



The Dilemma for Academic Librarians with Collection Development Responsibilities: A Comparison of the Value of Attending Library Conferences versus Academic Conferences

by Lucy Eleonore Lyons

Available online 16 January 2007

Due to limitations imposed on professional travel, librarians with collection responsibilities must often choose between attending library conferences or relevant academic conferences. An illustrative comparison of the limitations and advantages of the American Library Association annual meeting and the annual conference of the American Political Science Association reveals that neither type of event can be responsibly ignored. Strategies for resolving this dilemma are suggested.

INTRODUCTION

What is missed by attending library conferences which are not oriented to the subject areas for which a librarian has collection development responsibilities? What is missed by attending academic conferences which are not oriented to the professional development of librarians? This study is a comparative analysis of two conference types. Case study methodology is utilized to test which of the two types is most appropriate for collection development managers with limited resources. Quantitative and qualitative factors were investigated, including such variables as publisher representation and exhibitor–attendee interactions. The specific cases under examination are: the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Chicago in 2005, and the 101st Annual Meeting and Exhibition of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Washington, DC, also in 2005.

Those new to librarianship are often steered to join the major professional organization – i.e., the ALA – and to attend its annual and mid-winter conferences in pursuit of professional development. This is true regardless of the actual position within the library held by the new recruit. For those who inherit collection development responsibilities at academic research libraries, however, there are important considerations and options to explore with regard to conference attendance.

The schema in [Table 1](#) summarizes three types of conferences subject selectors might consider attending and the consequences of choosing among them. For some collection development librarians (a.k.a., area specialists, bibliographers, collection managers, subject selectors, and selection officers), it may appear that meetings of Type I – e.g., the ALA – are the most important to attend. Sections within Divisions of the ALA – e.g., the Anthropology and Sociology Section (ANSS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) – serve as the main organizations for librarians representing many, though not all, subject fields. In the case of selectors within sociology, for instance, attendance at the ALA results in interaction with peers in the ANSS. For others, conferences for professional academic organizations (Type II) – though not aimed at librarians – seem to be the logical choice as not all

Lucy Eleonore Lyons is Subject Bibliographer and responsible for Collection Analysis and Planning at Northwestern University, Northwestern University Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, IL 60208-2300, USA <l-lyons@northwestern.edu>.

Table 1
Conference Types and Attendance Outcomes for Collection Development Officers

	Conference of a Library Association	Conference of an Academic Organization	Outcomes
Type I	Attend event of a library association.	Do not attend.	Interaction with selectors in subject area. No exposure to academic field.
Type II	Do not attend.	Attend event of academic professionals.	No interaction with selectors in subject area. Exposure to academic field.
Type III	Do not attend.	Attend library association meetings staged at event of academic professionals.	Interaction with selectors in subject area. Exposure to academic field.

subject areas for which librarians have responsibility are perceived to be adequately covered at library events. Hence, some may choose to go to Type II academic conferences as the only or best option in the absence of a relevant, alternative library event. Type III conferences serve as both the main meeting of an academic organization and, simultaneously, the gathering of librarians representative of the academic field—e.g., both faculty and librarians hold their meetings at the same conference of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS), which is the parent organization of the Council on East Asian Libraries (CEAL). The focus of this study is on Types I and II; Type III presents less of a dilemma, because the outcome includes interaction with both the library and academic professions.

There is, of course, no reason for librarians to choose just a single type of conference to attend if attendance at multiple conferences is possible. For many subject selectors, however, a dilemma arises under circumstances of limited resources—e.g., when time and/or travel funds are insufficient to allow multiple trips and one must make choices. This predicament is even greater among those who manage more than one subject collection—a category which probably includes the majority of selectors.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although it is quite common to find general reports from events or detailed results from specific meetings and workshops, there is very little literature directed at the conference circuit as a topic *per se*. The most common tack within this type of literature is to provide helpful counsel on how to plan for attendance, what to do when attending, and ways to maximize the experience.¹ Other works provide practical guidance in the preparation of presentations and workshops.²

A few advisory narratives describe positive reasons to attend professional library conferences (Type I events). The list in “Top Six Reasons to Attend a Conference” includes professional rejuvenation, peer-to-peer learning, technology updates, memorable keynote speakers, exhibits as learning and fun, and networking while touring a city.³ Another notes the benefits to both librarians and their institutions as well as to the greater library community in terms of enhanced morale, skills development, and strengthened networks.⁴

With regard to attendance by subject selectors at conferences outside librarianship (Type II events), the literature is silent, with one exception. In an illuminating article, Tysick discusses and describes the benefits of attendance at discipline-specific conferences.⁵ These she divides into four groups: benefits to librarians; to libraries; to the profession; and to patrons. For librarians, collection development ideas may be sparked by panel discussions, or at exhibits which showcase new products.

