VLA Paraprofessional Forum 2011 Conference Report

The nineteenth annual Virginia Library Association Paraprofessional Forum Conference was held May 22–24, 2011, at the Holiday Inn Select/Koger South Conference Center in Chesterfield County. Karen Jacobs of George Mason University and Susan Carroll of Longwood University chaired this year’s event, which hosted 200 attendees. This year’s conference theme was “Libraries: Paving the Way for Success.” With the variety of concurrent sessions, special speakers, and networking opportunities offered to attendees, the program provided a wealth of valuable information and resources to enhance one’s professional development.

Sunday’s Dessert Social Featuring Virginia Author Donna Andrews

The Sunday evening event included a dessert social and a presentation by popular Virginia author Donna Andrews, followed by a book signing. Andrews gave a very interesting presentation, during which she talked about where she gets the ideas for her mysteries. Andrews began by saying that having a good idea for writing a book is not everything; taking off with a good idea and turning that idea into a good book is what’s important. She talked about one of her most recent publications, Stork Raving Mad, explaining where the idea for the plot and characters originated. The story takes place over the course of one long day in the home of the main character, Meg, who is eight-and-a-half months pregnant with twins. Inspired by her own memories of a college dean who made life miserable for students and faculty members, Andrews created a dean who torments Meg’s husband, a professor in the drama department. In an attempt to try and bring everyone together to resolve some issues within this academic group, Meg invites the drama class and the dean into their home. The mystery begins when the dean turns up dead. To make the story more realistic, Andrews talked to those currently involved in the world of academia, augmenting these experiences with what she learned during her years in college.

The Real Macaw, her newest book, was released for sale during the summer. Andrews researched this book by wandering around, observing and listening to the conversations of animal lovers. The story starts with an unusual situation. The main character, Meg, wakes up in the night to find a liv-
ing room full of animals that have been taken from an animal shelter during the night. Those who have taken the animals have done so in protest of the animal shelter’s decision to repeal its no-kill policy and euthanize animals not adopted in a timely manner. Meg’s father is one of the thieves. Of course, a dead body shows up, and Meg gets involved in the investigation.

Andrews said that real life has a way of inserting itself into her books. Inspired by people she sees in places such as the local library or the sports park where her nephews play ball, she finds it easy to get an idea for a new character. This works with settings and plots, too. Bizarre situations in real life do provide her with the ideas for her mysteries. After listening to Andrews talk about her process for creating settings, plots, and characters that form books filled with mischief and mayhem and a mystery to solve, it was easy to understand why her novels are so very popular.

Monday’s Opening General Session

During Monday’s general session, VLAPF Cochair Karen Jacobs provided opening remarks that included a welcome on behalf of the VLAPF Executive Board. VLA President Matt Todd further welcomed the group on behalf of the Virginia Library Association. Gayle Haglund, speaker for the Central Virginia Food Bank, shared information about how the Food Bank helps others and thanked confe-
ence attendees for their donations to assist with the work of this charitable organization.

This year’s keynote speaker for Monday morning was Dr. Peter Pober, professor in the Department of Communications at George Mason University. Pober began his address by emphasizing the importance of the conference, which can benefit attendees not only today but also in the future. Mentioning some of the sessions, he remarked on the wide range of topics, which included diversity, new technologies, and educational theory. He also commented on the title of the organization, stating that para- means working side by side with others.

Using Richard Howard’s acrostic poem about Donatello’s statue of David as an example, Pober pointed out that Howard’s poem is one work of art about another work of art. The point of the poem is to show that one can build on what has already been created by another. This is what we do in libraries when we find resources that can be used by patrons as they work towards creating a new work.

As library support staff, we take on the baggage of students and clients that we deal with every day because we have a passion for reading and research. The student takes the information we provide and turns it into something else. We guide clients to what they need as part of a cooperative process. We help them by providing the right quality and quantity of information as we relate to customers and their needs.

