Volunteering at the 2005 PNC, PRDLA, ECAI Conference at UHM

I volunteered fourteen-and-a-half hours for the PNC, PRDLA, ECAI conference held at the East West Center from October 30th till November 3, 2005. Being part of this event was a great learning experience and opportunity for me as a student to gain invaluable experience.

I prepared for my participation in this conference by first attempting to learn as much as I was able to about this event and its constituent organizations. I found that the conference website and talking with organizers were the most rewarding resources in this pursuit. Even before it was offered as a class project, I was prepared to volunteer my services. I was contacted as co-chair of a student group by the University Librarian via a Professor requesting volunteer service from our organizations and saw it as a great opportunity. So I was very happy to see that it would be included in our curriculum.

At the registration training session I attended on the morning of Sunday October 30, I learned more than just how to register attendees. Via instruction and observation, I was also exposed to several pertinent professional conference and management issues. At this meeting several misunderstandings between conference organizers arose and were efficiently dealt with utilizing tried managerial strategies. I observed examples of careful communication used in facilitation and solving disagreements. One organizer skillfully employed several of the necessary management qualities we have read about in our text. This organizer effectively tried to make everyone feel comfortable and welcomed each individual’s input. In settling disagreements she utilized great listening skills and respectful language with others while not sacrificing her own opinions in solving the issues at hand.
As per volunteering at the registration and information desk, I quickly learned that some of the same tenets from reference were here applicable. A lot of my success at the information desk was due to the time and effort I had spent in learning about the schedule, locations, and logistics of the conference. This enabled me to answer attendees’ questions in a quick and accurate manner. I anticipated this, and made certain to learn a wider swatch of information about the conference than the minima necessary to aid in registration. At the training session, we talked about the structure and policies of the conference, as well as taking a tour of the conference site in order to accurately help attendees with directions and other questions.

I was thoroughly impressed with the conference organizers’ managerial skills, especially those of LIS student Janel Quirante. That she was able to efficiently juggle such demanding and disparate duties as coordinating volunteers, aiding attendees in many facets, interacting with parties such as vendors etc, while maintaining the functioning of the conference running seems a miracle to me. She was constantly busy and never ceased being a warm and helpful organizer.

As per my participation as a volunteer; I think I performed well, but there are definitely areas in which I need improvement. I should have been better organized about keeping track of my scheduled volunteer hours. More than once I had to recheck with an organizer about which specific duties I was helping with at what times. It was confusing that my schedule was rearranged on several occasions, but I should not have given the organizers even more duties by asking them to recheck this information which was my own responsibility to keep track of. They were busy enough already without this extra nuisance. Another behavior which I need to improve upon at such events is my networking skills. Specifically, there were several instances in which I missed opportunities to interact with professionals in the field because I did not aggressively pursue conversations with them. For instance I sat with other students at lunch and
maintained small talk with attendees instead of engaging them. Unfortunately, this was mainly due to the early hours and not being a morning person. I should not be letting such minimal details curtail my pursuit of professional networking. But I do feel I did a good job in each of the functions that I served as a volunteer. As an addendum; I was much more responsible in these aforementioned traits during my involvement in the HLA conference.

I did have several very nice and encouraging conversations with pleasant conference attendees. For instance, while leading a tour of Hamilton Library I was chatting with a man about how I would like to be a Science Librarian. It turned out that he was an administrator with the UCLA Library system, who told me that when I graduate to contact them because they may have some openings in one of their Science libraries in the near future. Ironically enough, I also got the chance to meet and network with several pleasant local librarians whom I had not previously met, including department and library heads. They were also very warm and engaging.

Besides helping with registration, the information desk, and banquet help, I also offered my service as an escort for the conference attendees from their hotel to campus. I met the attendees in the lobby of their hotel each morning and got them on and off the bus. This capacity also provided useful experience, including dealing with inpatient attendees frustrated at the lateness of the bus etc. Au Minima, it tested my ability to function in the early morning, a skill hitherto beyond me.

Just as anticipated, volunteering for this conference has proven to be an invaluable experience. Participating in the functioning of this conference, as well as working closely with and observing the organizers have both given me a wealth of information on the nature and functioning of professional conferences. This is experience that will greatly help me at other
conferences that I will be volunteering at, including the 2005 Annual HLA conference, the 2006 SLA National conference, and of course later in my future career.

This has been an extremely valuable experience which should definitely continue to be included as part of future classes whenever such an opportunity presents itself.

**My volunteer time:**
I volunteered each morning, Monday through Thursday from 8:00am - 8:30am escorting attendees on their bus to the conference site at a total of 2 hours.

- Sun 10:00am – 12:00pm - 2 hours
- Mon 12:00pm – 2:00pm - 2 hours
- Wed 8:30am -12:30pm - 4 hours
- Thursday 4:30pm -9:00pm - 4.5 hours
- Total - 14.5 hours