

TLA 2017 CONFERENCE REPORT

APRIL 19-22, SAN ANTONIO

Notes from Paula Highfill

GENERAL SESSION I WITH CORY DOCTOROW

Cory Doctorow is an author, journalist and activist. He writes science fiction, most recently *Walkaway*, graphic novels, and young adult fiction. He is also the co-editor of popular internet newsletter Boing Boing. Doctorow left the crowd of mostly very smart people (librarians!) with the impression that there was much to learn about how our lives were being tracked in the age of the internet. A funny and very articulate speaker, Doctorow opened conference by giving everyone something to think about.

TRANSFORMING YOUR GEN X-ERS INTO GEN DONORS

Billy Fong from the Texas Association of Museums (Billy@TexasMuseums.org), formerly of the Dallas Museum of Art, spoke of the benefits and difficulties of bringing Gen Xers into support groups. Gen Xers are defined as those born between 1965 and 1979. Fong argues that groups often skip this generation who is now coming into a time of earning potential, in favor of targeting millennials (those born between 1980 and 1995) for their energy and fresh ideas. Some tips he has found helpful:

“Membership” should have benefits (event perks, etc.)

Annual funds have shown to be beneficial.

Tier events i.e. paid lunch, free evening, gala dinner, target all levels.

Free events can offer donors opportunities to sponsor, present or just be acknowledged.

Those who give consistently for 3-4 years will give for long period, often life.

OPENING AUTHOR SESSION

Formerly known as the LiFTA, or Library Friends, Trustees and Advocates, Luncheon, this is always an enjoyable way to spend time with other Friends groups and congratulate recipients of the Tocker Foundation grants. Authors Greg Iles and Adriana Trigiani spoke about their new books and entertained with stories from their writing careers.

85TH TEXAS LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE

State Librarian Mark Smith, Consultant Marty DeLeon and Jennifer LaBoon from TLA, briefed attendees on issues likely to have statewide impact, such as property tax reform, unlikely use of the so-called rainy day fund, and education mandates with no source of funding.

Smith spoke of the general budget that had been presented in the House and how library funding would be affected. Overall outlook is positive.

Smith also touched on SB 902, the bill sponsored by Sen Brian Birdwell that would remove accreditation requirements from public libraries. TLA worked hard against this bill and it appears to be dead.

TLA also has close watch on SB 196 which would require schools to notify parents if there is no librarian on campus, and on SB 6, the “bathroom bill” to which TLA adopted a resolution in opposition.

WRITERS OF MYSTERY

Authors Joseph Kanon, Randall Silvis and Josh Malerman talked about their latest releases and their writing careers. While none of these particular books seemed appropriate for Mansfield Reads! consideration, it is always interesting to meet and listen to authors and to see their publishers/agents.

ADVOCACY MAKE AND TAKE

This roundtable session allowed attendees to break into groups and talk about a specific advocacy need for their organization. Since our Friends group has talked about an “elevator speech” several times in the past, Suzonne and I chose this group. The goal was to leave having developed one tool that would help you make a case for your library or libraries and library related issues. With some great ideas, suggestions and feedback, we were able to make enough notes to rough out our own elevator speech. The finished product, which fits front and back on an index card, follows:

WHO ARE WE? – The Friends of the Mansfield Public Library is an all-volunteer group that supports the library through fundraising, promotion, and advocacy.

WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? – We help the library bridge the gap between the city budget and the needs and wants of an ever-growing community.

FOR INSTANCE: We operate a year-round used book sale to **provide funding for critical programs like summer reading**, which serves hundreds of children every year and helps prevent “summer slide”, the documented reading loss that occurs in the summer months.

We **fund an annual Wish List** the library has for items that are needed but not covered in the budget like extra laptops, software, program supplies, speaker and instructor fees, Books for Babies kits, etc.

We **sponsor the annual Mansfield Reads! program**, which is a free, month long community wide book read with associated programs for all ages, that culminates with a nationally known author in our library for an evening of food, discussion and socializing.

