

VEMA Conference 2011

Submitted by Eileen Cappel

I have attended most VEMA conferences since the mid-1990s, and this year's conference was one of the best. There were more sessions for high school librarians this year than in past years, and the presentations were practical and well done.

I attended three literature sessions. In the first, *Ain't It Cool/New?*, two public librarians from Henrico County booktalked new YA books. They also told about blogs and websites that highlight YA lit. In the second, *What's New in Teen Fiction Fall 2011*, a public librarian from Virginia Beach presented her observations of trends and authors. The third presentation, *100 Realistic Fiction Books Students Will Read*, included books whose characters all have realistic issues.

Audrey Church, professor at Longwood University and past president of VEMA, presented two interesting sessions that motivate one to improve. *Moving Forward with Program Assessment* explained the AASL school library program assessment rubric for *A Planning Guide for Empowering Learners*. I intend to subscribe online through the AASL website in order to participate and get a snapshot of how Oakton High School Library program is rated and where improvement should be targeted first. In her second session, *Top 10 Topics and Trends*, Audrey listed one book, journal article, and website that addresses each of the ten topics. This annual presentation is a favorite for all attendees. This year's topics are particularly thought-provoking and range alphabetically from BYOD (Bring Your Own Devices) to Transliteracy—what it means to be literate in the 21st century in all platforms, tools, and media. I am particularly interested in learning more about two trends, QR codes and student assessment.

Librarians from Thomas Dale High School in Chesterfield, VA presented *Creating a Vibrant High School Library Program* in which they shared best practices in the program that was awarded VEMA's 2011 School Library Media Program of the Year. They use TRAILS (<http://www.trails-9.org/>) to assess skills during freshmen library orientation, collaborate with the reading specialist to give booktalks that support the school reading initiative, and use backward design, Big 6, and evaluations from *Assessing for Learning* by Violet Harada to plan with teachers who bring classes to the library. Of most interest to me was the Library Science class that the librarians teach as an English elective to a few junior and senior library aides each period. Students cover basic research skills through online modules and intern in the library for academic credit.

One of the best sessions I attended was *Copyright for Librarians* presented by Dr. Carol Simpson, an expert in the field. Her PowerPoint and handout were packed with too much information to cover in the hour-and-a-half allotted. She discussed rights of the copyright holder, fair use, adaptive materials for special needs students, guidelines for AV materials, and copyright as it applies to instructors of online courses.

Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology for Mankato, MN schools, gave the conference keynote address in which he highlighted the characteristics of our young patrons and the

need for libraries and librarians to adapt in/to the digital age in practices and facilities. I have heard Cris Crutcher several times. Again he gave a hilarious, poignant reflection at the Author Banquet.

This was an historic conference for the organization as the name officially changed on Thursday evening at a function held at the Library of Virginia. VEMA is now VAASL (Virginia Association of School Librarians) to reflect our relationship with our national organization, AASL. This conference showcased the talent and hard work of dedicated librarians from across the Commonwealth. I am proud to be a member of the organization and enjoyed the opportunity to talk to and learn from my colleagues at the conference. Handouts for many of the sessions are online at

<http://www.vemaonline.org/site/templates/vema.aspx?articleid=281&zoneid=22>.