By attending panels that include faculty from one’s own institution, opportunities for collaborative projects or to offer specific services may arise. While one of the main reasons given to attend library conferences is skill-building, Tysick notes the importance for subject selectors to be versed in or aware of the skills needed (e.g., technological) and terminology utilized by students and faculty in the subject areas supported.

Strengthened relationships with faculty, increased positive perceptions of the library, and the potential of increased library usage are benefits derived to the library by the presence of a well-informed, actively engaged, and currently aware collection development librarian. Not only may such qualities be gained or enhanced at discipline-specific conferences, Tysick argues, but the mere presence of a librarian at such events also provides visibility to the profession itself and promotes an image of dynamism. Lastly, Tysick notes the benefits to patrons, including the development of a relevant collection, the realization of the value of working with a librarian, and improved library instruction. In short, attendance at discipline-specific conferences may turn out “a more knowledgeable librarian who knows the current issues, the appropriate terminology, the latest scholarship, and has updated technological skills. . .”⁶

“...in times of limited resources and/or in the situation of multiple subject responsibilities, collection development managers must choose which conference(s) to attend, which to pass up.”

Tysick’s work, like similar articles which discuss library conferences, is primarily a description of the benefits of attendance. Further search of the literature found no comparative analyses of the conferences of academic associations and library organizations. And no works were discovered that address the dilemma examined in this work: i.e., that in times of limited resources and/or in the situation of multiple subject responsibilities, collection development managers must choose which conference(s) to attend, which to pass up.

In the present study, the conference of the ALA fits as the case for Type I and the conference of the American Political Science Association (APSA) serves as Type II. The main librarian organization associated with this academic field of study, the Law and Political Science Section (LPSS) of the ACRL, has its meetings at the ALA. The annual conference of the APSA, though welcoming, is oriented not to librarians but

to college and university faculty and students in all subfields of political science.

This study focuses on two key elements of each conference: (1) The Exhibitions and (2) The Programs. Part 1 is further subdivided into an investigation of “Publisher Representation” and an examination of “The Environment for Subject Selectors,” while Part 2 is subdivided into “Sessions and Meetings” and “Panels and Pre-Conferences.”

The Exhibitions

Publisher Representation

What makes a conference relevant to a collection development officer may be quite different from what makes it relevant to a cataloger, a reference librarian, or a library director. Subject selectors in research libraries generally need to demonstrate some expertise in the academic field for which they develop a collection. Many assume responsibility for subject areas for which they have no background, and the selector must learn, quickly, all about the subfields in the discipline, and something about its history as well as trends in the current literature. In addition, they must develop knowledge of the publishers and presses in which the discipline’s scholarship is presented. It is important to know, for example, which presses are considered weak and which are the most prestigious in terms of faculty publications in the field, for publishers’ strengths and weakness differ along subject lines.

“What makes a conference relevant to a collection development officer may be quite different from what makes it relevant to a cataloger, a reference librarian, or a library director.”

It could be argued, in fact, that the presence of publishers at conferences is much more important to subject selectors than the presence of vendors of services, supplies, equipment, furniture, and automation technologies. The latter are strongly represented at Type I conferences (the ALA) and almost entirely absent from Type IIs (the APSA).

The annual conferences of the ALA attract very large numbers of exhibitors. At the 2005 Annual Conference, there were over 1500 exhibitors of products and services for libraries. It was a daunting number of booths to review, and included not only publishers with collections materials but vendors offering database preparation, display cases, disaster planning, bar coding, and other products and services. Fortunately for those interested in particular subject areas, products were listed in the *Exhibit Guide*⁷ under categories. Under the main heading of “Books Periodicals Documents,” for example, there was no listing for “Political Science,” but there was “Political/Cultural.” The guide to exhibits for the APSA’s Annual Meeting of 2005 had no need for categories, of course, as it had the obvious advantage of covering only one subject field. If, however, the ALA classification was suitable, this APSA advantage would have been nullified.

In fact, the ALA’s categorization of “Political/Cultural” is not helpful and causes problems for political science subject selectors. There are several reasons for this: (1) the publishers on the list have quite different audiences; (2) the publishers who produce works on the study of culture are mixed together with those who produce works on the study of politics; and (3) there is a scarcity of presses who generate a significant or even moderate number of scholarly political science works.

In regard to the first problem, the presses listed under the ALA’s “Political/Cultural” cater to a wide range of audiences. The presses who attended the APSA event offer only academic and scholarly works. Publishers at the ALA, in contrast, offered children’s and popular works and were not restricted to an academic audience. That fact alone is not a disadvantage *per se* of the ALA, but mixing “Political/Cultural” materials aimed at the full spectrum of readers is an inconvenience to selectors and it causes inefficiency. Visits paid to unfamiliar presses may turn out to be quite unnecessary.

