

TLA Conference 2013 Fort Worth, Texas
Promoting Our Values Proving Our Worth

Paula's Overview

Before writing this piece, I went back and read my overview from last year's conference. It seems that I could almost use the same document this year! There is the same sense of excitement as well as the sense of uneasiness that I spoke of last year.

Once again, there will be a board member in attendance for the first time. Carol Ann Grantham, our president-elect, will miss the opening days of conference due to a prior commitment but will attend the last two days. It is always exciting to share conference with a first timer!

Another reason to be excited this year is that the conference is in our back yard (well, almost!) I'm proud that we will get to showcase Fort Worth and certain that many of the local librarians and their staff members, board members and Friends as well as school librarians will be in attendance. The close proximity also made it possible for me to spend some extra time volunteering this year, which turned out to be great fun!

A sense of uneasiness does still hover around the world of libraries though. Budget cuts are still happening. Our own North Texas Library Partners recently announced their closing because of lack of funding. Library staff worry about their jobs. Questions about the relevance of libraries in today's world are still being asked everyday. There does however, seem to be an upswing in the library story. Local governments seem to be loosening the reins somewhat. Even the Texas legislature has made budget recommendations that are mostly positive in this session, up to the time conference began. Support for libraries is showing up more and more frequently.

The most heartening news about libraries can still be found at a TLA conference. The people you encounter, the stories you hear and the enthusiasm that is everywhere around you will leave you with no doubt about the future of libraries. They are in good hands.

TLA 2013

THURSDAY

General Session I

TLA President Sherilyn Bird opened the conference and began by thanking major sponsors. The following awards were presented:

The **UNT Libraries'** "Portal to Texas History" Project received the **TLA Wayne Williams Library Project of the Year** which recognizes the highest levels of achievement, professional standards, and inspiration to other Libraries.

The **Libraries Change Communities Award** recognizes a collaborative community effort to promote outstanding library-based initiatives in Texas. The **Bell Whittington Public Library's Seniors in Cyberspace** program delivered specialized training to adults over the age of 50. In addition to providing the training within two libraries in the county, this award recipient took training to 4 other sites in the county – including 2 Dairy Queens. Because of this work, participants are now more connected to family and friends AND the library has seen a big increase in Friends memberships and volunteerism.

Librarian of the Year is **Lydia Tucker** of Neil Armstrong Elementary School in San Antonio.

The **Distinguished Service Award** was claimed by **Steve Brown**.

Gleniece A. Robinson, director of the Fort Worth Public Library, was honored with the **Lifetime Achievement Award**.

J. R. Martinez, author of *Full of Heart: My Story of Survival, Strength, and Spirit*, but better known as champion of Dancing with the Stars and actor on All My Children, was the speaker for the opening session. Generally the opening session speakers are uplifting and motivational and J.R. did not disappoint. He was funny and engaging as well as inspiring.

This was a mystery/thriller author panel with Deborah Crombie, Stephanie Jaye Evans and Taylor Stevens. Michael Koryta and Lisa Lutz were also scheduled but cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

Crombie is the award winning author of the very popular Duncan Kinkaid / Gemma James mystery series set in the United Kingdom. She was raised in Richardson and now lives in McKinney.

Stephanie Jaye Evans is a first time author from Sugarland Texas who writes mysteries with a faith element set in Sugarland.

Taylor Stevens is the New York Times bestselling author of *The Informationist*, *The Innocent* and the soon to be released *The Doll*. Featuring Vanessa Michael Munroe, the series has received critical acclaim and *The Informationist* has been optioned for film. Stevens was born into the Children of God, raised in communes across the world and denied an education beyond the sixth grade. She broke from the cult in her twenties, now lives in Dallas and is at work on the fourth Munroe book.

Every time I go to an author session at TLA, I leave thinking “I wish we could get them for Mansfield Reads!” Any of these three could be a real possibility and should be on the list for consideration. Go check out any of their books and let me know what you think.

LiFTA Luncheon is always a pleasure. Friends attendees share a table with Mansfield Library Advisory Board members, and librarians. In attendance this year were Friends members Paula Highfill, Jenny Elliott and Diane Kelly, Board members Suzonne Evans and Cynthia Gray, City Librarian Steve Standefer and Assistant City Librarian Annette Weber. It is not often that all of the “branches” of our library get to socialize together and appear united in the library community.

