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Title

Engineering Libraries Division of the American Society of Engineering Education Annual Conference

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/96493990>

Journal

Library Hi Tech News, 18(7)

ISSN

7419058

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Publication Date

2001-07-01

DOI

10.1108/lhtn.2001.23918gac.006

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Engineering Libraries Division of the American Society of Engineering Education Annual Conference

Julia Gelfand, (2001) "Engineering Libraries Division of the American Society of Engineering Education Annual Conference", Library Hi Tech News, Vol. 18 Issue: 7.

This was probably the largest attendance ever of the Engineering Libraries Division (ELD) at the American Society of Engineering Education annual conference, held from June 24-27, 2001, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Nearly 100 engineering librarians came from close to 65 institutions in the USA and Canada, for a delightful meeting. One reason why the attendance swelled to such high numbers may be due to the fact that the American Library Association, Canadian Library Association and the Special Libraries Association held their annual conferences earlier in June. Thus there was a no-conflict slot for this particular week, which has not been the case for many years. Also, Mel DeSart, Head of the Engineering Library at the University of Washington, planned an exceptionally good conference covering all the current hot topics and invited excellent speakers. Membership has been aggressively encouraged by existing members and it is clear that this conference deserves to be on the map for all librarians who serve user communities composed of engineers, computer scientists, applied scientists and technologists.

The only unfortunate scheduling gaffe was with the ASEE program. ELD had planned such a full schedule that it was hard to get away to attend relevant meetings of the different engineering tracks.

There were several different forums that encouraged different kinds of presentations. The opening keynote session for the entire ASEE conference had Dean Kamen, President of DEKA Research and Development Corporation in New Hampshire, and recipient of the 2000 Medal of Technology presented by President Clinton. Kamen is known for his 150+ patents in the field of medical devices. Among the most famous inventions is the IBOT, a personal transporter that was developed for the disabled community and can climb stairs, traverse sandy and rocky terrain and raise its user to eye-level with a standing person. He describes himself as "an inventor, an entrepreneur and an advocate for science and technology." He is also the founder of two well-designed outreach programs:

1. SEE (Science Enrichment Encounters), an interactive learning center now visited by hundreds of thousands of children each year.
2. US FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), which since 1992 has paired professional engineers with high school students to compete in annual robot competitions.

FIRST has been expanded in 1999 to the FIRST LEGO League to expose younger children to fields of science and technology. The enthusiasm Kamen generated in his opening speech was contagious as he described the personal pleasure and passion he has had in working with children and teenagers to promote science and technology. The relationships he has fostered between schools and the engineering industrial community are truly remarkable.

The Engineering Library Division had a very productive first session in which all attendees introduced themselves and anything major that was happening at their institution. This time set the tone for a very useful networking agenda that ran the remainder of the conference.

The first formal session was on "E-Journals: Impacts and Possibilities" and featured three papers delivered by four persons. Maliaca Strom-Oxnam from the University of Arizona shared how her library is weaning itself from print subscriptions in a cleverly titled paper, "Taking off the Training Wheels." She was followed by a joint presentation by Margaret Landesman from the University of Utah and Johann van Reenen from the University of New Mexico. They collaborated on, "Creating Congruence between Consortial Goals and Emerging Initiatives in Scholarly Publishing." Stephen Smith from the American Institute of Chemical Engineers concluded the formal papers in this session by speaking on "Helping to Level the Playing Field: The Impact of Digital Technologies on Large and Small Journals Publishers." This was an important part of the program because the challenges faced by small society publishers who serve their membership as they scale their publications programs to institutional subscribers and respond to the expectations of consortia are very different than how large global commercial publishers respond.

There was a large poster session with nearly 15 posters on exhibition from ELD members. The themes varied but included several that explored different aspects of electronic journal distribution and access, migrating to e-only collections, standards collections, and several aspects of distance education efforts and virtual or digital reference programs. One of the most interesting posters was created by John Saylor from Cornell University, who introduced the "National Science Digital Library (NSDL) Program" and the "Site for Science."

The Collection Issues Forum concentrated on the IEEE University Partnership Program and several speakers shared experiences in that, including representatives of IEEE. The session clarified lots of misinformation and new directions were shared about distributing the wide range of IEEE content. Again, this was another very practical and informative session.

The second day offered three major sessions. The first session was focused on Information Literacies, and three papers were delivered. The first paper was a description of the strategic approach taken for information competencies at the College of Textiles at North Carolina State University. This paper by Honora Nerz and Suzanne Weiner was chosen as one of the best papers delivered at the entire ASEE conference. Other papers in this session were about experiences at the Indiana University/Purdue University at Indianapolis for first-year engineering students, and how to build a collections and services program for a new engineering program at Virginia Commonwealth. Both of these latter papers concentrated on how reliant the libraries and users are on digital content.