With regard to the second problem, as it turns out, those materials which could be classified as “Cultural” are quite different from the “Political.” The listing represents a very broad approach and incorporates cultural study materials which are wholly unrelated to political studies. Included, for example, is Funny Valentine Press, “. . .the entertaining, educational quarterly magazine devoted to the ‘Golden Age’ of radio, movies, music and television!”⁸ This is a sensible listing in terms of cultural studies, but not for political studies. Tuttle Publishing, also on the list, produces “. . .exceptional books for readers and lovers of all things Asian”⁹ except on the topic of political science. The long alphabetical list of subjects on the publisher’s Web site does not include politics between origami and travel.¹⁰ Likewise, David R. Godine, Inc., concentrates on what might be classified as cultural studies, but not political science, which, again, is absent in the alphabetical list between poetry and typography on the publisher’s Web site.¹¹

In total, while there were 107 publishers at the APSA political science conference, at the ALA under “Political/Cultural” forty-five (45) were listed in attendance. Further, as shown above, it is clear that not all forty-five are presses that provide academic political science materials. A search for other possibly relevant ALA categories, then, uncovered “Scholarly Books,” a title of potential promise.

It is notable that while the ALA does have the “Scholarly Books” heading, there is no heading for university and society presses. The reason for this became clear upon closer examination of the list. The number of such presses listed under “Scholarly Books” is very small—a total of seven. Only one appears in the “Political/Cultural” list and it is repeated in the list of scholarly books (see Table 2). Of these seven different presses in total, just slightly more than half, four or 57 percent, actually publish works on politics and government—Cambridge, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, and Oxford University presses.

In most cases, the vendors and publishers attending the ALA are generalist—that is, the resources they produce relate to a wide range of audiences and subjects. Presses that appear at subject-specific academic conferences, on the other hand, are more specialist—they produce for the academic market and are often known for strengths in particular subject fields. Therefore, publishers attending the

Table 2
University and Society Presses Under Relevant
Headings for Political Science Scholarship in the 2005
American Library Association Exhibit Guide

Listed under the Heading of "Political/Cultural"	Listed under the Heading of "Scholarly Books"
Johns Hopkins University Press	American Psychological Association
	American Society of Civil Engineers
	Cambridge University Press
	Columbia University Press
	Johns Hopkins University Press
	Oxford University Press
	Princeton Architectural Press

APSA can be used as a yardstick against which to measure the strength of the presence of political science scholarship at the ALA. This will reveal whether it was simply the weakness of the listings in the ALA guide—i.e., the fault of the guide—that resulted in an apparent absence of political science scholarship.

“In most cases, the vendors and publishers attending the ALA are generalist—that is, the resources they produce relate to a wide range of audiences and subjects. Presses that appear at subject-specific academic conferences, on the other hand, are more specialist—they produce for the academic market and are often known for strengths in particular subject fields.”

The presence of political science scholarship at the ALA was measured in two ways: (1) against the total number of presses at the APSA and (2) against the number of university and society presses at the APSA.

Of the total 107 publishers at the APSA, only twenty-five or 23 percent also attended the ALA (see Appendix A). In other words, less than a quarter of these presses known to be active in

political science publishing were represented at the ALA conference.

The presence of university and society presses is noted in Table 3. Thirty-eight (38) appeared at the APSA and of those, 84 percent did *not* rent booths at the ALA event. Just six (6) or 16 percent attended both conferences. Of the six who attended the ALA, not all were listed in the guide under “Political/Cultural” or “Scholarly.” In this study, university and society publishers of political science materials were found to be six times more likely to attend the APSA than the ALA.

One may wonder why so few publishers of political science scholarship or, for that matter, so few university and society publishers are represented at the ALA. Might it be that the ALA conference is primarily concerned with showcasing products and services for public libraries? This idea is sometimes raised by librarians at the ALA conference and was expressed at the APSA conference by more than one publisher. The assumption behind this proposition is that the ALA conference is most heavily attended by librarians from public libraries. However, according to ALA statistics the largest number of attendees comes from college or university libraries—42 percent of the total. Not far behind, but behind nonetheless, are attendees from public libraries—37 percent. School, special and corporate libraries as well as government agencies, consortium members and “other” make up the remaining 21 percent.¹² The absence, then, of academic publishers at the ALA cannot be explained by employment demographics of the attendees.

“In this study, university and society publishers of political science materials were found to be six times more likely to attend the APSA than the ALA.”