This year’s authors were Susan Elizabeth Phillips, the only four-time winner of the Romance Writers of America Book of the Year Award, and Andrew McCarthy, actor and travel writer for National Geographic. McCarthy is the author of the new book *The Longest Way Home: One Man’s Quest for the Courage to Settle Down*. Both very entertaining, and both would certainly be great prospects for author visits and Mansfield Reads!

In addition, a Benefactor Award was presented to the Friends of the Plano Public Library. The Friends group made their first contribution of \$100 to their local public library in 1967 to purchase one set of Encyclopedia Britannica. Since then, they have continued working to help their library offer first-class resources and services. Last December, after an extremely successful library book sale, the group presented a check for \$100,000 to the city council. Over the last ten years, the Friends group has gifted almost \$1 million to benefit the community through enhanced library programs and materials.

Grants from the Tocker Foundation were also awarded to small community libraries.

TLA Conference 2013 Maximizing Social Media

I was very interested in this session since the Friends have recently begun to emphasize their social media presence more than in the past with the hopes of attracting more interest and new members.

Rachel Parker, a social media consultant, presented information about the “Big Four”:

- Blogs
- Facebook
- Twitter
- YouTube

Others popular currently are

- Google +
- LinkedIn
- Foursquare
- Pinterest

Most important tip for a library: know your patrons.

Use your media with the 70 20 10 rule

70% to share valuable relevant content
20% to share others content
10% to promote your services

Always respond to questions promptly.

Engage with polls, questions (T/F), quizzes.

Post images – a lot.

They are most liked, commented on and shared on Facebook.

Note: I'm not sure all of these apply as a rule to Friends groups since our content and objectives are not the same as the library's, but some tips are good to know such as the photo posting info.

Brittney Cossey is in Adult Services at the Frisco Public Library and handles their Twitter page. She also manages Tumblr and Pinterest. There are others who handle their Facebook page.

She had some interesting info about Tumblr. It is a social network that works as a blogging platform. You have followers. They re-blog. It uses a dashboard set-up. Mostly comprised of images and short snippets of text. **Target audience teens to mid 30s.**

Pinterest is a social network that is strictly image driven. Its target audience is **women mid 20s to 50s.** 50% have children. Users spend 1 hour 17 minutes per visit to the site.

Primary purpose of these two platforms is to generate content others will want to share.

Ask "If I didn't work here, would I want to share this?"

Tremain, from the Abilene Public Library, South Branch uses social media in almost every format. He believes that in order to connect to patrons you must be where they are which means Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, etc. Use their Smartphone apps. They use them for everything don't they? Why shouldn't you be right there on their phone where they have everything else?

Facebook pictures & albums, created for events, activities, everyday happenings and posted and shared generate the most interest and activity. They also show all the things that are going on in your library. Take pictures of the snake handler, the author visit, the study group, the craft class, the game night, etc.

Note: Every presenter in the session mentioned photos on Facebook. We will be posting more photos!

TLA 2013 Adding Value through Community Collaboration

This session was presented by two professors from the University of North Texas who worked on the Pearl Project – Promoting and Enhancing Rural Libraries, and Molly Raphael, Past President of American Library Association.

Although the description of the session led me to believe the topic would be more general, it focused more on this particular study and was not very applicable to our Friends group other than in the general, common sense ways such as “try to cultivate community partners.”

TLA 2013 Evening with the Authors at Reata

This was one of the most enjoyable dinner events I have ever attended at TLA. I volunteered as a “ticket taker” so I arrived early and got to check in and greet every single guest as they arrived. (I also got to reserve seats at a great table for our group, which included Jenny Elliott, Diane Kelly, Suzonne Evans and Annette Weber.)

Reata was the perfect setting for the beautiful spring evening. The dinner was set under the fourth level dome and featured a delicious meal hosted by the owner, and Reata cookbook author, Mike Micallef.

Cookbook author Robb Walsh (*Texas Eats*) and newly named Texas Monthly Barbecue Editor and author (*Prophets of Smoked Meats*) Daniel Vaughn were also speakers.

