

# A Recipe for Success: Two Cups of Collaboration, Two Cups of Hard Work, and a Cup of Good Timing

## Facilitating the 2007 Pennsylvania Library Association Conference

by **Lisa German** (Assistant Dean, Technical and Collections Services, University Libraries, Penn State University Libraries; Phone: 814-865-0401) <lb10@psu.edu>

I've lived in Centre County in Pennsylvania for twenty-six months and one of the first things I noticed was the collaborative relationship between the **Penn State University Libraries** and **Schlow Centre Region Library**. I've worked at libraries in two other states and have never seen any collaborative effort quite like this between the public and the university research library.

### Fostered by Library Leadership

This collaboration is fostered by the leadership of both libraries and permeates both organizations. The two Associate Deans at **Penn State University Libraries**, both longtime residents of State College, have been champions of **Schlow** in roles of board member and fundraiser. The Administration and other librarians at the **Schlow Library** are very active, as are many **Penn State Librarians**, in the **Pennsylvania Library Association**. It was the collaboration and enthusiasm of these leaders that served as the catalyst for an academic/public library partnership to assume the responsibility for facilitating the **2007 Pennsylvania Library Association Conference** to be held in State College.

The planning for this conference began back in 2004/2005. The timing was perfect for a suggestion to hold the conference in State College to move forward. The President of the **Pennsylvania Library Association** was the parent of two Penn State students — and so followed events at **Penn State** more closely than might be expected. Librarians from both **Schlow** and **Penn State University Libraries** were on the **Pennsylvania Library Associa-**

**tion Board**. Agreeing to work together, they jointly made the motion for the 2007 conference to be held in State College. The motion was passed by the Board.

### Electing a Conference Chair

In 2006, a librarian from **Schlow** and a librarian from **Penn State** were the two candidates for 2nd Vice President Conference Chair of the **Pennsylvania Library Association**. They agreed to work together on the conference, regardless of the election outcome

**Betsy Allen**, the Director **Schlow Centre Region Library**, was elected. She and **Jack Sulzer**, one of the Associate Deans at **Penn State** and her opponent, became the leadership for planning the conference. The planning committee was composed of a good mix of public and academic librarians in the region and began meeting in the winter of 2006/2007 to plan and organize the conference. It was an extremely collegial working group, with enthusiastic people who were excited about hosting the conference. Fundraising, program planning, local events, publicity and other committees began working in earnest to plan the conference. Each subcommittee worked on its tasks through the spring and summer of 2007. The subcommittee chairs met with the conference chairs each month to make sure the planning was moving forward. The conference was held on October 14-17, 2007 at the **Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel**.

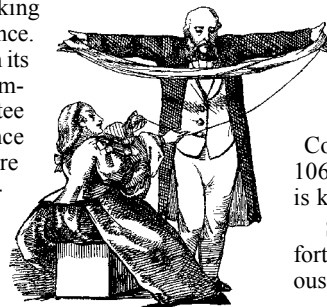
Why did this collaboration between the public and the university research library surprise me? Because, I have not seen it elsewhere, though I've worked in libraries in two other states.

Why did this work so well? I believe it worked well for several reasons. First, there was tremendous administrative support from both the Dean of University Libraries and Scholarly Communication, **Nancy Eaton**, and from **Betsy Allen**, the Director at **Schlow**. Second, the librarians at both libraries assumed leadership roles on committees and wherever else they were needed. The commitment to host a successful conference was shared by employees of both libraries. Many other librarians both from the region and outside the area were integral partners in areas such as fundraising and program planning. And finally there was a great deal of support by the **Association** headquarters staff.

Preliminary reports indicate that the conference was a success and that people would

like to add State College to the regular rotation of conference sites. Though it took 106 years for the **Pennsylvania Library Association** to be held in State College, it will not take another 106 years before it returns to what is known as "Happy Valley."

State College residents are very fortunate to have two such marvelous libraries in their town. 🌻



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Lisa German

**BORN & LIVED:** I have lived in Illinois, Ohio, and now Pennsylvania and I'm rooted in Midwestern culture.

**EARLY LIFE:** My early life was spent as an older sister to two brothers in the suburbs of Chicago. My younger brother has Cystic Fibrosis so our primary family goal revolved working our hardest to nurture him to adulthood (he's 42 now).

**FAMILY:** My husband **Greg** has spent the last 14 years at **OhioLink** (bless them for being an early telecommuting adopter). We have three daughters; **Sarah** who is married and works with disabled adults in Champaign, IL; **Beth** who is in her first year at GSLIS at **UIUC**; and **Julia** who is in 9th grade here in State College and who keeps her baby boomer parents on their toes.

**EDUCATION:** Both BA and MSLIS from the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**.

**FIRST REAL JOB:** My very first job was working in a dry cleaners in Arlington Heights, IL the summer before I turned 16. I spent time touching dirty clothes and listening to Cub games on **WGN** radio. My first job in libraries was working as a serial check in clerk at **UIUC** and I got my Master's degree while working in Acquisitions. And finally, my first job as a librarian was working at **Wright State** in Dayton as the Assistant Acquisitions Librarian. I have to say that in all of my jobs, I've had great colleagues.

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES:** I currently work at **Penn State** where I'm responsible for Technical and Collections Services across 22 of the 24 campuses and am the administrator for the IT unit in the Libraries. We work very collaboratively across the campuses and with our Digital Library Technology unit in the central campus IT unit. It's a challenging and complex environment. I had some good preparation for this job by working at **UIUC** which is also a large and complicated environment. One of the best things about changing jobs was being able to still be a part of the **CIC** and working with my colleagues in the Big 10. I've been active in **ALCTS** and **ACRL** for the past 15 years through both the Acquisitions Section and on Division wide committees such as the Fundraising Committee.

**IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO:** Take long hikes with my dogs!

**FAVORITE BOOKS:** *To Kill a Mockingbird* is my all-time favorite.

**PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD:** People who treat other people in a mean way really irritates me.

**PHILOSOPHY:** I don't have a particular philosophy but a suite of them. I learned early to never surprise the boss and so I try not to do that. Besides being a leader, administrators should be enablers. So as much as possible, I try and "clear the weeds so that the grass and the flowers can grow." I believe that it's crucial to take advantage of hiring opportunities. Who we hire is the most important decision we can make. Be honest and be fair.

**MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT:** Earning tenure at **UIUC**.

**GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW:** Learn how to knit.

**HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS:** Boy, this is a tough one. We need to be more agile and dynamic than we have been in the past and to both respond to changing needs and to be proactive. One of the coolest things about **Google** is that they put services out there, label them "Beta" and then see what develops. The users respond to their services. We need to take risks, and try new things, and collaborate with our colleagues across our universities, communities, schools, and companies to be access and service providers in the educational enterprise. 🐼