Again, why do so few academic publishers of political science attend the ALA conference? Rather than approach the question by speculating about the ALA, publishers themselves were asked to explain their absence. Although it seems reasonable to think that it would be more cost and time efficient to attend the ALA rather than multiple conferences for different disciplines, informal interviews with publishers at the APSA¹³ revealed that cost is most frequently mentioned as a barrier to attending the ALA. The cost of exhibit space at the ALA begins at approximately \$1925 for one 10' × 10' non-corner booth, which is \$700 more than the standard 10' × 10' at the APSA for \$1225 (which also supplies multiple complimentary benefits).¹⁴ But it is not only a matter of upfront expenses. Presses at academic conferences normally sell material on-hand to

Table 3
The Presence of Political Science Scholarship: University and Society Presses

	Present at the 2005 Conference of The American Political Science Association	Also Present at the 2005 Conference of The American Library Association
Number of University and Society Presses	38	6

individuals. Though ALA conferees place onsite orders for libraries, it is not as common at the ALA, as it is at the APSA, for individuals to buy *personal* copies while standing at a publisher's booth. While such sales may be of little consideration to some presses in terms of deciding which conference to attend, for others, these sales are important. As one representative noted, the \$600 of books bought by faculty at the APSA paid for a flight whereas the \$75 earned at the ALA covered cab fare.

Cost is not the only important reason for the absence of research-level political science presses at the ALA. Many of these publishers are also discouraged by the large size of the ALA conference, its emphasis on electronic resources, and the very noticeable presence of large (and wealthy) commercial publishers. These variables create an atmosphere in which it is difficult to attract attention as the representative of a small press, or one who specializes in print monographs, or one who has little to spend. (The abundance of free giveaways to attendees at the ALA was noticeably absent from the APSA.) In addition, as this study has demonstrated, it is not always easy for attendees to locate relevant presses by using the ALA's guide. In such a large gathering, with an inadequate guide, it is possible that some presses will be bypassed. In short, the lack of visibility among very large numbers of representatives from the entire spectrum of publishing and services is of great concern.

Finally, there is the matter of exhibitor-attendee interactions. When publishers attend professional academic conferences, the relationship they have with the conferees is different from their relationship to librarians at library events. At academic conferences, there is more mutual engagement. From the publishers' side, it is a chance to find authors and expand, deepen, and improve their inventory. From the attendees' side, it is a chance to test the interest of presses in regard to publishing ideas and to look for presses who would be a fit for completed work. Two publishers described this connectedness as a "two-way street." One database vendor noted that the interaction between authors looking for presses and presses looking for authors created, at the APSA, a very lively and charged "atmosphere of give and take."

In contrast, the relationship between exhibitors and attendees at library conferences resembles more closely that of seller and buyer. While it is true that at both types of conferences publishers and vendors are interested in feedback from conferees, there is a stronger sense of a business relation at library than at academic conferences. Publishers and vendors rely much more on libraries to purchase-not produce-their products. The ALA, in recognition of this, entices vendors and publishers to "Reach the Decision Makers."¹⁵ This motto explains why some sellers might choose the ALA over conferences for academic professionals. As one publisher noted, at the latter, the attendees (faculty and students) must be relied upon to relay information to someone else (a librarian) who will ultimately decide on purchases. Such dependence on an intermediary is less desirable than reaching the decision maker directly.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that Type I library conferences are less likely than Type II academic conferences to be attended by the publishers and vendors who offer the kind of works selectors use to build college and university collections. In particular, the cases demonstrate that political science scholarship is more heavily represented by presses

at the comparatively small academic conference than at the larger library association conference. Explanations for this phenomenon include active interaction with faculty, lower costs, and higher visibility experienced by these publishers at academic conferences.

The Environment for Subject Selectors

Despite the findings above, the librarian who deliberates over which type of conference to attend might well wonder about the usefulness of attending an exhibition in which many of the presses supply their materials via approval plans. As one academic publisher noted, his press does not attend the ALA and he feels no need to interact with librarians—the press is commonly on approval plans. However, as shown on the list in Appendix A, one is more likely at the subject conference than the ALA to find upcoming and small academic presses as well as those routinely found on the approval plans of research libraries.

While the ALA hosted numerous database and serials vendors, the exhibition at the APSA conference was primarily a book fair. The few such vendors who did appear noted that their interest was in promoting individual subscriptions rather than selling serials packages, large databases for campuses and simultaneous users, and other products on the high-end of cost. Is this lack of database and serials vendors at academic conferences a disadvantage for the subject selectors? Probably not, because vendors of the more expensive titles routinely travel to research libraries to demonstrate and sell such wares and it is quite unlikely that a selector would make such a costly and sometimes complicated purchase decision (involving licensing agreements) at a booth in an exhibition hall.

Exhibitions offer much more than the opportunity to place orders. A short cruise of the exhibition hall at an academic conference, for instance, is equivalent to a long time spent on a literature review. Perhaps because of the emphasis on individual titles and on individuals themselves (i.e., exhibitor-attendee interactions), each booth at the APSA event had a markedly and noticeably greater volume of works on display than the book vendors at the ALA. By skimming titles and examining works on display at the APSA event, it is possible to quickly learn of trends and movements in the field.

