Learning to make a difference

Coverage from ACRL’s 11th National Conference, Part 1
In her introduction to the panel presentation, “Get Excited About Research and Assessment: An Interactive Look at Some Qualitative, Quantitative, and Historical Projects,” Connie Dalrymple (Wichita State University) stated that while it is our duty to practice “evidence based librarianship” and do research, “it is our passion that pushes the pen” (Inga H. Barnello, “Librarians as Authors: Take the Plunge,” College & Undergraduate Libraries 7, no. 1 (2000):71–4).

Acknowledging the popular lament that librarians should be inspired and trained to do research in library school, Dalrymple outlined the research process and encouraged the use of qualitative versus the familiar quantitative methodology. This includes naturalistic inquiry, historical research, bibliometric analysis, and the Delphi technique. Each of the other four panelists then described their successful research projects, outlining the pros and cons of the methods they used. They later hosted a poster session.

Janet Brown (Wichita State University) described a comparative analysis of four versions of the ERIC database, including a student survey, which was used to provide a cost benefit analysis for library administration and as a tool for determining which version to teach. Phil Howze (Southern Illinois University–Carbondale) described the Delphi technique, which is both a quantitative and qualitative survey method for gaining informed consensus, and how he used it to create a manual for a credit-bearing library instruction course. Gail McMillan (Virginia Tech) described how a campus research grant inspired her to create the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA) Biographic Database. Finally, Beth Smith (Wichita State University) used bibliometrics to determine the information needs of undergraduate engineers by analyzing citations from students’ assignments.—Katherine S. Dabbour, California State University-Northridge, kathy.dabbour@csun.edu