FRIDAY

General Session II

The Second General Session of Conference featured speaker Dan Ariely. His most recent work is *The Honest Truth about Dishonesty*. Ariely gave attendees an insider’s look into his international studies regarding the understanding of honest and dishonest behaviors. His findings were fascinating and thought-provoking. It was quite an entertaining way to start the day!

Public Library as Destination

Wendy Heger, formerly of the Houston Public Library, now an associate at the architectural firm PageSoutherlandPage, gave a presentation on how libraries are using LEED certified building designs to integrate outdoor areas, energy efficient spaces, multi-use spaces, portable furniture and many other features to make their facilities open and accessible as well as energy and cost efficient. She used slides to show various Houston facilities, both new and renovated, to illustrate different looks and materials that can be used to accomplish objectives. Of particular note was a civic use project that was integrated into a downtown park. Also of note was a renovated neighborhood project.

Cathy Zeigler of the Plano Public Library System used a powerpoint demo to talk about many of their programs. Way too numerous to list, but some very interesting, the presentation will be on the TLA conference website and can be accessed after the conference by clicking on the link for

the session title. This could be used if we are looking for ideas to use for auxiliary programming for Reads programs or for ideas for other programs.

SEE PDF ATTACHMENT FOR POWER POINT SLIDES

Lariat List Luncheon

This luncheon features the announcement of the TLA 2013 Lariat Adult Fiction Reading List. Ernest Cline, a spoken word artist, screenwriter of the cult phenomenon film *Fanboys*, and author of *Ready Player One*, featured on the list, was scheduled to speak but was unable to attend. We were seated with one of the members of the conference planning committee though, and got to express our opinions and make lots of suggestions for conference next year in San Antonio!

SEE LARIAT LIST PDF ATTACHMENT

Legislative Update

This session outlined the status of bills that will have direct impact on libraries, two in particular:

One affects counties but probably will not get out of committee. The law currently says that if a majority of voters in a county want a library they can petition commissioners and they must create one. This is being rewritten to allow commissioners to decide.

The other is of particular note: HB 693 is out of committee and on its way to the House. It will allow utility billing parties to add donations to libraries to monthly utility bills. This could be very beneficial to fundraising for building campaigns or monthly giving campaigns.

TLA Conference 2013 Book Buzz

This is a lightning quick presentation from nine different publishers about new adult titles that will be coming out soon. Hearing from the publishers what they expect to be the most talked about, the most requested for book clubs, the hottest new titles before they even go to the reviewers gives us a real insight into titles and especially authors that might be good fits for Mansfield Reads and Mansfield Writes.

Authors that have new books coming out typically go on tour which means they might be in our area around the time of Reads. We might be able to choose one of their past titles and take advantage of some great publicity from their hot new title as well as their travel schedule. The same applies to new authors that publishers expect to have a big hit with their debut. A good

example was Billy Fountain's Long Halftime Walk. While we did not choose this book, it went on to become a huge bestseller and win numerous awards. The publishers told us all about it at last year's Book Buzz and that is how it made our short list.

It also helps to meet the library marketing reps from the publishers. After you have introduced yourself and talked about your programs several times, when you email them it helps them to be able to put a face to the name and to know that you put some time and effort into the books and authors that you short list for your programs.

Copies of the handouts from this session will be available at the Reads selection committee meeting.

SEE PDF ATTCHMENTS FOR PUBLISHER HANDOUTS

TLA Conference 2013

President's Exhibit Hall Celebration

This is an after hours event in the exhibits hall. Exhibitors stay late and offer special give-aways and drawings, there is live entertainment, wonderful free food stations throughout the hall, cash bar and a nice party atmosphere!

Book Cart Drill Team Competition

This is normally a highlight of conference. Think a dance routine/comedy sketch/parade all done with book carts – lots of them. Sadly, this year only one team competed. Maybe it is a sign of the times in library land, but they made the most of it, everyone had a great time and they took home the prize from Demco!

TLA Conference 2013 Putting up the Goods: Libraries' Impact and Return on Investment

SATURDAY

This session was one of the most informative sessions I attended on the subject of advocacy.

A speaker from the State Library went over some of the facts that came from the study that was commissioned by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to determine "Texas public libraries' economic benefits and return on investment."