At the same time, the subject selector has an excellent opportunity to learn more about publishing in the discipline. For example, in the case of the APSA, there were large crowds around many university presses. Very little attention was paid to the Elsevier and Springer booths. These observations may be taken as indicators of which presses are most important to this particular field. In contrast, the attention at the ALA paid to Elsevier and other large presses that cover many subject areas is difficult to interpret in terms of a particular academic field and, furthermore, could mislead inexperienced subject selectors who are trying to discover the important presses for their subjects.

Exhibitions at Type II academic conferences typically provide information specifically designed for students and faculty. For the subject selector who is also liaison to academic departments, such information can be brought back to one's home institution or posted on a subject guide Web site as a service to the department. For example, at the APSA, there were booths for the Fulbright program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the IREX International

Fellowships all of which offer programs of interest to scholars in political science. Likewise, the subject selector may learn more about professional organizations affiliated with specific academic fields. For example, the Policy Studies Organization and Political Studies Association, membership organizations which publish society journals, attend political science events but are not present at library conferences.

Finally, one hopes for both relevance and surprises. Two examples from the APSA conference are: (1) the award for “Best Instructional Web site” to faculty of this selector’s home institution; and (2) the discovery that a particular university press, thought by this bibliographer to specialize in history, produces much more in political science than expected. The ability to keep abreast of news and changes in an academic field are additional benefits of attending an academic conference.

In summary, at the academic conference, the subject selector is exposed not only to more of the relevant literature in the field, but also to the culture and world of that discipline. Information on programs, societies, and honors in the discipline is not present at the library conference, but is of importance to those who develop collections and act as liaisons to faculty and students in specific subject areas.

The Programs

Sessions and Meetings

So far, this work has examined publisher representation and other features of conference exhibitions. There are, of course, other important considerations when choosing a conference. As noted in Table 1, Type I library conferences include peer interaction which is absent from Type II academic events. On the other hand, librarians at Type II conferences may still have meaningful professional interactions with exhibitors and attendees. As Tysick notes: “Rarely does a librarian get the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the major authors from the disciplines we support. In addition, we often miss the opportunity to engage in conversation with the scholars responsible for developing the next generation software for their field. This type of current awareness is unique to discipline-specific events.”¹⁶

Be that as it may, the opportunity to meet and consult with other librarians developing collections in the same field is of importance. As noted earlier, the ALA conference serves as the gathering place for members of the Law and Political Science Section of the ACRL. Neither this group nor any other of its type formally meets together at the conference of the APSA.

Just as the lack of publishers of scholarly political science work may be viewed as a great loss at the ALA and hence incline one toward attending an academic conference, so too may the lack of peer interaction be thought an equal loss in attending academic conferences. The literature provides numerous compelling reasons as to why peer interaction is important—e.g., for the benefit of comparison, the chance to “talk shop,” to participate in the politics of the profession, gain a sense of fellowship and renewal, experience peer-to-peer learning, enhance skills, update knowledge of technologies and practices, and to develop a network of people to whom one can turn for advice. It could be argued that e-mail, conference calls, virtual meetings, and other technologies make conference attendance outdated and unnecessary. There are, however, good reasons for in-person contact: initial face-to-face communication makes it easier to later follow-up with less personal methods; the informal atmosphere between meetings some-

times inspires spontaneous discussions that would otherwise not take place; and it is a quick way to get updated about library procedures.

It is possible to become a member of the APSA, but the organizational meetings of Type II conferences are not as directly relevant to librarians as Type I sessions and do not fill the desire to participate in the organization of one’s own profession. By restricting attendance solely to Type II conferences, the librarian may lose touch with peers who share the same interests and professional needs.

Panels and Pre-conferences

Both Type I and II conferences offer workshops, pre-conference courses, and panels that provide in-depth exposure to areas of scholarship or librarianship. For subject selectors whose professional group meets at the ALA, for instance, the section meetings and conference in general supply workshops and panels of relevance. In this case study, for example, sessions with the LPSS and the panel on “Making Sense of Public Affairs Research” were very useful.

While the ALA does offer some panels relevant to academic librarians with collections responsibilities, every panel at the APSA is relevant to the subject selector who needs to be versed in the scholarship of political science. The ALA cannot fill that learning need. Some panels at the APSA, furthermore, bridged both subject scholarship and librarianship with courses such as “Using Archival Sources in Legislative Research: Choosing the Road Less Traveled.”

