

c:Que Pasa?

The Official Newsletter of Amigos Library Services, Inc.

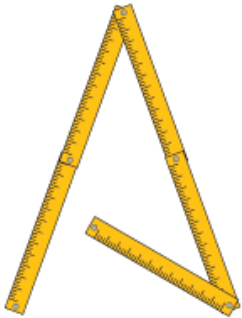
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October - December 2009

Amigos to Conduct 2010 Member Conference Online

Amigos is pleased to announce that its 2010 annual Member Conference, May 5-6, will be conducted entirely online, a first for the organization. Details, including the conference theme, keynote speakers, and programs, will be announced as they are determined.

Amigos has historically conducted Member Conferences as face-to-face events in Dallas. The change to a live online venue is seen as a way to make member participation more convenient and affordable. Individuals from Amigos member institutions won't incur travel and lodging expenses, and time away from worksites will also be reduced. Access to national and regional leaders as program presenters and participation in lively colleague discussions will continue to be hallmarks of participation for Amigos members.



assess » act » advance

Amigos Member Conference Online
May 5&6, 2010

“Conducting a live online Member Conference will broaden and deepen our ability to engage members,” said Amigos Executive Director Bonnie Juergens. “We hope to broaden attendance to more member libraries no matter how far away from Dallas they are located and deepen the attendance to more staff from each participating member library. This is an exciting move for us to take! We looked at the availability of effective live online conference delivery systems and tighter-than-ever travel budgets among our members and determined now is the time to introduce this change.”

Amigos recently conducted its first-ever online conference, “Going Green @ Your Library: Lean, Green, Clean Ideas.” (see “Amigos Hosts First Online Conference October 7” in this issue.) Conference organizers described evaluations by participants as overwhelmingly positive. Juergens said Amigos members can look forward to an equally positive online conference experience in May. *QP*

Amigos Seeks Program Proposals for 2010 Member Conference

Amigos is seeking program presenters for the May 5-6 Amigos Member Conference. The conference theme is “Assess, Act, Advance,” focusing on assessment and embedding the practice of improvement into library culture and services. For the first time in its history the conference will be conducted entirely online.

Benchmarking, LIBQual, process improvement, Balanced Scorecard, outcomes measures: whether they choose one or the other or a combination of techniques, libraries are compelled to measure services and processes to maintain vitality, prove value, retain customers and stakeholders, obtain funds, and remain relevant. The Amigos conference will provide an overview of the culture of assessment as well as practical tips and steps on specific techniques.

If you have an idea for a session related to the conference theme, please submit a description of your idea in 250 words or less to Laura Kimberly, kimberly@amigos.org, by 5:00 p.m. on January 23, 2010. Along with the description, include the following details: intended audience (library type, staff function, and audience level), benefits to attendees, equipment needs, and presenter bio. Submitters of accepted proposals will be notified by email before February 9, 2010. *QP*

Also In this issue...

Board of Trustees Meeting Highlights	2
Does Your Website Help or Hinder Patron Searches?	3
TAE/TExpress Gets New Bags	4

Viewpoint from the Chair

Happy New Year!

Each new year brings with it the promise of new beginnings and renewed hopes. For Amigos Trustees, 2010 will be a year focused on establishing realistic goals for the development of new programs designed to meet member needs. At our planning session last December, Trustees reviewed a broad-ranging list of 17 new member program ideas and narrowed that list to six for immediate analysis. Currently, the staff at Amigos is conducting feasibility studies on the six program ideas proposed by the Board. In March, Trustees will review detailed information about the feasibility of each and determine the order of priority for further exploration and/or development.



Carolyn Allen

Programs being considered include establishment of a hosted digitization and archiving service; consultation and training in the use of tools for library service assessment; facilitated E-Rate filing for public libraries; management of open-source library systems and software; expansion of consortial licensing services for access to e-content; and the provision of off-site back-up storage and mirrored website services. Following further Trustee discussion in March, the Board will seek input from Amigos members regarding the usefulness of these new programs in support of your operations. We hope to share preliminary information with the full membership in April of this year. Our goal is to have a final strategic plan in place by this June.

Another new beginning occurs in May with the Amigos Member Conference. For the first time, the annual conference will be conducted as an entirely online event. Amigos' staff has received a great deal of positive feedback about the move to an online format since last November's announcement, and the Board looks forward to hearing the experiences of conference participants. We have all endured significant budget woes in recent years. Library training and travel budgets have been severely curtailed and in some cases eliminated altogether. In light of this, the move to an online conference, using currently available technology to reduce costs and enhance member participation, is typical of Amigos' member focus and a welcome savings to us all. Once again, Amigos' Laura Kimberly has fashioned a timely conference program focused on "the culture of assessment," a topic of vital importance to all librarians. The Board feels certain you will come away from the 2010 online Amigos Member Conference with practical ways to implement the wealth of ideas presented.