Because of the electronic age in which we live, we don’t have the ability to disconnect from our customers, so we must learn to deal with the constant needs of others, and do so in a gracious manner. The terminology used by our customers can result in misunderstanding a request. The way we communicate in today’s world can be distorted due to all the electronic devices used to communicate. We have too much to do, which is making us less efficient, and there is no desire in the modern world to correct this problem.

Our jobs involve providing library customers with the tools they need without doing their work for them. To effectively serve them, we need to listen to how they ask for help and interpret the underlying intent. When reacting to patrons’ needs, we have an added mission: to encourage customers to want to read more; to encourage them to want to do more research; and to
encourage them to use their minds to a greater extent. The transmission of narrative is crucial to who we are. We should perform gap-filling, in which we complete others’ ideas in order to guide them in the right direction. We fill gaps when helping people with reports, stories, and other projects. We all naturally possess the ability to fill gaps. We go through life looking at the world around us and mimicking things we see and like; they then become a part of who we are. We are walking scrapbooks made up of everything around us.

Pober concluded by saying that we hold the ultimate responsibility to communicate well. Words do important work. We give them to others, and in time our words change those around us. This interesting address provided us with a different perspective on how our words and actions impact those we serve in our libraries.

**Tuesday’s Luncheon**

Tuesday’s closing session included a storyteller, a buffet luncheon, special recognitions and awards, and the drawing for the scholarship raffle prizes.

Following the luncheon, Susan Carroll and Karen Jacobs presented several awards. Deloris Thomas of the Earl Gregg Swem Library at the College of William and Mary received the VLAPF Outstanding Paraprofessional of the Year award. Andrea Ogier of Virginia Tech’s University Libraries was recognized as this year’s recipient of the Clara Stanley Scholarship, sponsored by the members of the VLAPF Executive Board. Cochairs Susan Carroll and Karen Jacobs received special plaques for their commitment of time and service to the board during the past year.

Karen Jacobs introduced the afternoon’s speaker, storyteller Megan Hicks, who entertained the audience with some of her unique stories. According to Hicks’s biographical information, she “survived the Baby Boom with her sense of humor intact.” She began by sharing how her storytelling career got started. She didn’t have a career until she was in her thirties. Up until that time, she had written three novels that she was unable to get published. She then took the only job she could get and worked as a janitor in a Montessori school. When a school librarian began looking for an assistant, she was asked if she would be interested in the position, which would include handling story times. This was how Hicks learned to love libraries and entertaining others with stories. In 1986, she attended a professional development session on storytelling, which was all about
raffle prizes was the grand finale for the 2011 event. Everett Seams of the Mercer Library on the Prince William Campus of George Mason University was the winner of the P. Buckley Moss print Spring Together #12, which was donated by the Moss Society and beautifully matted and framed by Christopher's Fine Arts and Framing of Farmville. A handmade quilt was created and donated by Jim Whalen, director of the Appomattox County Public Library, and his talent as a storyteller allowed the audience to travel back in time and walk in her shoes for a few moments.

A delightful speaker, Megan Hicks transported listeners to different worlds and times to meet unusual and unique characters. Her passion for entertaining others with stories had a positive impact on listeners. She provided an enjoyable and lighthearted closing event.

The drawing for the scholarship learning how to keep stories alive. One storyteller presented “The Shoemaker and the Elves,” and it changed Hicks’s life. This is when she decided that her identity crisis was over. She had found her calling: to be a librarian.

Today she loves to share her gift of storytelling with young and old alike. She feels that stories can be a source of comfort to troubled children, so this is a gift she wants to give them. She then shared her talents with the audience. First, she told a fairy tale that kept the audience tense with anticipation until the conclusion. Then she took us back in time to the 1970s to share her experiences as a young and naïve woman trying to find herself in the not-so-glamorous world of Hollywood, California. Joining a religious group, she fell for a very smooth-talking, handsome, blue-eyed stranger, who had also joined the group. The story evolved, keeping everyone listening with its unlikely twists and turns. Hicks’s Right, the VLAPF Executive Board presented a gift of thanks to storyteller Megan Hicks.

