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MLIS '12

Thanks to the Frost-Gershenfeld Travel Award, I was fortunate enough to attend the Special Libraries Association Annual Meeting in New Orleans in June, 2010.



The conference was educational, interesting, fun and thought-provoking on many levels. I attended fee-based sessions on developing an information architecture, text mining and visualization as well as a number of free sessions. There were so many paid and free sessions to choose from every day, I was not able to attend all of the ones I wanted to, such as a panel on embedded librarianship. Free sessions included a talk on optimizing career advancement within the workplace, where the primary message was that it's not enough to do a great job, you need to do a bit of self-promotion to get yourself noticed. The speaker (a librarian), conceded that most librarians are not comfortable doing this but he highly recommended it and offered specific strategies to accomplish this goal.

I also attended the opening address by Mary Matalin and James Carville, a New Orleans native, who offered a warm and heartfelt welcome to the city. Two unexpected surprises made the conference even more enjoyable. I discovered that there is an SLA Baseball Caucus (I'm a huge baseball fan) and I attended their annual business meeting. Ron Swoboda (formerly of the New York Mets) was the guest speaker and was promoting SABR, the Society for American Baseball Research, dedicated to the collection and preservation of baseball data. I learned that one of the SLA members attending the meeting was employed by a major league baseball team. Now *there* is my dream job!

A second surprise came with the announcement of the five SLA "Rising Stars" of 2010, that is, newer members of SLA who are making outstanding contributions to the organization and to the profession. One of the recipients was our own Reese Dano (UW MLIS grad), current membership director of the Oregon chapter of SLA. It was a thrill to see him on stage receiving this prestigious award.

Many of us attended a fabulous luncheon at Emeril's hosted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (I'm the second one from the left).



The food was fabulous, the restaurant beautiful and I sat at a table with talented librarians from all over the country. In fact, the luncheon was only one in a series of encounters with amazing members of SLA. Being my first SLA conference, this was my first exposure to the breadth and depth of this particular segment of information professionals. Members were employed by public, private and academic organizations ranging from libraries to the DuPont Corporation to art museums. The range of education, training and types of work performed by those I met was amazing, from collection development to highly technical software design and implementation.

There was some time for sightseeing (somewhat curtailed by the heat advisory) and my favorite event sponsored by SLA was the visit to the Degas House. Edgar Degas lived in New Orleans for five months in 1872 and the house he lived in has become a popular tourist attraction. The guided tour was fascinating and fortunately, the house sat high enough on a knoll that it was not damaged by Hurricane Katrina. I joined another attendee for dinner one evening at Mr. B's Bistro (recommended by the concierge) and



had beignets at Café du Monde.

As luck would have it, one of my college chums has lived in New Orleans for the last thirty years and took me on a driving tour of the city (in his

nice air conditioned car).



There is no doubt in my mind, after attending this convention, that the question raised in a course I am taking this term, Information in Social Context, has been answered. Librarianship in all its forms, *is* a profession, not an occupation. I hope to attend future SLA conventions and would encourage all of you interested in special librarianship to do the same. It was a truly inspirational experience and I am grateful for having had this wonderful opportunity to attend.