

Joshua Meyer

AASL Conference Report

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As the 2013 recipient of the AASL Student Travel Award, I am pleased to outline and share in this report my wonderful experiences whilst attending the 2013 Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The month of March 2013 marked an enriching time in my life with regard to professional development, networking and mentorship. I was able to share and explain my professional aspirations and objectives with the AASL community, while at the same time receiving incredible and generous amounts of feedback, insights, anecdotes and recommendations. After leaving San Francisco and returning back to Philadelphia to digest all the case studies, concepts, and experiences that were packed into the highly engaging agenda, I started to formulate in my head the reasons why I felt this event was so successful and impressionable. I later even found a small bulleted list that I made on the plane ride home listing this exact thought. It read: *People; Activities; Knowledge sharing; San Francisco!; and the future.*

First, I was most overjoyed about the generosity and enthusiasm of the AASL members as a whole, as well as getting to know most members on a personal level. It was clear to me that for many, this event was the super bowl of annual meetings and conferences, and I was continually impressed by the excitement and energy being circulated by all. As a general rule, one can expect this type of behavior from librarians, but this factor is heightened exponentially through the groups' unique traits of a long standing camaraderie, as well as sharing a highly specialized subject knowledge field.

Second, the myriad and well organized assemblage of speaker panels and discussions left me enriched, energized and inspired me to take action. The lightning round talks directly related to current initiatives being undertaken at my library, and I was pleased to share many of the concepts from this session with my colleagues back in Philadelphia. After following up through email with Kathy Edwards on her talk about film & video public performance rights, our next library meeting will include an agenda line on the possibility of implementing this practice. I enjoyed the discussion on open access journals in the context of the architecture field, and felt it was very important for the barriers on this model to be communicated and outlined. For example, who knew a journal needs five straight issues to get on Ebsco, or the challenges of having to contact each service just to get indexed? Kim Soss' presentation presented valuable insight into the world of assisting graduate students with thesis preparation, while Jacque Tygart's case study made me rethink the importance of cataloging for maximizing access, as well as the fundamental flaw that some schools don't count E-books as physical, appraisable objects. I recently wrote a research proposal for my MLIS studies about design collaborations with staff, faculty and librarians, and Kasia Leousis' presentation resonated with my own experiences. After getting back to the library at Longwood, I downloaded many of Cathryn Zeifle's recommendations from her now infamous *List of Apps*, and it's been rather easy to entice students to check out these powerful tools. Phillpe Laux's anecdotes on real life collaboration with architecture schools nationwide in France exposes the potential for similar projects within the AASL in America, or even international partnerships. I found Ed Teague's account of rebirthing old slides into digital hot commodities to be quite pertinent to

our archives unit here at Longwood, and was glad to share this presentation with the archivist at Longwood. As my library is currently brainstorming initiatives to inspire more engaging users, my boss was thrilled to learn about the fresh and creative approaches being undertaken by Martha Walker at Cornell University. In a similar vein, I felt compelled to share the work done by Elizabeth Schaub in her marketing and outreach endeavors with our very own marketing department here at Longwood. And finally, the online collaboration experiences shared by John Cays and Maya Gervitz echoed similar experiences with my library and provided me with new ideas in approaching study abroad scenarios.

The special topics presentations also elicited much food for thought, and I once again felt compelled to share these ideas with peers and colleagues. Learning about Kevin McMahon and Reza Monahan's monumental efforts with SCI-Arc was inspiring, and illustrated the ability to achieve extraordinary goals through simple means such as strong communication, great donor relations and passion. Mitch Stepanovich and John McDermott's presentation about barriers in the studio from technology, to access and to service hours was very effective in the librarian's role of being an advocate for the student's information needs. I was able to cite this study in helping my library decide about expanding hours as well as offering off site access to our databases. Similarly, I found Jesse Vestermark's instructional methods to be highly successful and creative, and hope to use these methods of interaction someday. As someone who appreciates the ability to identify trends in their given field, I found Rebecca Price's observation of micro-macro themes to be purposeful in offering information services to users with the best context in mind.

The third point on my list was my delight in discovering the transparency of the group and the desire to practice in knowledge sharing. While I had two years of library experience and am about to graduate with my MLIS degree this summer, there is only so much theory one can put into practice as an intern. Learning about people's philosophies on collection development and how it is initiated was a common question for me, and I truly feel I have a much greater understanding of the topic in the architecture context. I also learned at length about how larger schools deal with overlap of collections; as a former landscape architecture student who heavily utilized both the science and engineering as well as the art libraries, it was interesting to learn how this situation impacts the librarian. I was also able to talk at length with several people about effective techniques for engaging with the user and relating to instructional sessions. As I'll be taking an instructional methods class this summer, I am hoping to have some anecdotes to share with my classmates. Finally, simply hearing from seasoned and new professionals about how they landed their first academic library job and how they achieved that goal was invaluable. I left with a list of resources and contacts to consult, as well as a clear idea of what skills I need to develop and hone in on.

With the third point on my small, bulleted list simply reading *San Francisco!*, I'll be honest in saying that I was very excited to visit this city for the first time, as well as being on the West Coast for more than a flight layover at LAX. The City of San Francisco certainly did not disappoint, surpassed all my expectations, and was a show stopping backdrop in learning about the collections, concepts and user needs in the area. Having the privilege of a walking tour, the China Town experience as well as the art deco decadence of Oakland and William Stout Books left me feeling cultured and accomplished. The

week's itinerary was at just the right speed to see everything, yet one never felt too rushed- as is oh so common with many conferences.

Overall, I was amazed by how many **goals** were achieved and identified in this trip. I should have underlined and bolded this word in my list! In an attempt to explain how my goals were reached while attending this week-long event, I will describe the reasons why I applied for the AASL Conference Student Award. First, I was able to attend part of the Annual Meeting in Boston in 2012, and could not attend the full schedule because of my job obligations and looming MLIS studies deadlines. Taking the initial plunge as a new member that year motivated me to realize the full benefits of attending in San Francisco, despite supporting myself on an Intern's salary. Second, I have a proven commitment to the subject specialties associated with AASL and allied fields, with degrees in landscape architecture and sustainable development. I believe that this subject specialty knowledge is important in being able to better realize my suitability for architecture librarianship as I enter the job market in the coming months. Third, I have made a considerable commitment to utilizing subject specialties in my career, which involved many sacrifices and demonstrates my motivation for learning more about architecture libraries. For example, I left two permanent, higher paying public library jobs for the yearlong LIS internship at Longwood Gardens to better utilize my background knowledge in design, environmental science and sustainability.

My overarching career goal is to secure a job in academic libraries where I can successfully share knowledge and resources in a manner that improves the information and literacy lives of others. My initial desire to attend last year's meeting in Boston was to gain a first-hand account of emerging trends and case studies in academic libraries for the purpose of knowledge sharing. After leaving San Francisco, I can say for a fact that this experience has further solidified my desire to work with architecture collections in an academic setting. In my current internship, I rotate throughout the year in the library, the archives as well as our digital repository of images called the Digital Gallery. Gaining a firsthand tour of the UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design library as well as other libraries such as the Academy of Science was highly insightful in learning how my current skills can be useful in academic libraries. Most importantly, this conference has inspired and motivated me to be an advocate for AASL, utilize its resources and network of professionals, and challenge myself to find a job I love in the field. After returning home from San Francisco and slowly coming down to earth from the classical "conference high", I was overjoyed to learn about the emerging social media outlets with AASL, enabling all to stay seamlessly in touch. And as I said before, the camaraderie and sharing in architecture resources is what AASL does best.