

Access Interviews

An Interview with Karen Glover

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I recently interviewed Karen Glover of Georgia Tech a key person behind the planning of the Access Services Conference held last fall, and now going into its second year. Karen started working in libraries as a part time library assistant at her local public library during her high school years. She later became a Circulation Clerk and then was promoted to Circulation Supervisor in the same public library system. She obtained her MLIS from Florida State University. She is now the Circulation Services Librarian, Assistant Dept. Head at Georgia Institute of Technology Library and Information Center. Her job, like many of us serving in Access Services involves staff supervision, student assistant management, and developing and updating policies and procedures. However, also like many of us, she wears other hats as well, including planning and implementing the first Access Services Conference, in the fall of 2009.

June Power: Tell me about your job. What parts of Access Services are you involved in? How much time is devoted to each part? What are some of the “unofficial” duties involved in your position?

Karen Glover: I am the Assistant Department Head in charge of managing the Circulation desk. I also work with the Department Head on managing the department and directing workflow. As a librarian, I am also responsible for professional development such as presenting and writing articles. I would say that most of my time is devoted to making sure the service desk is staffed with talented, caring, and dynamic individuals who are dedicated to outstanding customer service. However, I am unofficially managing the leisure collection at Georgia Tech which includes Popular Reading, a Book Swap, and a Film collection. I am having lots of fun with it. Our department is special because we embrace change and progress and we continue to push the envelope of what is expected of a Circulation Department. We are combining our service desks this Fall so balancing [reference and access services] will be a work in progress.

JP: What is one thing you would like to change about your library's Access Services department?

KG: I don't think I want to change my department but the way the department is perceived by the rest of the library. Unfortunately, that is just an obstacle all Access Services departments have to hurdle.

JP: If you weren't working in Access Services, what library department would you want to work in and why?

KG: I would work in Collection Development. I think it would be fun.

JP: Last year was the first annual Access Service Conference in Atlanta, GA. Describe the impetus behind the conference. What were the goals of the conference planners?

KG: The conference was derived out of my frustration in my professional development. The professional world as far as organizations and conferences is severely lacking of Access Services. I found it hard to find an organization that focused on my area and thought that many of the Access Services programs at conferences did not clearly demonstrate the growth and change that I assume we are all experiencing. So, taking some ingenuity from the ER&L [Electronic Resources and Libraries] Conference, I decided we need a conference solely dedicated to Access Services. Knowing this would be a huge task to undertake, I asked for help from three Access Services colleagues: Stella Richardson [of the Georgia Institute of Technology], Denita Hampton [of Georgia State University], and Catherine Downey [of Georgia Gwinnett College] and we began organizing the event together. Our goals were to have 75 attendees and to offer a program that focused on current trends in Access Services. My undercurrent goal was to legitimize Access Services in the professional world.

JP: How successful was the conference? How well did the conference meet your expectations?

Were there ways in which it did not meet your expectations?

KG: The conference was incredibly successful. We had 102 attendees, and only 1 no-show. Everyone enjoyed the facility and the programming. The attendees were all excited to attend and took full advantage of the opportunity to communicate and network with fellow Access Services professionals. It far exceeded my expectations.

JP: What was your favorite thing about the conference?

KG: My favorite thing was seeing the attendees talking. There was a general feeling of excitement in the air. It made them feel important and recognized. The energy was so good. I loved it. It was proof that I was not the only one who needed this outlet.

JP: What was your least favorite thing about the conference?

KG: My least favorite thing was the public speaking. I am not the best public speaker so I was nervous. Unfortunately the nervousness was not just when I was speaking. I was shaking on the inside throughout the whole program.

JP: How has the experience of the first year influenced your planning for the second annual conference to be held this fall?

KG: Oh, the planning is much easier this year. I already know what worked and what didn't, or rather, what caused the most difficulties. We are taking suggestions from the evaluations to make some improvements but we are also keeping many things the same. We had an overall response of "yes we like this, don't change a thing" so we are trying to keep that in mind when planning.

JP: Who should attend this conference and why?

KG: The conference is geared towards anyone working in access services such as Circulation, Reserves, Interlibrary Loan, but also there could be a benefit for those working in any public services aspect of academic libraries. The conference is an opportunity to learn more about current trends, practices, and issues in Access Services as well communicate with others in your profession. It's a great opportunity to learn from each other.

JP: How can people who are unable to attend the conference avail themselves of the information given by the presenters?

KG: We are archiving all of the presentations in Georgia Tech Library's Institutional Repository (SMARTech). A link to the presentations can be found on our website:

www.accessservicesconference.org

JP: Besides conferences, what do you think are the best means of networking for those working in Access Services?

KG: I have found listservs to be a very effective way to communicate. Also, participating in local consortia borrowing produces many conversations.

JP: Do you feel face to face conferences are being superseded by virtual seminars? Why or why not? What do you see as the pros and cons to each?

KG: I think that many people see a financial benefit to offering virtual seminars. To me, virtual seminars work best when they are focusing on a single task or function of a job that needs to be learned. While learning some functions of a job work well virtually, community and bouncing ideas off of each other do not. Just having a casual conversation with someone over coffee in between a session can add to your experience. We learn so much from each other, not just the presenters.

JP: Tell us a fun fact about yourself – something unique about you.

KG: I am a pop culture buff who loves television, film, music, graphic novels, and entertainment and I write a blog about my love of pop and how it influences my work. My office holds quite a few popular culture “Easter eggs”. Most notably is my Pez collection. It’s so popular that I have become known as the Pez Librarian by students. I even renamed my blog recently to www.pezlibrarian.com.

I thoroughly enjoyed my chance to talk to Karen Glover, a forward thinking change minded librarian on the cusp of what Access Services is developing into in the 21st century. I also thoroughly enjoyed the first Access Services Conference, both as a presenter (Training 2.0 – an overview of the Blackboard course I created to provide a graded, self-paced, and interactive training tutorial for my student workers), but as an attendee. I was able to attend at least one presentation on each of the areas I work in – which allowed me to focus some on details of my work but also helped me to see a new big picture. Being in Georgia provided an experience that just can’t be replicated by viewing the conference presentations online – the networking and camaraderie I felt I gained by attending the conference was more than worth the trip – though I am glad they are available for people that could not attend. I look forward to again attending this year. I will be presenting again (III, Eres, and Ares: A Reserves Comparison – a comparison of the pros and cons of three different reserves systems), but more than anything, I am looking forward to spending time with others that do what I do in the Library world, as I’ve always felt our best professional development resource is each other.