In most academic disciplines, there are numerous subfields. In political science, for example, most departments cover the general subfields of American politics, comparative politics, international relations, methodology, and theory. Within each of these are further divisions—e.g., Latin American studies. Under such circumstances, it is valuable to attend various subfield panels to grasp an understanding of such a far-flung discipline. It is also informative to see political scientists in their own habitat, so to speak, and to observe (as noted earlier in the case of crowds at university publishers’ booths) audience attendance at panels. Though low audience numbers should not be taken as an indication that the research is unpopular or irrelevant, high audience turn-out may indeed be an indicator of relevance, currency, controversy, and/or importance to the field.

In addition to knowing what the scholarship within their field of responsibility has produced, collection development librarians need to know how it was produced—i.e., the methodologies. In regard to the latter, Tysick notes: “While many of us benefit from attending library-related electronic product demonstrations or sitting in on ‘best practices’ presentations, we may sometimes be ignorant of the skills crucial to students and faculty in the disciplines we support.”¹⁷ The pre-conference course listed above, for example (“Using Archival Sources”) served this purpose. It taught the subject selector how faculty and graduate students had gone beyond roll call data and have launched new approaches to using legislative archives.

The pre-conference “Using Archival Sources” was free of charge, five hours long, with fifteen speakers, and included a tour of the National Archives and Records Administration. Just as the publishers noted the overall cost and the specific price of booths at ALA, it is informative for librarians to compare costs. For example, common prices for pre-conferences at the ALA are approximately \$200 and more. Though the ALA

offers pre-conferences of potential interest to subject selectors, for some librarians the cost is too prohibitive. APSA pre-conferences, called “short courses,” are half or full day sessions like those offered by the ALA. The cost for short courses at the APSA, however, runs from \$0 to \$35. In 2005, more than half were free (12 of 21 or 57 percent). Of the remaining, the average charge to faculty was \$18, and the average charge to students \$9.

“...selectors who only attend library conferences risk being exposed to a very small proportion of the literature and publishers relevant to academic subjects, miss the benefits of interacting with scholars in the discipline, and miss an opportunity to become educated on the latest intellectual, methodological, and cultural developments in the subject field.”

CONCLUSION

Which type of conference – a Type I library association conference or Type II academic conference – is the most suitable and relevant for academic librarians with collection development responsibilities? This study establishes the importance to academic librarians with collection development responsibilities to attend academic conferences. It is true that exclusive attendance at Type II academic conferences, such as the APSA, diminishes opportunities for the peer interaction – the fellowship, networking, and skills development received in the company of other librarians – that occurs at Type I library conferences. On the other hand, selectors who only attend library conferences risk being exposed to a very small proportion of the literature and publishers relevant to academic subjects, miss the benefits of interacting with scholars in the discipline, and miss an opportunity to become educated on the latest intellectual, methodological, and cultural developments in the subject field.

The conclusion above is based on various analyses conducted in this study. The analysis of publisher presence, for example, uncovered (1) the fact that bibliographers will find much greater representation of political science scholarship at conferences of the APSA than the ALA, and,

furthermore, that (2) the ALA has *poor* coverage of political science scholarship. Informal interviews found that these conclusions are unlikely to change, because publishers of political science scholarship prefer to attend academic conferences. This preference is supported by factors such as the give-and-take interaction between publishers and authors, potential authors, and other attendees. In addition, high costs and low visibility contribute to the reluctance of academic publishers to attend the library conference.

Further analysis showed that at Type II academic conferences all of the panels and pre-conferences are relevant to the subject selector, because all immerse the selector in a deeper understanding of the subject field. At Type I library conferences, a smaller portion of the panels are educational for collection managers. Furthermore, in this study, the relevance of the ALA pre-conferences, unlike that of the APSA, was made moot by their prohibitive costs.

The case for attending an academic conference is strong. Under circumstances of limited travel and professional development resources, the case is strongest for advocating Type III conferences—wherein librarian organizations or sections formally meet at an academic conference. It is, in fact, the solution to the dilemma under study. The presence of a librarian component at academic conferences places subject selectors in the most advantageous position, with all of the benefits of the academic conference environment plus the professional–peer interaction found at library conferences. At the same time, it minimizes travel commitments—an especially important consideration to those with multiple subject selection responsibilities. Finally, this arrangement also creates a benefit not available from either the academic or library conferences alone: the *visibility* of an assembly of librarians to their constituents. This visibility creates the opportunity to increase, among faculty and students, awareness of and interest in academic libraries and library usage.

When Type III conferences are not an option for the collection development librarian and when professional development resources are restricted, it will be necessary to act creatively to insure that neither the library nor academic conferences are neglected. Table 4 provides strategies for maximizing the benefits of conference attendance under such circumstances. The options are listed in order of the least to the most optimal course of action.