Below, Karen Jacobs bestowed the VLAPF Outstanding Paraprofessional of the Year award on Deloris Thomas.

Cochairs Susan Carroll and Deloris Thomas will head up the 2012 VLAPF Conference Committee.
wife, Annette. The other prizes, which included a variety of unique baskets, a lap-sized afghan, and a beautiful handmade wreath and stand, were provided by the members of the board and other generous supporters of the scholarship. The raffle earned $1,200, which will help fund next year’s Clara Stanley Scholarship, sponsored by the VLA Paraprofessional Forum Executive Board.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University

Tuesday’s luncheon was well attended.

MONDAY, MAY 23
10:45 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Online LIS Programs: Providing Education and Equity

Presenter: Linda Swaine, Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies

Linda Swaine is a course instructor and the school media internship coordinator of the Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies. The pursuit of a library degree once typically forced students to resign from their jobs and relocate to attend classes at the university. This caused many to abandon their hopes of ever achieving their educational goals. Fortunately, Internet technology now allows prospective students more opportunities and convenience. A reliable Internet connection, computer, and headset are the only requirements for class attendance.

Swaine explained the course structure of her institution’s programs. A student may obtain an MLIS without traveling to Florida. Student/instructor interaction is conducted almost exclusively online. Classes are conducted via Il-luminate software that uses Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIC), allowing participants to speak with one another online and in real time. This presentation provided all the basic information needed by those interested in the online
LIS programs provided by the Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies.
—Everett Seamans, George Mason University

Holding a Mirror Up to Your Management Style: My True Life Story of Climbing the Ladder, Again

Presenter: Angela Duncan, Davis Memorial Library, Fayetteville, North Carolina

Angela Duncan shared the perspectives she gained when she changed jobs and became the supervised instead of the supervisor. She shared her favorite quote by Peter Drucker, which reads, “So much of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to work.” She offered common-sense suggestions; for instance, when telling an employee you need to meet, be aware of your unspoken tone—the message is in how the meeting is announced. For example, her supervisor announced that they needed to meet, without saying why. When they finally met, it concerned something routine, but she had been upset trying to remember what she could have done wrong. Training is leadership. As a supervisor, you are the trainer—so know the job inside and out. Give immediate and continual feedback so employees know how they are really doing. Trust is very important; build it by listening. Supervisors should continue to work “in the trenches,” aka the service desk. When not working the desk, you can lose the respect of staff and the ability to do the tasks at the desk. Be supportive, and be aware of how you present yourself to staff. Customer service should be given to all patrons and staff. There are many ways to offer support; it can be as simple as a phone call. Grow your staff and harness their potential. Encourage staff to learn and play. Allow time to experiment with new technology. Duncan concluded by saying that the biggest compliment she has received as a supervisor was when a staff member told her, “This is the first job where I got to do more than the job description.”
—Ona Turner Dowdy, Lynchburg City Public Library

The social brought friends together for an evening filled with fun.
An American Future: Young Immigrants and Library Service

Presenter: Erin Chernisky, Fairfax County Public Library

How do you introduce the public library as a possible career path, a community resource to immigrants, a place for young immigrants to develop new job skills, and a source for developing and maintaining a diverse workforce? This session described a grant project between Fairfax County Public Libraries and Liberty’s Promise that did exactly that. As a part of Laura Bush’s 21st Century Librarian program, a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services has placed young immigrants in internships at 114 sites. These youth represent over ninety countries. To be considered for an internship, the applicant must be able to work ten to twenty hours per week during the school term and twenty to forty hours during the summer, be fifteen to twenty-one years old and from a low-income family, be able to speak English with a moderate to high fluency, and be legally able to work in the U.S.

Transportation, dress, work ethic, staff perceptions, and library budgets were some of the challenges that needed to be overcome. Overall, the project appears to be a success from both sides of the equation. If interested in further information, visit Liberty’s Promise at http://libertyspromise.org/.