What was probably one of the most interesting and provocative sessions was the program on "Fundraising Success Stories and Strategies." Fundraising is an activity that not everyone is fully engaged in but in which librarians are increasingly becoming involved, as it is a way to stretch resources and develop relationships with alumni and local community leaders. The

focus on how it can positively affect engineering collections, branch libraries, use of technology and multimedia, programming, staffing and service levels, responding to new initiatives should not be discounted. A variety of institutions were represented on this program, large public, small public, and a private university, so nearly all bases were covered. Bill Mischo shared very candid, challenging and exciting insights about a large-scale program at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The Grainger Engineering Library was built with external money from the Grainger Family Foundation and is an incredible facility. On a smaller scale, Lisa Dunn spoke about the efforts under way at the Colorado School of Mines Library and then Carol Szambelan offered the private experience at Notre Dame.

The subject of distance education was the focus of an entire session. Bart Lessin from Wayne State shared the results of a small national sample/survey he conducted about how schools of engineering are engaging in distance education. Another speaker from North Carolina State spoke about the digital library program that was established to serve distance users and the final speaker chronicled how far the University of Southern California has come in the 32 years it has engaged in some form of distance education through its engineering school.

Day two wound down with the ELD Business Meeting, which was incredibly well attended with lots of plans for future programs and ongoing work conducted during the year. Bill Mischo was honored as the ELD Librarian of the Year for his many years of mentorship and contributions to ELD and the profession of Engineering Librarianship. The ELD Banquet celebrated that announcement and a loud good time with lots of southwestern food and spirits was shared and will be remembered.

The last day's program was no less intense with three major sessions on very timely topics. The theme of the morning session was "Marketing the Engineering Library," and the lead speaker was Aline Soules from the University of Michigan School of Business Library. I am often skeptical of this subject and frequently conclude that it is full of professional jargon best left in the B-School context. However, her paper on "Librarians, Marketing and Relationship Management: Setting the Stage," made me reconsider my provincial outlooks. She used the "Librarian as Liaison" approach to illustrate how more of an entrepreneurial spirit can provide some very exciting opportunities for librarians on their campuses and invite ways to partner with faculty, alumni, and local industry. With such efforts, we can work "outside the box" and create a more progressive environment that can lead to fruitful and long-term relationships that will be beneficial for us as librarians and for our organizations. Two other papers followed in this session, one about promoting library services at Caltech and another with building a new faculty liaison model at the University of Minnesota where faculty input was critical to stave off major journal cancellations.

The last session I attended was on "Transforming Scientific Communication," and we had three very different speakers share what they are working on. The first speaker was the physicist, Dr Paul Ginsparg who created the e-print archive concept for applied physics at Los Alamos National Labs, known as <http://www.arxiv.org/> a decade ago. Now headed to Cornell, he shared how he has devoted the last decade to "Creating a Global Knowledge

Network," and what this means for scientific and scholarly communication. It was a captivating and intense presentation because the preprint server idea is now becoming more widespread in other disciplines.

The second speaker was Catherine Candee, in charge of e-scholarship at the California Digital Library for the University of California, and she explored some programs that have recently launched there, including resources in Archaeology, Dermatology, International and Area Studies, Tobacco Control and support for other upcoming launches. More can be learned about this young program by consulting <http://escholarship.cdlib.org/>

The last speaker was equally exciting as he described the DSpace Project at MIT. Eric Celeste has been among the pioneer staff on this joint program between Hewlett-Packard and MIT that is fully described at: <http://web.mit.edu/dspace/home.html>. Each of these examples is an adventure of its own with its own legacy and future. The fact that we as a universal community are the beneficiaries is a remarkable thing and we can expect only more creative output as we explore new channels of scholarly communication with the emerging technologies and tools.

There was a tour of the University of New Mexico's Centennial Science Library and a reception in the glorious special collections department of the Zimmerman Library. This local hospitality reminded registrants of life outside of the convention center or on hotel strips, the other parts of Albuquerque that I saw. There were several local field trips to the Petroglyphs, to Sandia National Laboratory and other nearby sites that reaffirmed the ASEE theme, of "Peppers, Papers, Pueblos and Professors," and reminded us of being in the beautiful southwest. It is not hard to wonder why this group is expanding. With a program that is so balanced and rich in content, it definitely deserved to be on everyone's calendar this year.

The 2002 ASEE meeting is scheduled for 17-20 June, 2002 in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The ELD Web site at: <http://web.mit.edu/dspace/home.html> will contain details about this conference in coming months.

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