland, Oregon. With the major exception of six massive timber columns (whole trees, really) that came from what's now the **Gifford Pinchot National Forest** on the Washington side of the **Columbia Gorge**, most of the building materials were gathered within a mile of the building site.

During the depths of the Great Depression, the **WPA** sought to give unemployed, desperate people a living wage — and, just as important, a sense of self-worth and dignity. The results at **Timberline** are magnificent and enduring. For more information about the **Lodge**, including photos, visit their Website at www.timberlinelodge.com. I'll admit to being somewhat biased, but it's the best venue for a conference on the planet (and yes, the exterior **Lodge** shots from *The Shining* were filmed here).

Now, a bit about the history of the conference. This all started about twenty years ago, when **Richard Brumley** (then of **Cal Poly San**

Luis Obispo, later **Oregon State University**) and **Tom Leonhardt** (then of the **University of the Pacific**, now director at **St. Edwards University** in Austin) and I were having a drink in the bar of the **St. Francis Hotel** in San Francisco during an **ALA**. The **Charleston Conference** had already established a name for itself; we pondered whether there were any issues obtaining to acquisitions, collection development, and technical services in the West that were different or unique from Eastern libraries. One thing led to another, as these **ALA** conversations tend to do, and at the end of the conversation we'd decided to build a meeting around this theme. The **University of the Pacific** has a conference center/destination resort in the Sierras, and **Tom** volunteered to look into the details of securing its use for this informal symposium. The facility is called the **Feather River Inn**, and hence in its first incarnation the conference was known as the **Feather River Institute**.

By the end of that first meeting we'd concluded that no, in fact, there really wasn't anything all that different about acquisitions in the West, but we had a lot of fun and much stimulating conversation at that first conference, so we decided to make it an annual event.

The Inn was indeed a rustic setting — the main lodge, originally built as a ski lodge in the early part of the twentieth century, had been used as a boarding school for troubled boys in the 1960s, and they'd done a pretty thorough job of trashing the place. The upper floors had been condemned years before we started meeting there, so we just used the cafeteria, bar, and main fireplace room in the lodge, and found accommodation in cabins down the ravine (gully?); some years heat and running water were in short supply. Despite this, the Inn provided a convivial and relaxed atmosphere, and inspired candid and unfettered conversation between librarians, vendors, and publishers.

Tom masterminded the first three meetings, before moving on from the **U of P**. We continued to meet at **Feather River** until the late 1990s, when, for a variety of reasons, we decided to relocate.

By that time the planning committee consisted of **Brum** (by now at **Oregon State**), **Nancy Slight-Gibney** (**University of Oregon**), and me. We decided an Oregon venue made just so much more sense. Although other locations were considered (**Skamania Lodge**, **Edgefield**, the **Kennedy School**), **Timberline** was our first choice — and the folks there were genuinely interested in us and our meeting. From the beginning they've been a delight to work with.

We meet every May the weekend following **Mother's Day**. Informal dress is encouraged; be prepared for the possibility of snow (last year we had the most spectacular weather we've ever enjoyed, but some years we haven't been as lucky). We deliberately build free time into the schedule to allow off-line conversations and networking.

The call for papers goes out at the end of August / early September, and we post the preliminary program on our Website around **ALA Midwinter**. Conference registration is limited to 85 people, and we admit on a first-come, first-serve basis.

The **Lodge** offers several different types of rooms, ranging in price. There are singles, doubles, and rooms that can accommodate larger parties; attendees are encouraged to bring spouses, significant others, and/or their families. (Some mythology has grown up about the rooming at the **Institute**: (a) no, you don't have to share a room, providing you register early and (b) no, the rooms are not all bunk beds with bathrooms down the hall. There are such rooms, usually utilized by skiers — we've occasionally had people book into them, but we seldom use them. They are cheap, though, and actually, fairly nice.)

The **Lodge** is fully ADA-compliant. Wi-fi is available in selected locations. Rooms are equipped with telephones and television. However, bear in mind this is a 1930s vintage hand-built structure, so don't expect luxury — that's not what this is all about.

An optional meal package is included; we strongly encourage attendees to take advantage of this. There are alternatives — the **Lodge** does have a fine restaurant, the **Cascade Dining Room**, as well as the **Ram's Head Bar**, which offers pub food — but part of the networking opportunities and conference experience comes with eating together. Once you're at the **Lodge** you're pretty much part of a captive audience — it's six twisting miles of alpine road dropping two thousand feet to the village of **Government Camp**, and the route can get icy at night.

After lunch on Sunday we allow time (weather permitting) for attendees to ride the ski lift on up to the **Silcox Hut** at 7,000 feet — the view can be absolutely spectacular! In 2009 several folks went snowshoeing with **Faye**; this year there wasn't enough snow.