—Karen Jacobs, George Mason University

All about ERM: Managing Electronic Resources

Presenter: Andrea Ogier, Virginia Tech

Andrea Ogier from Virginia Tech began by sharing some important basic facts about electronic resources, including KnowledgeBase, e-journals, e-books, licenses, and many more. She then went on to talk about some of the common e-resources used in libraries and why these resources need special management. Ogier also shared some of the problems associated with e-resources and provided some information on how libraries can better manage their electronic collections. Ogier gave a very helpful and knowledgeable presentation on managing the electronic resources that are now a major part of the modern library.

—Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

Web 2.0: Building a Social Library with Online Tools

Presenters: Tatiana Pashkova-Balkenhol and Mark Lenker, Longwood University

Attendees to Tatiana Pashkova-Balkenhol and Mark Lenker’s overview of social media and how to use it successfully in a library setting were treated to an exciting program using the Pecha Kucha format. For those unfamiliar with the Pecha Kucha style of presentation, the presenter shows and explains twenty slides in twenty seconds. The format encourages concise presentations that keep things moving. Pashkova-Balkenhol and Lenker certainly delivered in this style! They provided many examples of uses for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube in library settings, and the audience engaged in plenty of discussion about the various types of social media, including the advantages and disadvantages in using each technology. In addition to the discussions, attendees were invited to contact the presenters for additional information.

—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

How about Publishing Myths and Publishing Truths?

Presenter: Donna Andrews, author

Donna Andrews, author of numerous mysteries, discussed the current publishing world and what the future holds for those who wish to become published authors. She began by saying that no one knows what the future holds in regard to the publishing world. The business has become one of large companies that rely on blockbusters to make profits. The writer must come up with ideas to grab the niche in the new market, like the one created by J. K. Rowling with her Harry Potter series. Andrews said that there are fewer published authors today. Contracts are not renewed for the established author whose sales have reached the top of their plateau. Major publishing companies are looking for new authors whose writing has a unique slant that will sell large numbers of books. However, along with the focus on the next big thing, the new market has fostered the growth of small publishing companies like Poisoned Pen Press that prefer to publish a better quality of work. Novelists, Inc., a new group for those who have published a large number of books, facilitates e-book reissues. There are problems with e-books, including copyright and contract issues that become convoluted for the writer. The world of e-books holds pitfalls for both writers and agents, which Andrews discussed in detail. She said there are so many unanswered questions about the modern world of publishing that publishers, agents, and writers are all waiting to see what the future holds.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University
1:45 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

**Stress Management and Burnout**

Presenter: Frank Howe, Longwood University

A full house greeted Dr. Frank Howe’s presentation, subtitled “Taking Care of Yourself While Taking Care of Your Patrons.” Divided into two sections, stress management and burnout, the presentation provided definitions, described signs that indicate stress and burnout, and offered tips for preventing and coping with both. The audience enthusiastically engaged Howe in a lively series of discussions during the question-and-answer period. Some of the most interesting topics included advice on how to deal with patrons who may be suffering from stress, tips on supervising to prevent stress and burnout, and ideas about how to cope with stressful supervisors. —Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

**The Reluctant Librarian Serving Genealogists**

Presenters: Laura Wickstead, Roanoke Public Libraries, and Gregg Grunow, Newport News Public Library System

During their presentation, Laura Wickstead and Gregg Grunow focused on how libraries with limited staff and resources can best serve genealogists. Most patrons will not know how to begin their research or what questions to ask, so knowing how to get the researcher started is the key to success. Genealogists are anxious to talk about the topic of family history, so controlling the conversation in order to keep them focused on what help they need is essential. Once the researcher starts looking for information, problems may arise with variations in the spellings of surnames; the names of localities, which may have changed over time; and incorrect dates for major events such as marriages and births. Librarians can recommend that a genealogist begin research...
by moving backwards, beginning with immediate family. Life events generate documents that the librarian should suggest that the researcher consult. These documents include death certificates, obituaries, Bible records, funeral home records, cemetery registers, and grave markers.

