

Conable Scholarship Report

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As I reflect on my experiences at the 2017 ALA Annual Conference, the first thing that I feel is extreme gratitude to be chosen as the Gordon M. Conable Conference Scholarship recipient. I could never predict how incredible my first ALA conference would be, nor how amazing the FTRF community is. I am so thankful for my warm welcome into such a passionate group of people, many of whom went above and beyond to make my experience in Chicago such a wonderful one. It truly was one of the most incredible experiences I have ever had in my professional life.

As a newly graduated librarian and first time ALA Annual Conference attendee, navigating the hundreds of sessions and exhibits at the conference seemed overwhelming. Luckily, as the Gordon M. Conable Conference Scholarship recipient, I had an amazing introduction to the conference. Before I even arrived in Chicago, Julia Warga and Kim Diehnelt guided me through the preparations, such as registering for the conference and booking airfare and hotel stay. Julia even met me the first night of the conference to walk me to the trustee dinner. She also connected me to my mentor, Helen Adams. I could not be more grateful to her for guiding me through this experience.

In preparation for the conference, Helen suggested helpful sessions to attend and introduced me to distinguished school librarians who have led incredible careers. Through Helen's introductions, I met with Ann Symons, the most recent electee to honorary membership in the ALA, who has fought for intellectual freedom and LGBTQIA rights in the US and around the globe. I also met with Susi Grissom, who was recently selected as the Dallas ISD's Librarian of the Year. Helen also facilitated contact with many other school librarians from schools in Nigeria, Taiwan, and New York City. Talking to librarians that have accomplished such great things was invaluable to me as I begin my own career in school librarianship. Everyone also graciously offered their ongoing support and I am grateful to have access to their wisdom.

Although I could write pages about all of the amazing librarians that I had access to through the opportunity that the FTRF provided me, I also learned a vast amount of valuable information while at the conference. In addition to meeting the warm and inviting members of the FTRF community, I loved learning more about the work that the FTRF does while I was attending the work sessions and board meetings. Although I was aware that the FTRF participates in litigation, it was fascinating to hear more about the individual court cases and the updates on the state and national legislation regarding privacy, access, etc.

I also enjoyed other sessions regarding intellectual freedom. The Banned Abroad: Stories of International Censorship session not only introduced me to issues that I was unfamiliar with – such as how many texts in Turkey are being censored through deceptive translations – but also revealed many new resources that I plan to use in my role as school

librarian. For example, Words Without Borders (WWB) provides unique texts and commentaries that I hope to share with teachers, in addition to the “Campus” website that facilitates a connection between international literature and the classroom, which I will also be sure to use.

Another session that I found extremely useful as a school librarian was Library Readiness, which focused on facilitating learning in an elementary school library. It provided very practical skills and helpful tools to support young students of all backgrounds, namely English language learners and special needs students. The activities that the speaker, Karla Collins, shared were very engaging and educational, and could also be adapted to fit secondary students. I will certainly be more likely to incorporate Padlet, Popplet, and Plickers into my library instruction after seeing them modeled in the session. I am also eager to share these resources with the teachers at my school.

Many people have asked me about the conference since I returned from Chicago, and nearly every person has noticed my face light up and my smile widen as I answer their questions. It is difficult to express in words how grateful I am to the FTRF for selecting me from such a large pool of talented applicants. Especially since this was my first ALA conference, I can speculate that I would have felt lost in the thousands of attendees. My mentors aided me through the entire process and provided access to their incredible network of colleagues. I am sure that I would not have felt so accomplished if I had attended the conference without the FTRF's support. I also feel so excited to continue to work with the FTRF and all of the wonderful people that I met through this experience. Thank you again for this incredible opportunity and I look forward to working with the FTRF community for years to come.

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