ALA Round-Up: Highlights from ALA Midwinter in Atlanta

…with thanks to Tom Gilson, Associate Editor, Against the Grain <GilsonT@cofc.edu>

Despite milder than usual temperatures for an ALA Midwinter host city, this year’s conference had one of the smallest turnouts in years. The 2017 Atlanta version of ALA Midwinter, held January 20-24, 2017, saw attendance drop nearly 30% from last year’s gathering in Boston. Only 8,326 librarians, vendors, and library supporters made the trek to Atlanta for the usual business meetings, panel discussions, exhibits, award presentations, and keynote speakers.

Admittedly, attendees from the local area, who often account for numerous one-day registrations, may have had second thoughts about braving the congestion and traffic causing some of the drop-off. Downtown Atlanta was jam packed on Saturday with the “March for Social Justice and Women” that drew some 60,000 protesters, while on Sunday, thousands more poured in to see the Atlanta Falcons and Green Bay Packers battle it out for the NFC Conference championship.

Nonetheless, both locals and out-of-towners who dared to make the trip were rewarded by a lineup of 1,120 meetings and events, as well as the opportunity to view the more than 450 book and technology related exhibits arrayed on the floor of the Georgia World Congress Center. So, given all the action, we thought that we would once again offer a small sense of what went on by sharing with you a few of the conference related posts and articles, that have “caught our eye.”

#alamw17 conveniently collects American Libraries’ varied blog coverage of ALA Midwinter 2017. However, to get the full scope of the coverage a little scrolling may be in order. Reports include those on ALAs Town Hall, multiple celebrity keynotes, and various award presentations, as well as those on programs discussing issues like advocacy, cybersecurity and privacy, not to mention, the award presentations, as well as those on ALA’s Town Hall, multiple celebrity keynotes, and various award presentations, as well as those on programs discussing issues like advocacy, cybersecurity and privacy, not to mention, the daily “Top Ten Tweets” and ALAs three Council meetings. (https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/tag/alamw17/)

For Librarians, 2017 Is Off to a Rough Start is Publishers Weekly’s first take on Midwinter with reporter Andrew Albanese noting “the lowest attendance of any Midwinter Meeting in 25 years. ALA officials reported that total attendance (including exhibitors, excluding comps) was 8,326 – down substantially from the 11,716 who came to the 2016 event in Boston.” The article goes on to discuss attendees concerns over the incoming Trump administration’s threat to eliminate funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as other worries about the current political climate. The article also highlights the show’s opening keynote speech by W. Kamau Bell, the popular podcaster and CNN host. It then mentions several book awards presented at Midwinter along with their winning authors. (http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/72618-for-librarians-2017-is-off-to-a-rough-start.html)

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Not Business as Usual | ALA Midwinter 2017 is LJ's overview post that starts by noting involvement of librarians in the “Women's March” and then moves on to the “ALA Town Hall: Library Advocacy and Core Values in Uncertain Times” along with ALA’s post-election advocacy messaging. The article also notes that ALA Council has unanimously adopted Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion as a fourth strategic direction for the organization and that ALA will have to find a new Executive Director as Keith Michael Fiels has announced his intended resignation. The report continues with an account of the “Symposium on the Future of Libraries” that offered nearly 40 sessions devoted to the subject. In addition, article coverage included programs about the equalizing impact of technology; Google’s CS First program; ALA's presidential candidates; and various library and publishing award winners. (http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2017/01/events/not-business-as-usual-ala-midwinter-2017/)

2017 ALA Midwinter – Report from Atlanta is for the more visually inclined. It’s a youtube video that runs about 20 minutes and includes photos and video clips from various events at the Conference. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BpzF8cLdt3Q)

LITA’s Top Tech Trends is American Libraries’ report on a panel discussion that included Blake Carver, LYRASIS; Lauren Comito, Queens (N.Y.) Library; Laura Costello, Stony Brook (N.Y.) University; Carolyn Coulter, PrairieCat Library Consortium; and Nick Grove, Meridian (Idaho) Library District. Each was called on to answer the following series of questions:

• What is the next top tech trend?
• What is on the horizon in IT privacy and security?
• Should libraries develop their own tools to meet their specific needs?
• What are some creative ways that leadership can integrate tech for library outreach?
• What technologies should libraries be using to improve tech literacy?

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The Charleston Report – January/February 2017

By the Numbers

196 million...The number of digital books, including audio books, borrowed from libraries by readers and students in 2016, a 21% increase in use over 2015, according to OverDrive, a leading digital reading platform serving 36,000 libraries and schools in 63 countries worldwide. For more information, contact David Burleigh, Director of Marketing at <dburleigh@overdrive.com>.
TCR Reports from the Field: Academic Publishing in Europe, Berlin, January 17-18, 2017

...Observations by Anthony Watkinson, Principal Consultant, CIBER Research, <anthony.watkinson@btinternet.com>

The 12th APE meeting (it sounds better in German) was held in Berlin on 17th and 18th January with a preconference the previous day. Attendance is limited by the size of the beautiful hall of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy to a little over 200. Germany is one of the great world publishing nations and German publishers and others are the core players. There was no exclusivity here and the presentations mainly concerned with the world of academic journals were important for anyone interested in the world of scholarly communication. The title Publishing Ethics: Doing the Right Thing – Doing Things Right was apt; eventually there will be a video at http://www.ape2017.eu/.

