
Shakin' down at Shakertown

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A participant's view of an ACRL/PLA humanities programming workshop.

The isolated, somewhat austere setting of Shakertown, Kentucky, would seem the least pleasant place to talk about the humanities, yet it proved to be an excellent setting for library teams who came there on March 13-15, 1985, to learn about grant writing and funding available from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Sponsored by ACRL and PLA, the workshop was a daring idea—to bring together academic and public librarians, together with humanists from various fields of the humanities, in a spirit of communication and cooperation which might foster joint ventures in humanities programming. As we soon learned, the Shaker values of honesty and simplicity could well be applied to the grant-writing process, as could the virtue of patience in both the writing time and the waiting time as the grant evolved from its initial concept to finished product. The participants were advised by more than one of the speakers to remember that the humanities as defined by NEH involved their study and interpretation, not their actual performance, which more appropriately belonged in the area of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Emphasis in this workshop was on team spirit and cooperation. At the time I was library director at the Ohio State University, Lima Campus, and our three-member team consisted of myself, an assistant professor of music, and the head of technical services, Lima Public Library. When we arrived on the first day, we were greeted by the ACRL executive director, JoAn Segal, who distributed ma-

terials for the following day. These materials contained a virtual how-to of information about writing grant proposals. There were verbal introductions, and a candid photo and a questionnaire completed by each participant helped to reveal the various mix of talents, personalities, background, and training. These were placed on the walls around the meeting room, creating a friendly, sharing atmosphere.

Julie Virgo, former executive director of ACRL, was the principal presider at the events, having written the grant for the program and defined the major objectives for the workshop. She designed the format to include a lecture by a representative from NEH's Humanities Projects in Libraries, actual case studies of successful humanities programs in libraries, and panels composed of those humanists who worked with writing or reviewing grants. Since the team approach was encouraged, the most important objective was "to acquaint librarians and humanists with the value and potential impact of humanities programs on the library's program of service." It was refreshing, therefore, for this participant to see how the barriers between humanist/scholar, academic librarian, and public librarian were overcome in a forum where ideas blended and the overall result was a team that worked out differences in order to achieve the goal of a fundable project.

Each of the three-member teams was combined with another to form a six-member team in order to write a proposal which was reviewed by a panel on

the last day of the workshop. This exercise alone was worthwhile because it required everyone to perform the necessary interactions and compromises which are necessary for producing a final proposal.

In our team, for example, a project on American Musical Theatre took several turns and directions before a stated set of objectives evolved. We soon realized that before ideas can be given shape and form many things must be taken into account: budgets, the intended audience, the involvement of scholars, the time structure, and the final evaluation of the project. Before we could present a program on American Musical Theatre, for example, we knew we needed to assess the Lima community in which we lived but frequently took for granted. It was clear that when the proposals were presented to the review panel that many of the teams

needed to define the specific involvement of librarians in the humanities project.

For most librarians, writing an NEH proposal and taking the plunge into humanities programming is a deviation from the role of information service provider in a specific library to one that involves being a participant in a larger community project. Clearly this was one outstanding benefit of the workshop—that it freed librarians and humanists from day-to-day responsibilities in order to engage in an interchange and exchange of programming ideas. The ACRL/PLA workshop was an opportunity to explore humanities projects in conjunction with libraries. It was, at least for the Lima team, complete with the necessary information to work toward a shared humanities program which seemed viable and which, finally, might be funded with real dollars from NEH. ■ ■

Baltimore '86

Places to visit during ACRL's next national conference.

"As we advanced toward Baltimore the look of cultivation increased, the fences wore an air of greater neatness, the houses began to look like the abodes of competence and comfort..."

Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1832

In anticipation of hosting the Fourth National ACRL Conference April 9-12, 1986, Baltimore is looking even more cultivated, its fences getting mended to even greater neatness, and its abodes made even more comfortable than they were when Frances Trollope described them over 150 years ago. In the Spring of '86, it is hoped that librarians from across the nation will throng to Baltimore to discover its delights.

The theme of this conference, "Energies for Transition," will be explored only partially through addresses, speeches, and exhibits within Baltimore's new Convention Center. The com-

pleat conventioner will want to sample the events, professional and social, which are being planned to complement the official schedule. The busperson on holiday will find that the city has been blessed with a multitude of libraries and related institutions, whose staffs will be pleased to welcome guests. The librarian, needing respite after a busy day at the meetings, will be able to enjoy several social outings.

Library visits

On Wednesday night, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, a premier public research library, whose founding inspired Andrew Carnegie and which celebrates its centennial in 1986, will host a gala reception for convention goers.

A daytime excursion will combine visits to the Maryland Historical Society and the Peabody Library, neighbors on or near Mt. Vernon Square. Founded in 1844, the Maryland Historical Society is a repository of manuscripts, books, silver, furniture, and portraits related to Maryland's history