Option 1 suggests that selectors continue to attend a Type I library event, but choose (possibly on a rotating basis) section members who will attend the corresponding academic conference. The liaisons could then narrate back to other members via the section’s newsletter, listserv, or other special report. For

Table 4
Conference Attendance Options for Subject Selectors

- Option 1: *Send Liaison to Academic Conference*: Attend library conferences. Assign, on a rotating basis, members of the library section to be liaisons at the academic conference.
 - Option 2: *Under Restriction of 1 per Year*: Switch every other year between attendance at library and academic conferences. (Type I or Type II on a rotating basis)
 - Option 3: *Under Restriction of 2 per Year*: Attend one library conference and one academic conference. (Type I and Type II per year)
 - Option 4: *Form New Association of Subject Selectors*: Create a subject-specific library group whose parent organization is the academic field and meet regularly at the academic conference.
-

**APPENDIX A.
THE PRESENCE OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP AT THE ACADEMIC AND LIBRARY
CONFERENCES**

example, this author reported in the *LPSS News* on the short course offered at the APSA. This option is better than complete absence from academic conferences. It is also, however, the least desirable option because (1) it depends on the reporting of an intermediary and (2) each individual selector in the group will make very infrequent trips to an academic conference.

Option 2 assumes the subject selector has the resources to attend only one conference per year. In this case, the suggestion is to switch each year between presence at a library conference and at an academic one. Trends in scholarship in many subject areas do not change radically over just two years so that annual attendance at academic conferences, though desirable, is not necessary. Likewise in the case of library conference attendance—so much professional interaction is now conducted via listservs, e-mail, conference calls, and other remote modes that annual attendance, though perhaps desirable, is not necessary. This model of rotation may also be applied to the librarian with multiple subject areas: For example, the pattern might then be: year 1, a library conference; year 2, political science; year 3, anthropology; and year 4, the library conference again.

At least in the case of the ALA, Option 2 may appear to be challenged by rules of committee service which relate to conference attendance. While most conferences for academics (and for many professions) convene once per year, the ALA is in the unusual position of twice yearly events and, furthermore, warns committee members that missing two consecutive meetings without an excuse deemed acceptable “constitutes grounds for removal”¹⁸ (a rule with the absurd consequence of discouraging participation). Enforcement of the rule may depend on the judgment of the committee chair. One can only hope that financial limitations plus an understanding of the needs of subject selectors would constitute acceptable excuses.

With Option 3 and the ability to attend two conferences per year, the selector is saved from the threat of committee removal if the Type I conference is the ALA as one may safely miss a single ALA meeting per year and still not miss two consecutive meetings. Under this option, those with multiple subject area responsibilities can benefit by rotating the relevant academic conferences.

Finally, Option 4 is modeled on Type III conferences wherein the academic association acts as the parent organization to a librarians’ association. The conclusion of this case study is that this is the best option for academic subject selectors in circumstances of limited travel and time resources.

Perhaps it is possible to reconfigure or combine some of these options. In any event, this case study demonstrates the importance of attending academic conferences. This conclusion has implications not only for veteran selectors, but also in terms of advice given to new selectors. Rather than routinely steer the latter toward attending the ALA, it is important for all selectors to seriously consider the consequences of ignoring, and the benefits of attending, subject-specific conferences. If this consideration must be weighed under circumstances of limited resources, subject selectors will need to engage in creative strategizing to maximize both professional development as well as collection building through conference attendance.

Attended APSA 2005	Attended ALA 2005
The American Prospect	*
Ashgate Publishing Co.	
Association Book Exhibit	
Atomic Dog Publishing	
Baylor University Press	
Blackwell Publishing, Inc.	*
British Council USA	
Broadview Press	
Brookings Institution Press	
Cambridge University Press	*
Cambridge Worldwide Political Science	
Carolina Academic Press	
Center for Strategic and International Studies	
Center for the Study of the Presidency	
Columbia University Press	*
Cornell University Press	
Council for International Exchange of Scholars	
CQ Press	*
CSA Worldwide Political Science	*
Current History	
Duke University Press	
Elsevier	*
European Consortium for Political Research	
Financial Times	
Foreign Affairs	
Georgetown University Press	
Hackett Publishing Company	
Harper Collins Publishers	*
Harvard University Press	*
Holtzbrinck Publishers	*
Houghton Mifflin Company	
ICPSR	
Intercollegiate Studies Institute	
International Specialized Book Services	
IPSA World Congress	
IREX	
Johns Hopkins University Press	*
Kumarian Press, Inc.	

