

CALA 21st Century Librarian Seminar Project
Team Member Report¹
Seminar Location: Donghau University, Shanghai
Seminar Dates: From: November 18, 2009 to November 19, 2009

Your name: Roberta A. Stevens

Your topics:

Keynote presentation

21st Century Libraries: The Challenges and Opportunities

This presentation covered the changes that have occurred in work and organizational environments from the 20th to the 21st centuries and the impact they have had on libraries. Twenty-first century skills and how libraries can become institutions of learning in the new century were identified. The challenges that libraries confront in making the transition from “the way we’ve operated” to “the way we need to operate,” the role of libraries in the 21st century’s economy and society, libraries as “leaders” in a global economy, how to advocate for your library and how the American Library Association prepares librarians and their advocates in a rapidly changing era were described.

Presentation

Developing 21st Century Libraries

This presentation focused on the American Library Association’s role in providing leadership for the development, promotion and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship. In particular, the association’s emphasis on advocacy for libraries and the many means made available for building support were explored as well as how to effectively “deliver the message” to legislators, administrators and any other individuals who control the library’s budget; successful fundraising for libraries; creating customer-driven libraries and how to determine whether you are accomplishing the goals and objectives; the accreditation of library programs and the reasons it is important to have accredited librarians; and the competencies for librarianship today and in the future.

Your evaluation of the seminar in which you participated:

Since the seminar was largely conducted in Chinese, I was at a bit of a disadvantage. However, it was clear that the participants were very interested in the range of topics covered in a very compressed period of time. In spite of the advances occurring in Chinese libraries, basic library subject areas ... collection development, acquisitions, the organization of materials (cataloging), information/reference services, networks for the delivery of library services, designing libraries and services that reflect how people seek information and use libraries today ... are likely to have broad appeal to these audiences.

The opportunity for more interaction with participants during and after the presentations would be useful ... as we saw during the lively question and answer session at the conclusion of the seminar. I would encourage offering more panel presentations with speakers taking a different slant on a specific subject and the audience being able to comment and question those presenting.

Because the state of librarianship and libraries is moving forward rapidly in China, assessing what the needs are for future seminars is very important.

Your suggestions:

The lesson I took away from the experience is that there is no possible way to understand China, its libraries and how Chinese libraries are staffed and function unless you've been there. If invited to make a presentation in the future (during my year as President of the American Library Association), I will be very specific in covering how libraries are organized, library staff are trained, facilities are designed and operate and key management skills for a well-run library. My keynote was, appropriately, broad and conceptual. However, what seemed to me to be most useful was to describe the "nitty gritty" of how libraries work in our country.

Report by:

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