The **Lodge** curator offers a tour (she's great!), and we arrange a wine tasting as well (the **Lodge** has one of the best cellars in the Northwest). Another tradition handed down from **Feather River** is "favorite readings" — attendees are asked to bring something to read (prose, poetry, ILS documentation (just kidding!)). The readings take place in the **Blue Ox Bar**, a cozy room in the depths of the **Lodge**. (The **Blue Ox** occupies what was originally intended to be a wood storage area. However, near completion of the building the principal interior designer, **Marjorie Hoffman Smith**, realized there was no bar in the **Lodge**, and decided that just wouldn't do. Today the **Blue Ox** is not open to the public, but is available for private functions.)

I would be remiss were I not to mention the generous financial support we receive from the vendor community — we try to keep this conference very affordable; without their help this would be well nigh impossible. There are no

continued on page 77

exhibits, but book vendors, serials agents, automation vendors and publishers attend and interact as colleagues. I must indeed thank **Alibris**, **Ebsco**, **Gale Cengage**, **Puvill**, **Swets**, and **YBP**. We really appreciate it!

This year's keynote speaker was none other than our own **Katina Strauch**! **Katina's** presentation, "All I Need to Know I Learned at the **Charleston Conference**" was, as you'd expect, thought-provoking and engaging. With the help of **Stacey Devine**, Assistant Head of Acquisitions and Rapid Cataloging at the **Northwestern University Library**, we're working on a Website to host presentations, past programs, and other content from earlier **Timberlines** — I'll let you know when **Katina's** presentation, as well as others, are up and available.

The 2010 conference was also a first in that **Camila Alire**, **ALA** President, was in attendance and gave welcoming remarks. In addition, **Molly Raphael**, now **ALA** President-elect, was able to join us as well.

The complete 2010 program is available for viewing at our main Website, libweb.uoregon.edu/ec/aitl.

A couple of years ago someone referred to us as a "boutique conference," and initially I resented the remark. The more I thought about it, though, I decided it wasn't such a bad reference after all. We work very hard to provide the best possible conference experience, particularly regarding the program content (it's not all skiing and St. Bernards). So, if you're interested in a meeting somewhat off the beaten path, keep us in mind. Feel free to contact me with any questions. I hope to see you on the Mountain next May!

The Acquisitions Institute Planning Committee:

Faye Chadwell, Oregon State University

Nancy Slight-Gibney, University of Oregon

Scott Alan Smith, Alibris

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Little Red Herrings — A "Wall" by Any Other Name Remains Equally Insipid?

by **Mark Y. Herring** (Dean of Library Services, Dacus Library, Winthrop University) <herringm@winthrop.edu>

For those who keep up with such things, it now appears that the whole social network craze is, well, a little forced, postured, and otherwise created out of thin air. It's not unlike the so-called "HPOA Girl" who quit her job using a dry-erase board and caused an Internet sensation. **Jay Leno**, **Steven Colbert**, "Good Morning America," et al, all wanted her on board. Everyone shook their heads in a knowing way: we hear you sister, and we wish we had done that. We all discovered that it was all postured from the beginning by a Website known for its antics (<http://TheChive.com>). Then came the news that **Wikipedia** really was trying to fix its quality issues; but amid all that work, many young people didn't really believe it to be that reliable anyway. "Our goal," said co-founder **Jimmy Wales** in an **Ad Tech** conference in

November last year, "is to make **Wikipedia** as high-quality as possible. **Britannica** or better quality is the goal," he said. While the online encyclopedia is much better than it was, it still has "issues." So much so, that in May of this year, it began to look to experts for contributions by teaming up with universities. Openness is not the enemy of quality, of course, but it may make it harder to achieve without the intervention of those who know what they're talking about.

Pew informed us early this (<http://bit.ly/cQdgi3>) year that "kids" don't blog anymore, and it's likely they never did. Only 14% of tweens and teens (12-17 years of age) still blog, down from 25% just four years ago. Apparently blogging is an "old person's" task. The same **Pew** study points out that young people may well be "sick" of **Twitter**, and as for **Facebook**, they all have one but just aren't that much into it anymore. Add to all this, the datum that the so-called "online generation" really isn't as savvy as we thought. The "digitals natives" are not necessarily tech-savvy. The tech-savvy folks are 30-something, not 20 something. Digital natives are more

likely to attend the "University of Google" for everything, regardless of its success or lack thereof (<http://bit.ly/bvXGIM>). While working on another project I ran across some data that might surprise readers about the "age" of the so-called social networking era.

According to **Royal Pingdom** in a study done earlier this year (<http://bit.ly/bPpWOf>), it would appear that the average social networking user is a geezer, or she may as well be. In a study of 19 social networking sites, fully one quarter are 35-44, if you stretch that to 55, that age bracket accounts for nearly 45% of all users. And the female pronoun above is not merely for the sake of political correctness: more women than men use social networks.

It doesn't end there, either. The social network one uses correlates to one's age. If you have a **Bebo** account, you're probably 17 years of age or younger. On the other hand, if you have a **Facebook** or **Twitter** account, you are likely to be 35 years of age, or older. The average age of a **Facebook**, **Digg**, **StumbleUpon**, **Twitter**, **Delicious**, **LinkedIn** or **Classmates** user is thirty-eight, or older. Put your teeth

continued on page 78