(continued on next page)

APPENDIX A (continued)

Attended APSA 2005	Attended ALA 2005
Lexington Books	
Liberty Fund, Inc.	*
Longman Publishers	
Lynne Rienner Publishers	
M.E. Sharpe	*
McGill-Queen's University Press	
McGraw-Hill Higher Education	
MIT Press	
National Endowment for Democracy	
National Research Council of the National Academies Ford Foundation Diversity Fellows	
The New Republic	
The New York Times	
Northern Illinois University Press	
NYU Press	
Ohio State University Press	
Oxford University Press	*
Palgrave Macmillan	
Penguin Group (USA)	*
Penn State University Press	
Perseus Books Group	*
Peter Lang Publishing	*
Policy Studies Organization	
Political Studies Association	
Potomac Books, Inc.	
Praeger/Greenwood Publishing Group	*
Prentice Hall	
Princeton University Press	
Random House, Inc.	*
RFF Press	
The Roper Center	
Routledge	*
Rowman and Littlefield	
Roxbury Publishing	
Russell Sage Foundation	
Sage Publications	*
Springer	*
St. Augustine's Press	
Stanford University Press	
State University of New York Press	
Taylor and Francis	*

APPENDIX A (continued)

Attended APSA 2005	Attended ALA 2005
Temple University Press	
Texas A&M University Press	
Thomson Researchsoft	
Transaction Publishers	
U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute	
U.S. Institute of Peaces	
UBC Press	
US Foreign Policy Institute	
United Nations Publications	
University of Chicago Press	
University of Hawaii Press	
University of Michigan Press	
University of Minnesota Press	
University of Missouri Press	
University of North Carolina Press	
University of Notre Dame Press	
University of Oklahoma Press	
University of Pennsylvania Press	
University of Pittsburgh Press	
University Press of America	
University Press of Kansas	
University Press of Kentucky	
W.W. Norton and Company	*
Wadsworth, Thomson	
Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars	
West/Foundation Press	
William S. Hein and Co., Inc.	
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars	
World Bank Publications	*
Yale University Press	
Total: 107	25

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, for example: Simon Ford, "Networking: the Art of Conferencing," *Library Association Record* 100/4 (April 1998): 194-195; Pat Miller, "Tips for Attending Conferences," *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 19/4 (December 2002): 39, 45; Blanche Woolls, "Preplanning for a Library Conference," *Knowledge Quest* 32/1 (September/October 2003): 12; and Alice Yucht, "Conference-Going Strategies," *Knowledge Quest* 33/5 (May/June 2005): 19-21.

2. Ken Cheetham, "Powerpoint for Tyros: How to Prepare a Simple but Effective Presentation," *Multimedia Information and Technology* 31/4 (November 2005): 126–128; and Elizabeth Parang, "How to Plan and Deliver a Great Workshop," *The Serials Librarian* 24/3–4 (1994): 177–180.
3. Rosina Alaimo, "Top Six Reasons to Attend a Conference," *Knowledge Quest* 33/1 (2004, September/October): 34–35.
4. Jessie Cranford, "Conference Contemplations," *Arkansas Libraries* 58/2 (April 2001): 13–14.
5. Cynthia Tysick, "Attending Conferences Outside of Librarianship," *College and Undergraduate Libraries* 9/2 (2002): 75–81.
6. Tysick, "Attending Conferences Outside of Librarianship," 80.
7. *American Library Association Annual Conference: Chicag05 Exhibit Guide*, American Library Association. Chicago: 2005.
8. Funny Valentine Press. Online. Available: <http://funnyvalentinepress.com/> (January 2006).
9. *American Library Association Annual Conference: Chicag05 Exhibit Guide*, American Library Association. Chicago: 2005, p. 104.
10. Tuttle Publishing. Online. Available: <https://peripluspublishinggroup.com/tuttle/> (January 2006).
11. David R. Godine, Publisher. Online. Available: <http://godine.com/> (January 2006).
12. American Library Association. Online. Available: http://exhibitors.ala.org/neworleans/who_attends.html (January 2006).
13. American Political Science Association. 101st Annual Meeting and Exhibition. Washington, DC/September 1–4, 2005. Informal interviews included representatives from Broadview Press, International Specialized Book Services, Lynne Rienner Publishers, The Roper Center, Taylor and Francis, and UBC Press.
14. American Library Association. Online. Available: http://exhibitors.ala.org/neworleans/pdf/ALA2006_Space_App.pdf (January 2006); American Political Science Association. Online. Available: <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/ExhibitHallfloorplan2.pdf> (January 2006).
15. American Library Association. Online. Available: <http://exhibitors.ala.org/neworleans/index.html> (January 2006).
16. Tysick, "Attending Conferences Outside of Librarianship," 76.
17. Tysick, "Attending Conferences Outside of Librarianship," 77.
18. See, for example, "ALA Policy 4.5 Requirements for Committee Service" which states: "Members of all ALA and unit committees are expected to attend all meetings. Failure to attend two consecutive meetings or groups of meetings. . . without an explanation acceptable to the committee chair constitutes grounds for removal. . ." Association of College and Research Libraries. Online. Available: <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/aboutacrl/resourcesforwork/guidetopolicies/chapter3acrl.htm#31five>.