With its promise of new beginnings and renewed hopes, I believe 2010 will be a year notable for the introduction of important new programs of great value to Amigos members. I am confident that working together, Amigos members will embrace these programs as we seek to deliver vital, timely services to our patrons in the most efficient and effective means possible.

My best wishes for a bright future!

Carolyn

Board of Trustees December Meeting Highlights

The Amigos Library Services [Board of Trustees](#) devoted a portion of its December 11 meeting in Dallas to ongoing development of a new strategic plan for the organization.

Continuing with development activities begun during the past year, trustees reviewed the organization's progress in achieving the goals of the current Amigos strategic plan, reaffirmed how the organization defines itself, conducted a traditional SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, and identified priorities for future member services. The board will continue the strategic planning process at its next scheduled meeting in March.

During the business portion of the meeting, Chair Carolyn Allen, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, described recent updates to Amigos personnel policies and thanked Trustee Rita Hamilton, Scottsdale Public Library, Scottsdale, AZ, for agreeing to chair this year's Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will begin soon to identify candidates for election to the Amigos Board of Trustees. Allen added in her report that she will shortly appoint a working group of Amigos members to advise the board on ways to enhance and refine the [Amigos Fellowship Program](#).

In other matters, trustees received the final report on an audit of Amigos' operations for FY2009. The Dallas accounting firm Weaver and Tidwell, which conducted the audit, issued Amigos an "unqualified" opinion, the equivalent of an excellent performance report.

Treasurer Bill Hair, Baylor University, Waco, TX, reported on the Amigos financial report for October, commenting that operational performance overall was below the business plan, due mainly to the timing of various program sales. He noted the organization's investment portfolio performed well for the month, resulting in net gains. Trustees approved the Budget and Finance Committee's recommendation to appoint Fidelity Investments as custodian of short-term investment funds through Brookmont Capital Management, Amigos' investment brokers.

In her Executive Director's update, Bonnie Juergens reported on member retention efforts, investigation into the possible expansion of Trans-Amigos Express, the organization's interlibrary loan courier service, and ongoing research into development of a shared offsite storage program for Amigos members. She also shared plans for the May 2010 Amigos Member Business Meeting. Unlike the 2010 Amigos Member Conference, which Amigos announced in November 2009 would be conducted entirely online, Juergens said the business meeting will be held in a blended format, both online and in-person. She said this will allow Amigos members to select the manner of attendance that works best for them. Juergens also reported on various revisions to both the Amigos Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws that will be presented to the membership for approval in the directed proxy voting process that will precede the May business meeting.

In other business, Trustee Anne Prestamo, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, who serves as Co-Chair of the Americas Regional Council of the OCLC Global Council, shared information with Trustees about OCLC governance as well as updates on other OCLC topics.

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled for March 5, 2010. *QP*

Does Your Website Help or Hinder Patron Searches? by Jessie Milligan

Editor's note: Ms. Milligan, who describes herself as a "librarian in waiting," is currently a library school student at the University of North Texas, Denton, due to graduate in August 2010. She works



Jessie Milligan

part time at the Fort Worth (TX) Public Library in the adult services section. This article is the first of three Jessie has agreed to write for ¿Que Pasa? focused on library websites. Her next articles are scheduled for the March 2010 and June 2010 issues.

It happens in a flash. Patrons open your website's homepage and decide in an instant if they can find what they need.

In an estimated 10 seconds, website patrons determine if they can find links to the catalog,

locations, programs, resources or contacts, according to the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services. Anyone who has helped patrons use the online catalog knows frustration hits very quickly.

Does your website help or hinder patron searches?

A recent review of Amigos member websites showed excellent examples of library homepages doing good jobs of quickly helping patrons use what is meant to be a self-service tool. Even if your library uses a template for a website, you still have opportunities to control some basic content.

Here are just a few examples of best practices:

Simplicity: Website visitors don't always understand basic library terminology. Frequently misunderstood terms include database, index, interlibrary loan, periodical, resource, e-journals and even library catalog, according to John Kupersmith, a University of California Berkeley reference librarian who reviewed more than 50 library website usability studies.

Library terms are easily learnable, but natural language works best for the fastest recognition among the widest group of patrons.

One good example is the homepage of the Bartlesville (OK) Public Library, www.bartlesville.lib.ok.us/. Its catalog search is labeled simply "Find Books & More," and a database search is labeled "Find Articles & Info." It recently answered a common public library patron question with a homepage article under the headline "How to Find a Good Book."

Collections: Your users may have no idea how many wonderful resources are at your library. An example of how to offer more access to collections is the website of The University of Texas at Austin Libraries' homepage, www.lib.utexas.edu. It showcases Recent Arrivals, a Featured Resource, and News of upcoming events, all in tidy boxes on the homepage.