There are some “musts” for the genealogist. Consulting the U.S. Census is one, since every family member in every generation is listed. Another must is keeping a research log of what resources are used, and, if possible, making and retaining copies of the title pages of these resources.

Gregg Grunow discussed some of the resources he uses and recommends to customers. The Library of Virginia’s online website was the first one mentioned because it provides a wealth of digitized information related to Virginia families, including county and city records on microfilm, an index to death certificates from 1912 to 1954, records of death certificates from 1912 to 1939, and various newspapers on microfilm. Another online resource, Chronicling America, provides full-text access to hundreds of newspapers from 1860 to 1922. In addition, Grunow shared the names of several free databases that include the USGenWeb Project; the WorldGenWeb Project; and Family Search, which is a resource made available by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The presenters did mention a few reliable online resources that require a fee, which include the Ancestry Library Edition and Heritage Quest Online, produced by ProQuest. This session provided a wealth of information and resources to share with genealogists seeking assistance.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University
Minding Scarlett’s Business: Margaret Mitchell and Gone with the Wind

Presenter: John Wiley Jr., author

John Wiley Jr., coauthor of Margaret Mitchell’s Gone with the Wind: A Bestseller’s Odyssey from Atlanta to Hollywood, has been a fan of Gone with the Wind since childhood. Once he saw the movie, he wanted to read the book. At that time, because it was considered an “adult” book, he had to have parental permission to check it out from the bookmobile. His mother did give her permission, and therein lies the rest of the story. He has one of the world’s largest collections of memorabilia about Gone with the Wind. While Wiley was being interviewed about his collection by future coauthor Ellen Brown, the two decided to write a book to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the publication of the novel. Wiley brought along a few items from his collection to display during the session, including various international editions of the novel.

The session contained a short presentation in which Wiley gave some basic background about Margaret Mitchell, including the fact that she began writing Gone with the Wind in 1926. She had grown up hearing stories about the war from her relatives and thought Virginia got too much mention, so she decided to write a story about Georgia. She sold the manuscript to McMillan in 1935. It was a tremendous success, appearing on the New York Times Best Seller list in 1936 and 1937. Mitchell received 600 pieces of mail a day, but declined to autograph copies of her novel.

Wiley invited questions from the audience; once the questions started, they continued right up until the scheduled ending time of the session. The topics were varied: his research, Margaret Mitchell, the book, the movie, his collection. There was no question Wiley was unable to answer—he is truly an expert. However, if you want to know Rhett Butler’s middle name, you’ll have to read the book!

—Ona Turner Dowdy, Lynchburg City Public Library

Laura Wickstead and Gregg Grunow shared tips to help those doing genealogical research.
Blogging in Children’s Services
Presenter: Elizabeth Swistock, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library

Swistock enthusiastically showed attendees how to get started with their own children’s blogs for their libraries, and how to make and keep them fun for kids. She pointed out that not only are most blogging services free (therefore no extra budget cost) and very easy to use, but they can also be easily spiced up by using pictures and much more. Overall, she shared how these blogs can be great tools in garnering traffic and promoting services.

—Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

Otis Alexander demonstrated how to dramatize and bring traditional works of literature to life so that they will appeal to a younger audience.

Cindy Church brought in iPads, Kindles, and Nooks for attendees to view during the session “Technology Petting Zoo.”

3:15 p.m.–4:30 p.m.
Customer Service, Both Sides of the Desk

Presenters: Ellen Krupar and Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

In this session, the presenters gave some helpful tips on how to listen to and help patrons/students...
with their search for material in a library. Ellen Krupar told some stories about things that have happened while she was on the reference desk and explained how she went about solving these issues. She also asked for comments from the audience regarding how they thought a particular issue should be handled.