AND, we promote library service and advocate for our library by speaking up in the community, to the public and elected officials, about available resources and the need for them. Computers and Wi-Fi access, research databases, and the original internet – our librarians, are only a small part of what is available at no cost in our public library. The certified Family Place Library program, English conversation circles, teen and adult craft sessions, the ever-popular Children’s Storytime and yes, books. We still have plenty of beloved books.

LEARN MORE ABOUT US AT WWW.MANSFIELDLIBRARYFRIENDS.ORG

All the above was just ONE DAY at TLA and that evening we were fortunate to have purchased tickets for dinner at **An Evening with the Authors**. Attendees are seated among the authors in attendance for dinner. Afterwards each author speaks about their newest book. Suzonne and I sat with a former Reads! author, Amanda Eyre Ward, which turned out to be one of the highlights of conference. Amanda took the opportunity to brag about our program, introduce us to everyone she talked to and proclaim how wonderful Mansfield Reads!, the town and our Friends were. Amanda inscribed our copy of her new book, *The Nearness of You*, with the words “Here’s hoping I am asked back!” Other authors in attendance were Sara Paretsky, author of the V.I. Warshawski series, Ruta Sepetys, whose book *Salt to the Sea*, has now been added to the Reads! 2018 summer reading list, Jennifer McMahon and Nickolas Butler. It was quite an enjoyable and productive evening!

BOOK BUZZ I

The first of two sessions where publishers bring their lists and summaries of books to be released in the upcoming year. This session has proven to be very beneficial in the past in several ways. It is great to hear which authors might be coming out with a book that would be suitable for Reads! and when they might be on tour. It is equally important to talk to the reps from the publishers and ask questions, mention our program and make ourselves known.

EXHIBITS HALL

With more than 450 vendors, including publishers and authors, from every publishing house you can name, the exhibits hall is simply library heaven. It could take many more hours than are available to explore all the offerings, but seeing new library products, furnishings and talking to colleagues on the floor is one of the most fun parts of conference. Not to mention those ubiquitous authors we are looking for are making appearances at all hours!

SET YOUR LIBRARY APART: DEVELOPING AN EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Donavon Roberson, of the Roberson Company, and a featured speaker in a new series of programs sponsored by the Texas State Library Called Big Ideas featuring well-known speakers from outside the library industry, presented valuable insight on how to make your emails stand out. His concept teaches how to 1) Rise Above the Noise 2) Make it Valuable 3) Start with the Why. He advocates using a 3-part outline, with a call to action, a calendar element, and content. The goal is to move a reader to do something other than just open the email. Three styles of email, used for different types of mailings, are the blast, the short-term nurture (usually about 5 emails), and the long-term drip. Donovan suggests a VALUE acronym to help with making your email work for you. Variety, Authenticity, Levity, Unexpected, Educate. All the above depends on the Why to begin with. What do you offer or what are you doing that is so valuable to your patrons that it rises above the noise? Make a list of the things that help you stand out from others. Know your audience and what you want from them. Be sure you are telling them what you want from them, why they need it or it is important to them, and what they need to do. Donovan's presentation can be viewed at bit.ly/TLARiseAbove.

GENERAL SESSION II WITH CARMEN AGRA DEEDY

General session speakers are always entertaining, generally inspiring and normally have great stories to tell. Children's author Carmen Deedy knocked it out of the park on all three counts. Born in Havana, Cuba, she used her wonderful sense of humor and outstanding storytelling ability to enthrall the audience with tales of growing up in an immigrant family and what her local library and its librarians meant to her. It was an awe-inspiring enjoyable session.

HETHERINGTON XXX FUN RUN

This was my opportunity to volunteer this year. A change in the schedule made the run after the day's activities. I donned my Nikes and waved my directional flags to all the runners/walkers and thoroughly enjoyed watching them.

Day three started bright and early with **BOOK BUZZ 2**. This was a continuation of the aforementioned Book Buzz session with publishers.

One last visit to the **EXHIBITS HALL** where publishers and vendors have end of conference giveaways, authors make their last appearances and attendees say their goodbyes, wrapped up the TLA 2017 Conference.