

2011 ACRL/NEC Partnering Program

Submitted to ACRL/NEC Board

by the ACRL/NEC Outreach Group, 6/11

Development of a Partnering Program

During the 2010 ACRL/NEC Board Retreat, the idea for increased outreach to students in New England Library School programs was broached and supported. The Member-at-Large for Outreach agreed to form a group to address this issue. Many Board members expressed interest in joining such a group. Current members of the Outreach Group include:

- Kieran Ayton
- Raynna Bowlby
- Leslie Button
- Eleta Exline
- Diane Klare
- Margaret Lourie
- Robin Maddalena
- Sara Marks
- Linda Plunket, Member-at-Large
- Beth Rohloff
- Janice Schuster
- Amy Stimac

At the initial meeting of the Group, we brainstormed ideas about how to reach out to our target population. After much discussion we decided to create a Partnering Program that would be held during the Annual Conference. The goals were to welcome the students to the organization and to academic librarianship and to spur interest in ACRL/NEC.

Collaboration with Conference Planning Group and Membership

The Conference Planning Committee was contacted and welcomed the idea of including a Partnering Program in the day's events and offered to keep the Outreach Group informed about library school student registrations.

Call for Participation

The Partnering Program was advertised on student email lists at all three New England Library Schools. As the deadline for registration approached we realized that only about ten library school students had registered so we recruited librarian partners from the Board, the Outreach Group, and through word-of-mouth. We initially had ten pairs of partners lined up, but only seven library school students showed up on the day of the Conference.

The librarians who volunteered to be partners were:

- Kieran Ayton, Rhode Island College
- Leslie Button, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Carina Courmoyer, Brown University
- Diane Klare, Wesleyan University
- Amy Lewontin, Northeastern University

Linda Plunket, ACRL/NEC Member at Large, Outreach

- Robin Maddalena, Pine Manor College
- Regina Raboin, Tufts University
- Beth Rohloff, Tufts University
- Janice Schuster, Providence College
- Lauren Vander Zanden, Bristol Community College

Partnering Program Activities

Robin Maddalena volunteered to coordinate the Partnering activities during the day of the conference. The activities suggested to the partners included sharing breakfast and lunch during the conference, introducing the students to colleagues, and discussing career plans with the students as opportunities arose. Librarian partners were also encouraged to talk about the learning and networking opportunities available through ACRL/NEC.

Evaluation by Student & Librarian Partners

A week after the Conference, all participants were sent an email thanking them for their participation and asking them to respond to four questions. Five of the seven students responded and six of the seven librarians responded. Summaries of the responses are below.

Question 1. Was the Partnering Program worthwhile? Why or why not?

All of the students and librarians who responded thought that the Program was worthwhile.

Student partner quotes:

- “Without having a partner, I would have found the conference more intimidating (being a young professional and knowing so few people). It was also useful in that I could make more professional contacts.”
- “. I also liked the fact that ... the librarian I was partnered with, had experience but was also young enough to be in touch with what I am currently going through as a library student and young professional. She offered some great insight into her own experiences so far, and she gave me some new ideas for how to find a Professional Field Experience (required at URI)”
- “The ACRL/NEC AC seemed to be a great networking opportunity, but if I feared that since the only people I knew there were students, that we would cluster together and hamper the full networking experience. This partnering program gave me the opportunity to branch out and make connections through an established librarian in the organization.”

Librarian partner quotes:

- “The program was easy to organize and did not cost anything since it took place at the annual conference. It provided such a valuable opportunity for the students to begin building their professional network.”
- “Besides being exciting to meet and talk with (and get energized by) our future colleagues, I think it offered students who aren't quite part of a professional network just yet a good place to get started.”
- “From my perspective, I got to see what current students are getting in the classroom (increasing my awareness of issues, etc.), and I think the students got to see that we want to help them in the profession, including the benefits of networking.”
- I think both the intention and the results were very positive. I do have some comments to offer, though. I think my partner and I may have gotten on fairly well, but I think that due to the differences in our age, and where we both are in our careers, I think what might have been better for my partner would have been for her to be placed with someone younger.”

Linda Plunket, ACRL/NEC Member at Large, Outreach

- “At least from my perspective it required very minimal effort but was a fun opportunity to be in the position to offer suggestions or answer questions for the student I was paired with.”

Question 2. If it were offered at a future conference, would you recommend it to a colleague?

All student and librarian respondents responded positively.

Question 3. How could the program be improved?

Student participant suggestions:

- “Perhaps if you included a resume review portion to the program.
- “Provide a pre-conference get-together -- that morning, perhaps -- specifically for the program participants. It would be nice to meet the other student-librarian pairs”
- “request/suggest exchanging photos before the conference. I was worried that I wouldn’t find my partner” (This was echoed by a second student respondent.)
- “My issue with my personal experience was my mentor was only a year out of library school... It might be nice to shadow a more seasoned librarian who might be able to give more insight and introduce me to others.”

Librarian participant suggestions:

- “hav(e) a morning meeting area away from the registration table. The registration area was a busy place in the morning and it was difficult to find everyone. “
- “exchange pictures beforehand”.
- “have two volunteers available on conference day to take pictures and make sure that all of the pairs find one another. “
- “I think a bit more buzz can be created in the library schools-- not just for this program, but for the conference. Maybe finding a professional liaison to each of New England's library schools could be a place to start, and a visit by ACRL members/ mentors to talk up membership and the conference (while mentioning the mentoring program) could be helpful.”
- “Perhaps matching students and volunteers based on interest/specialty within academic libraries. Also if students and volunteers were matched it might make it so that they could attend the same breakout sessions.”
- “If the program were to evolve past conferences it could be interesting to build the mentoring program so that it also offers students a chance to shadow a library professional for a day or meet for an informational interview.”

Question 4. What do you think the Chapter could do to encourage more library students to participate in ACRL while earning their library degrees?

Student Partner Responses

- “more marketing... , I only received one email from Simmons about it. Signs in the computer lab and in meeting room would draw more attention.”
- “Offer programs/workshops/courses that are more relevant to library students, at the conferences and/or in other venues (separate workshops, webinars, etc.). Perhaps organize social events of some sort for library students interested in ACRL.”
- “I found out about the conference through the Simmons College GSLIS list serve. Advertising/ providing information on school related resources and providing mentorship programs would be my top two suggestions to encourage student participation.”

- “The Chapter could reach out more to the Deans of the regional library schools and tell them why attending an ACRL Conference is such an important opportunity for library students.”

Librarian Partner Responses

- “The membership committee would like to send volunteers to visit all of the library schools next year. Thirteen students were members of ACRL/NEC last year at this time. As of today there are thirty-six student members. This year’s efforts paid off and they should be continued.”
- “... a liaison or liaisons (alums would be wonderful) to each of the library schools could be a good way in. A visit per semester to check in, answer questions, etc. might be nice. Continue to email... but personal visits tend to be powerful for students.”
- “Have a resume review breakfast ... and have librarians who hire go over student resumes”
- “Have a library student rep on the ACRL NEC Annual Program planning team and encourage them to be on the SIG’s.”
- “If we don’t already do this we should - ACRL NEC Day on the Job, a direct rip-off of SLA’s Day on the Job. Partner librarians from all fields with library students interested in these areas. “
- perhaps we could offer one small program or panel session at the library schools in New England and present a topic that is of interest to library school students (the job market? How to network?).

Recommendations

The Outreach Group recommends to the ACRL/NEC Board that a Partnering Program be continued and that the suggestions above be considered.