\$4.42 ROI for every dollar

\$2.4 billion in economic benefits from public libraries in Texas in 2011

12,000 jobs dependent on public library direct expenditures

These are real economic figures that can be used to show the real economic value of libraries besides the positive social value. The study was contracted to measure benefits and analyzes libraries as a business with economic benefits not just social benefits.

The 2011 Texas legislative session resulted in an 88% reduction in funds to libraries. This has an even more significant impact in that these reductions affect federal funds.

Susan Mann from the Hillsboro City Library spoke about using certain types of data to get the attention of the group you are advocating to.

Politicians, i.e. council members, budget writers, are interested in voters. Use anecdotal info with statistical data to back it up.

Example: We are the only free computer access in the city. 90% of our computers are in use all of the hours that we are open. One young mother uses our computers to do classwork online to complete her degree. Students do their homework online. One grandfather does genealogy research for his grandchildren's family tree. In McKinney two young brothers could not afford office space for their start up business. They came in every day, sat up their laptops, and worked quietly. They eventually grew and branched out of the library, and sold their business. You know it today as Words with Friends.

Example: In Hillsboro they have a large bronze statue of a man reading a book to a young girl on a bench. "It is the only public art on display in Hillsboro." It has inspired many stories, on TV, some naming contests, the man on the bench has become famous and brought a lot of good publicity and notoriety to the town.

Janis Test from the Abilene Public Library system continued with this theory.

She suggested using the Friends group for testimony on library value with personal stories. They are not library personnel so hearing stories from citizens, i.e. voters, about how the library impacts their lives makes an impression.

One thing they do in Abilene is ask staff members to write down memorable interactions. Tell personal stories about patrons that have been helped in the library.

Point out that library services are FREE. They have Book a Librarian sessions. Free 30 minutes of help for whatever you need it for. Very popular and make excellent testimonial stories. Use your basic info, point out what you do every day to make your case.

Example: They refurbished and reopened a neighborhood branch. The friends and the community put up the money, the council committed to the operational expenses. That gave ownership to the neighborhood. It really became their branch. They had big numbers for the opening and big numbers thereafter. They were able to use those numbers and go back to council and say "See, we told you so – your investments will pay off."

Julie Todaro from Austin Community College had further tips for targeting your audience.

She also suggested using specific or targeted data that makes sense to decision makers individually. If you know your councilman loves movies talk about how many copies of free DVDs you circulate. Find something in your request for everyone.

Brand your staff expertise in terminology others understand and can relate to. Children's librarian is the youth expert.

Use other decision makers outside the library to help with your message. The police chief said mischief went down in the summer as soon as the new programs started up.

Have your elevator speech ready. Tailor it to your audience.

Be ready to answer impact questions. Know your data.

Lee Shuey with TLA offered insight on tools available on the TLA website.

There is a 30 page toolkit on Proving Your Worth.

65 Reasons to Love Your Library (being updated)

Graphics available to use in your newsletter, website.

Short articles, paragraphs ready to send to newspapers.

Gloria Meraz once again reminded us that this info has to get to the decision makers to be useful. Use the impact data. It shows you know what you are talking about. It shows you have an understanding of the value of libraries.

TLA Conference 2013 Nia Vardalos

Ms. Vardalos was originally scheduled to be part of the LiFTA luncheon but because of a scheduling conflict had to cancel. She rescheduled this session to speak about her new book Instant Mom.

What a treat. She was funny and touching. This is definitely one of the perks of attending a TLA conference. The authors you meet are just amazing.

Ms. Vardalos signed complimentary copies of her book after the session.

TLA 2013 General Session III with Neil Gaiman

From the conference brochure –“A true literary Renaissance man, Neil Gaiman has created in just about every genre – prose, poetry, film, journalism, comics, song lyrics, and drama.” His works range from *Sandman*, *Coraline* and *Crazy Hair* to *Neverwhere*, *Stardust*, and *The Graveyard Book*. A master in the social media realm, his work as a blogger and on Twitter has earned him millions of readers and followers. An unabashed library advocate, Gaiman credits librarians with his love of reading. He serves as the 2013 spokesman for National Library Week.”