Marion Eaton went on to talk about issues and problems that arise in dealing with vendors in libraries. She said that just as the staff at the reference desk deal with customers who come to them with problems, the staff in the acquisitions department do the same. Their customers are usually the librarians who have issues with a request for materials or with the status of an order.

Both Krupar and Eaton shared many helpful tips on how to handle difficult customers. They talked about when it’s okay to handle a situation yourself and when it’s better to hand the problem off to someone with a better understanding of it.

— Marion Eaton, Virginia Tech

Virginia Library Leadership Academy: The Participants Speak

Presenters: Elizabeth Hensley, Culpepper County Library; Deborah Lammers, Henrico County Public Library; Chandra McPherson, Appomattox Regional Library; and Jamie Stoops, Pamunkey Regional Library

Four members from the first group of participants to go through this new library staff leadership development training program in Virginia shared their achievements and the challenges that they faced during the two-day intensive retreat. The leadership academy will continue to occur biennially for new groups of participants. Being mentored by individuals who had themselves been trained for the program, these participants chose one project each to focus on and implement their leadership/managerial strategies for the betterment of Virginia libraries. This program certainly seems poised to be a major win/win endeavor for enthusiastic staff and the commonwealth’s libraries as a whole.

— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library
Preserve What You Have and Prepare for the Unexpected

Presenter: Lene Palmer, George Mason University

Palmer began her presentation by defining the term preservation and explaining the difference in the preservation and conservation of library materials. Preservation is what you do from the first day the book is received; conservation takes place after damage occurs. Palmer shared some of the basic preservation steps that all libraries should use, which include monitoring a facility’s temperature and humidity, training staff in good handling and shelving practices, training patrons in the proper care of library materials, and developing a disaster preparedness plan. Palmer went on to say that all staff should be involved in the preservation of library materials. Circulation staff can monitor and record the condition of damaged books during check out and check in; they can share the basic preservation policy with patrons. Those who shelve books can report unusual environmental conditions they may find in the stacks. Careful handling during shelving and removal of books from shelves is important, and Palmer covered all the basics of what we should and should not do when handling books. Do not pull books from the shelves using the head cap; do not shelve a book on its fore edge; do use bookends to keep books standing straight on the shelves; and do train staff to look for and pull books with loose pages, torn spines, brittle and deteriorating paper, mold or water damage, pet damage, bent pages, graffiti highlights, post-it notes stuck to pages, etc. Palmer said that there are minor book repairs that can be performed in-house; it is easy to train staff to replace head caps, replace book spines, and tip in lose pages. Palmer went on to emphasize the importance of developing a written plan that addresses everything staff will need to know in the event of a water emergency. She advised the audience on how to handle wet books to be salvaged.

Palmer’s presentation provided valuable information on how to ensure that items in a library’s print collection are properly cared for and maintained over time.

—Lydia Williams, Longwood University

Taking the Show on the Road

Presenters: Charlsie Parker and Madonna Green, Roanoke Public Libraries

Charlsie Parker and Madonna Green showed attendees how com-
munity outreach for patrons of the Roanoke Public Libraries is not limited to bookmobiles or story time in the library. Their library system participates in a wide variety of outreach programs that take the library out of its building and into the larger community. In addition to providing story time at local daycare/preschool providers both public and private, the library develops themed book deposits that support the preschool curriculum. The library also works with the local senior center and nursing homes, providing books and Wii gaming. Perhaps the most unusual outreach program is located in the shopping mall. The library maintains a kiosk where patrons can pick up and drop off books and come for weekly story time sessions. When this program began in 2003–2004, there were 211 participants. This grew to 9,856 for 2009–2010. The attendees engaged in interesting discussions with the presenters throughout the session. 
—Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

TUESDAY, MAY 24
8:30 a.m.–9:30 a.m.

Special Collections Materials: Where Do They Come From; How Do They Get Where They’re Going?

Presenters: Marc Brodsky and Kira Dietz, Virginia Tech

This presentation was filled with interesting information related to working in a special collections department with rare books and manuscript materials. Brodsky and Dietz shared the basics of working with these collections from the acquisition of materials through the process of making them available for public use.

