

AASL ANNUAL CONFERENCE—TORONTO 2015

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My exposure to professional conferences is limited, to say the least. This means that the following summation, filtered through a novice mind, can only be a sampling of the conference at best. Really, it is my amateur interpretation. But this is exactly why I have benefited from the student travel award. You all have provided a starting point and I feel I'm learning quickly. My goals included, first of all, representing my institution well. A second goal was exposure (in the wild, so to speak) to the language and scope of this segment (the information part) of my adopted profession (architecture). Finally, I wanted to establish myself in the community of architecture school librarians.

After introductions, Shawn Micallef, author and columnist for *The Toronto Star*, provided a fun local introduction to both the culture and cityscape of Toronto, introducing me to the term "psychogeography." He painted the city's "messy urbanism" as an accidental metropolis, encouraging us to pass through it on foot; and cast it as an unhomey teenager in need of some empathy. Cindy Derrenbacker of Laurentian University presented the legacy of Toronto's own Raymond Moriyama as a springboard for our group excursions to the local projects with which he was involved. The first of those excursions was our afternoon trip to the Bata Shoe Museum and the extraordinary Toronto Reference Library and its Digital Innovation Hub.

The conference evolved into a series of themes marked by prescient social issues and innovative projects. Issues covered included the changing ways in which research impact may be measured and the place of women in the architectural profession. These larger social and professional issues were explicated and localized to our community of architectural librarians through "lighting round presentations" and conference sessions. The latter caught my interest because I have spent most of my architectural career at women-owned firms and my *alma mater* is home to the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA). Also notable was the objection

of some to the “gendering” of architecture and the limitations of such categories, for example by overlooking the transgendered and gender non-conforming community.

Besides issues, the conference also highlighted innovative and exciting projects of both architecture and information. The stunning Aga Khan Museum stood out for me (as well as the fantastic dinner at Diwan Restaurant). New and developing reference resources such as *Le Corbusier Online* and the *Built Works Registry* were presented. *Avery Index*, which I certainly used as an architecture student, reminded us of its important cataloging and indexing work. Diego Grass presented an interesting and creative way of remotely examining architecture *in situ* through video representation with his *OnArchitecture* project. Also on the ubiquitous theme of technology, a visit to the Student Learning Center at Reyerson University reminded us particularly of our own changing landscape, if not our ultimate role as information professionals.

The salient issues at the business meeting included perceived competition and need for coordination with other conferences such as ARLIS, ACSA, and VRA. Questions arose about documenting conference presentations, redesigning the website, and developing policies and procedures for focus groups. And what’s a business meeting without talk of the budget, including our 501c3 application and status? Finally, some were interested in revisiting the group’s core list of publications.

There are many dimensions to attending a conference. The strongest impact on me remains situated in the in-between spaces, so to speak, which is not to say marginal. This is the interstitial space of small talk, observation, forecasting, griping, and theorizing. Collective consciousness emerges in the act of sharing at many levels and confirming (or rejecting) our individual perceptions. Those in between spaces provided connection, and a sort framework with which to grasp and comprehend the main events of the conference and the issues of the day. Whatever my preconceived notions were, I feel closer to a professional community. I want to thank the AASL for the honor of welcoming me so generously into the fold. I was delighted by my fellow attendee’s reception and was particularly touched by Maya Gervits’ presentation of the student travel award. I think we would all like to thank the planning committee, especially Sonny Banerjee for his unshakable good nature as host. I enjoyed meeting

everyone who was there, and I look forward to meeting others perhaps next year in Seattle.