Eight key points follow:

1. Two introductory messages gave answers to the conference question. One from the German Federal Minister for Education, Dr. Johanna Wanka, was read out: unhindered transfer of knowledge needs open access so that the advantages of high-speed digital communication can be realized. Dr. Michiel Kolman of Elsevier – the president of the International Publisher Association – argued that yes, the industry was doing its bit and by embracing the digital revolution with new models, workflow technologies and quality control was way ahead of other sectors.

2. There were four linked contributions from within publishing on openness, and experimentation in peer review systems, on the safeguarding of research integrity, from AAAS on transparency in peer review, and from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) on the central question of how the culture of research is being conducted and evaluated. They were all encouraging. The first one by Rachel Burley of Springer Nature is available at https://figshare.com/s/1f7a7857d36d0c75e324.

3. A follow up came in another session dedicated to the PEERE project. The somewhat chaotic site (http://www.peere.org/) provides information about a number of initiatives dedicated to quality and efficiency which brings together academics and publishers including data sharing and also “the transparency of peer review of conferences” – a new take on neglected scholarly outputs.

4. A second group of four presentations examined the aims of the Amsterdam Call for Action on Open Access (https://english.eu2016.nl/documents/reports/2016/04/04/amsterdam-call-for-action-on-open-science) specifically transforming the publishing models in Europe from subscription to open access by 2020. One speaker only (Dr. Ralf Schimmer of the Max Planck Digital Library) really seemed to think mass “flipping” could happen so soon. The policy adviser from the European Research Council and the director of Science Europe explained that the policy conditions are in place – rather a different claim. Finally a publisher from a learned society press (the Royal Society of Chemistry) explained modest but definite success in offering open access solutions to a famously uninterested discipline.

5. Like other disciplines publishing is concerned by the lack of diversity in its senior management which means in this case a low proportion of women in top jobs. Three women in publishing and two female academics looked at the statistics and shared experiences but the big take-home message shared with men in the audience was that where discrimination was detected it should be highlighted and steps taken to look seriously at internal culture and practices.

6. There was some more navel-gazing in a session entitled – Is our industry in good shape? Dr. Philip Carpenter of Wiley, now a senior advisor but until recently head of large swaths of his company, admitted problems. Why was “publishing in the doghouse”? He mentioned the pirate SciHub, which was not a friendly thing to do at a publishing meeting. Why do researchers go there rather to their digital libraries? The answer is convenience – all you want is there with one click. What can the industry do? He pointed to SharedIt – a Springer initiative as one way forward. Michael Mabe of the STM Association highlighted http://www.houcomishareit.com/. Something else is brewing at CrossRef (the DOI organization) in their labs – see http://eventdata.crossref.org/.

7. At all publishing events now and indeed also at the Charleston Conference there is a lot of emphasis on innovation. There was something rather different from newcomer Dr. Jessica Polka of http://asapbio.org/. This is a “scientist-driven initiative to promote the productive use of preprints in the life sciences.” There was a strong undercurrent of interest in preprints throughout the meeting.

8. Finally Dr. Richard Horton, the editor of The Lancet launched The Berlin Declaration on Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities for Sustainable Development. This is now available in his journal at http://www.thelancet.com/BerlinDeclaration2017. This was serious evangelism, heavy work for an early evening presentation. Essentially he was/is asking publishers to commit to a mission extending beyond dissemination and that they pledge themselves “to support, invest in and advocate for the principles, values and practices of fact-based decision-making in our societies, freedom of expression, equity and equality, social justice, and enhanced human cooperation within and between nations and peoples.”

A final note: there were some librarians at the meeting but they were mostly quiet. There used to be more librarians and more librarian input. More input would have been useful but nevertheless much that was positive at APE was positive for libraries too.
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March 15, 2017...Third Research and Scholarly Publishing Forum, a half-day dedicated conference during LBF, co-sponsored by the Publishers Association and ALPSP (the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers). Registration available at www.londonbookfair.co.uk/Whats-On/conferences/research-and-scholarly-forum/.

April 10-12, 2017...40th UKSG Annual Conference and Exhibition, Harrogate International Centre. Registration is available at www.uksg.org/event/conference17/book.

May 20-23, 2017...The Acquisitions Institute at Timberline Lodge, Mt. Hood, Oregon. Learn more at http://acquisitionsinstitute.org/.

Don't Miss This – Still Time to Register!

Spaces are still available for the 19th Fiesole Retreat in Lille, France, April 19-21, 2017. This year's theme is “The Evolving Scholarly Environment” – register online at http://www.casalini.it/retreat/retreat_2017.html.

Of note, we are meeting this year at the LILLIAD Learning Center Innovation on the campus of the Université de Lille. LILLIAD is a state-of-the-art facility that is attracting worldwide attention. Lille is easy to reach by airplane and direct train from Paris, London, and Brussels. Hope to see you there!

Short Takes

Kudos and Aries Systems have announced a partnership through which plain language summaries from authors will be captured at the point of submission within Editorial Manager (http://www.ariessys.com/software/editorial-manager/). The partnership is the result of a six-month pilot to assess author interest in providing summaries when they submitted their manuscripts online; 45% opted to provide these, helping drive broader readership post-publication through Kudos. A video guide for publishers wanting to set up the integration is available at: http://www.ariessys.com/views-and-press/resources/video-library/export-custom-question-data-services-kudos/.