Dietz shared information about the processing of these materials. All materials given to the Special Collections Department are accessioned. During the accessioning process, potential problems are discovered and the priority order for working with the materials is established. Accessioning is followed by physical processing, which involves getting dirty and physically organizing the materials. This establishes control and prepares the materials for permanent housing. Preservation and conservation needs are determined, with materials being moved into the proper sleeves, folders, and boxes. Intellectual processing involves creating a catalog record or finding aid for the collection that will aid both staff and users.

The session ended with a reminder that the Special Collections Department of the University Libraries at Virginia Tech is open to faculty, researchers, genealogists, historians, and anyone with an interest in the materials housed in the facility.
—Lydia Williams, Longwood University

Heard It through the Grapevine: Traditional and Ethnic Literature

Presenter: Otis D. Alexander, Danville Community College

Did you hear it correctly? Did you pass it on accurately? We have all played the childhood game of whispering information from one to another to see how the message changes, but never was it so much fun nor so educational as when presented by Dr. Otis Alexander. As library staff, we can pave the way for our patrons, especially children and teens, to be engaging and interesting storytellers. In this very interactive session, Alexander showed us that when we entertain with a purpose and create the meaning for the audience,
we can bring literature to life. By using ethnic and traditional literature, we can pass on enlightenment and positive values as well as inspire an enduring love of literature. Whether we teach with story, poem, or song, by being alive with our audience, we can really connect on many levels. Speaking of songs, did you know that Johnny Cash could be considered a rapper of the ‘50s? You heard it right, straight from the grapevine.

— Karen Jacobs, George Mason University

9:45 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

LUCY: An IMLS Grant and You
Presenter: Roxanne Mills, Old Dominion University

A small but interested group attended Roxanne Mills’s presentation on LUCY, Librarianship Upgrades for Children and Youth Services. LUCY’s program, funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, focuses on multicultural materials for the youth services librarian or any individual who works with children or young adults in libraries in Virginia. In addition to offering continuing education opportunities, LUCY maintains a website that provides a free annotated bibliography of multicultural children’s literature. The session’s interactive discussion focused on selecting multicultural materials for children and how LUCY can help. Mills also provided attendees with materials about the August conference being sponsored by LUCY.

— Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

RDA—Where Are We Now?
Presenter: Pat Howe, Longwood University

Once again, Pat Howe very knowledgeably brought catalogers up-to-date on where we stand with the new RDA bibliographic record format. Howe calmly assured everybody that the whole process is going to come to fruition over a lengthy period of time. This will allow catalogers to adjust to the new cataloging rules in almost stress-free “baby steps” instead of in great, big, panic-inducing strides. She gave clear examples of each difference catalogers will be seeing in records from here on out and how these differences are supposed to make searching more user-friendly for our patrons.

— Kim Blaylock, Washington County Public Library

11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Round Table: Is Reference Dead?
Facilitator: Carole Lohman, University of Virginia

According to the group that attended this round table discussion, reference is changing, but it’s not dead. While the individuals working in academic libraries had greater representation than public libraries in this group, there were many areas of common agreement. For example, although patrons can fulfill many of their information needs from online resources, they often don’t have the depth of knowledge to evaluate more complex information needs. Also, most libraries provide one-on-one reference appointments. The academic library representatives indicated that much of their reference work may be handled using various types of technology, from online tutorials to instant messaging. The public library representatives reported that they are doing more community-based programming and working collaboratively with community groups like the Virginia Employment Commission. Both academic and public library representatives say that students trying to complete their research assignments at the last minute are still a challenge to the person working the reference desk. Also, many of the questions at the reference desk are related to using the technology in the library, such as how to attach a photo to an email or how to use the printer.

During the later part of the session, attendees shared how they obtained their reference training. The major method was on-the-job training, followed by reference staff meetings, service desk meetings, listservs, and websites.

— Carole Lohman, University of Virginia