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Chicago Road Trip

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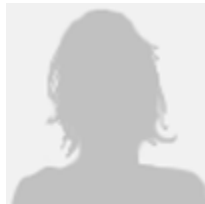
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Chicago Road Trip



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Posted by [Maria Hanrahan](#) at 10:59 PM on July 14, 2009

As you may have read in other blogs (it's all the talk in West Bend!), I recently made a trip down to Chicago to participate in a panel discussion about how libraries handle book challenges, and to share the West Bend story with attendees at the American Library Association 2009 Annual Conference.

I drove down to Chicago on Sunday on my own and arrived around 2:00pm. I avoided the tolls and instead entered the city via Highway 41. Worked well as I avoided the headaches of driving on 94 in Illinois. (In the past, I have occasionally missed the turns to access the cash toll lanes and breezed right on through the EZ Pass lanes, and I own no EZ Pass!) My hotel was about 2 blocks away from Millennium Park, so I spent a little time checking that out (hadn't been there before) and took pictures of the Cloud Gate and Crown Fountain. There was also some other cool stuff like chalk murals being created on the ground, music, etc. I went to the park shop and bought a Chicago t-shirt for each of the kids, then went to check into the hotel. I met up with Mary Reilly-Kliss, former library board member (and new friend!), and we road a shuttle bus over to McCormick Place to check out some of the exhibitor booths at the conference. We only got to visit it for a little while before it closed for the evening, then we road the shuttle bus back to the hotel. Shortly after this, we met up with the rest of our library group to have dinner. Afterwards, we briefly went over our panel discussion/presentation for the next morning. Around 9:30pm, I decided to take another walk to Millennium Park and got some great photos of the Crown Fountain at night. I'll try to post some photos in the next few days.

On Monday morning, we all met for breakfast and then headed over to McCormick Place to find the meeting room. It wasn't a very large room, maybe room for about 75-100. (I think we ended up with about 50 attendees.) After some nervousness because the sound equipment wasn't cooperating, everything was as it should be and we began our presentation. We began with stats about West Bend; how large the city is, where it is located, and some information about the circulation statistics for the library, the fact that it is the resource library for the community, etc. Michael Tyree and Kristin Pekoll discussed how the book challenge/complaint was handled by the library and the library's reconsideration policy. Others, including myself, discussed their roles in the challenge. We all addressed the fact that the challenge and controversy was discussed often in the media and blogs, and how the information was often incomplete or incorrect, and hard to deal with because of the nature of the Internet. We all shared things we've learned or questions that have come up as a result of the challenge. I asked the audience to provide any input as to how library patrons and/or Friends of the Library groups can help libraries deal with

book challenges. Others asked for input on how to deal with the media and blogs. At the end, the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions. Some shared stories of how they/their library had dealt with a book challenge in the past. Others suggested ways to do things differently or other potential resources.

After we wrapped it up, several audience members came up to say hello, introduce themselves, and/or commend the panelists for their handling of the challenge. It was very nice to get feedback from the library professionals, the ones who must address these kinds of book challenges.

After the panel, almost all of the panelists participated in an abbreviated version of the panel discussion in a virtual conference format. After this, we went back to the hotel area and went our separate ways; I hit the road to head for home.

I think our panel discussion was worthwhile to those that attended; they certainly seemed to enjoy the discussion and were open in sharing their feelings and insights on the matter. I hope that someone that attended the talk will read this and post their comments about the discussion.

Contrary to what another has accused, no trash talking occurred.