

In January, I joined ALA and attended my first Midwinter meeting. The RLG Shares group always has two meetings at Midwinter: the Shares Roundtable and the Shares Practitioners' Council. The Shares Roundtable is held on Friday evening and is an opportunity for all of the RLG Shares resource sharing staff who attend Midwinter to talk about issues of interest to the group. The usual topics are new technologies, standards for member performance, fees and problems related to resource sharing. The Shares Practitioners' Council is the second opportunity to meet colleagues who work in resource sharing. The Practitioners' Council is usually attended by people who are involved in the day to day work of interlibrary loan. The topics are the same as the Roundtable, but can be explored in greater detail. This is the meeting where you finally meet the people with whom you have spoken on the phone and exchanged email messages. It is especially good for finding out if anything you are doing is good or bad for the consortium; a lot of best practices come out of the exchange of ideas in this meeting. On Saturday morning, the RUSA MOUSS ILL group meets from 8:30-12:30 and you get the chance to meet your counterparts from many different institutions. The Library of Congress, the National Library of Medicine, the Association for Research Libraries, the Center for Research Libraries, OCLC, RLG and vendors of resource sharing software and systems attend. There are presentations and breakout discussion groups; it's a good time to meet people who have expertise in areas where you do not. Like all professional gatherings, it's a chance to network and make friends for yourself as well as your library. ALA is giving birth to a new division for resource sharing. The new section has the same name as our opac--STARS. The new section will not be fully operational until sometime in 2004, but when it is, I hope to serve on a committee. I am most concerned with our library's resource sharing activity, but I am also very interested in improving resource sharing in both the national and international areas.

ALA Midwinter has a huge exhibition of library products and services. I visited the ExLibris booth to see SFX demonstrated and I am very much looking forward to our implementation of SFX in the near future.

My only regret about Midwinter is that I couldn't attend all the meetings that were of interest to me. There is so much going on in systems and digitization and the internet. My major focus has to be resource sharing, but many other things interest me and those things enhance my performance in resource sharing.

Addendum:

I forgot to include the OCLC/ILLiad user group meeting I attended at Midwinter. Atlas Systems gave a major presentation because ILLiad was about to release a new version soon after the meeting. The attendees were treated to one of Genie Powell's wonderful Powerpoint presentations, with a most interesting narrative by Genie. Genie is really a genie. There is no ILLiad problem that she can't explain or solve.

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