Timeliness: Impress upon website visitors that new and exciting things are happening at your library. The Scottsdale (AZ) Public Library, library.scottsdaleaz.gov/, posts a rotating gallery of book cover images to highlight new additions. The Victoria (TX) Public Library's home page, victoriapubliclibrary.org, focuses on featured events with rotating photographs illustrating featured events, as well as a display of covers of books new to the collection.

Credibility: Just a few steps help establish a website's credibility. Place a logo on every page. Update copyright dates to the current year. Display contact information clearly. Delete outdated events. Special libraries may benefit from a statement of purpose such as the one on the homepage of the American Association of Petroleum

Engineers Library in Tulsa, OK, <http://foundation.aapg.org/library/index.cfm>.

Modernity: Let visitors know that you aren't an outdated institution. The Fayetteville (AR) Public Library, www.faylib.org/, posts photos of its green initiatives and digital services, including circulation of the tiny laptops known as notebooks.

Websites are windows into what patrons can do at the library, but those patrons are likely to take just a quick glance through that window before deciding if they want to enter. Let them know quickly if their visit is worth their while. *QP*

Amigos Member Discount Services, Altarama Team Up for Yearlong Trial

In the summer of 2009, Amigos Member Discount Services (MDS), in cooperation with vendor partner Altarama Information Systems, began a yearlong trial of Altarama's RefTracker DeskStats



program with a number of Amigos member libraries. Altarama is providing a year of

RefTracker DeskStats free to trial participants, allowing Amigos members to test the product and its usefulness to them.

RefTracker DeskStats enables reference librarians to perform what historically has been a tedious and imprecise chore: the recording and reporting of reference statistics. Currently at its halfway point, the trial has gone extremely well, notes MDS Manager Gerry McEntire.

¿Que Pasa? recently spoke with Altarama president Arthur Brady about the trial program and the company's experience as an Amigos vendor partner.

"We certainly welcome the opportunity to work with a partner like Amigos that is aggressively looking after the interests of its members and helps us develop an approach that serves everyone's interests," said Brady.

Brady said Altarama and Amigos staff initially spent much time discussing how best to market DeskStats to Amigos members. "As we were talking with the staff at Amigos, trying to figure out what we could do to launch a partnership, it became clear that traditional price discounts and 30-day free trials are good as far as they go, but neither of those approaches seemed to fit this situation. So, borrowing from some success we had with a group in California, we agreed on a trial program whereby Amigos members would have free use of DeskStats in what for some will have been almost a year."

AltaRama continued on page 5

Nominating Committee Seeks Amigos Board of Trustees Candidates



Rita Hamilton

The Amigos Nominating Committee is seeking nominations for individuals to serve on the Amigos Board of Trustees. For this year's election, those designated as Voting Representatives of Amigos member libraries will elect three librarians and one non-librarian to serve three-year terms on the Board. The Nominating Committee, chaired by Trustee Rita Hamilton, invites those interested in serving or wishing to nominate a colleague to contact Rita at (480) 312-7039 or rhamilton@scottsdaleaz.gov by January 15, 2010. *QP*

Amigos Hosts First Online Conference October 7

Amigos held its first ever online conference, “Going Green @ Your Library: Lean, Green, Clean Ideas,” Wednesday, October 7. The conference featured speakers from both academic and public libraries, who offered ideas on how to promote a clean environment while still providing superior customer service.



The structure of the daylong event mirrored the face-to-face format of traditional conferences, complete with keynote speaker and breakout sessions, and closed with a question-and-answer session. Fifteen session presenters literally spanned the country, with over half coming from the Amigos southwestern U.S. operating region.

Christine Peterson, Continuing Education Librarian at Amigos and a conference organizer, said that while the conference drew

participants primarily from the Amigos region, 11 other states were represented. She said that Oklahoma accounted for 46 percent of participants.

“The overall theme – the practical greening of libraries – offered us a wide range of topics,” said Peterson. “We covered programming ideas for libraries and practical ways to reduce their environmental footprint, greening IT, emphasizing LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) in construction and renovation projects, and collaborating with communities and colleges to develop sustainability projects.”

Peterson termed evaluations of the conference as “overwhelmingly positive.” Most participants rated the content as very helpful, offering many ideas for them to try, and Peterson said speakers cited and praised some participants for work they were already doing.

Complete conference information, including session descriptions, is available at <http://greenlibs.amigos.org/>.

Amigos has plans for future online conferences, and recently announced that its annual Member Conference in May 2010 will be conducted online. *QP*

TAE/TEExpress Gets New Bags

Amigos is pleased to announce that new, reusable nylon transit bags are now available for use by Trans-Amigos Express (TAE)/TEExpress participants. Last year, Amigos and the TexShare ILL/Courier Program Working Group began discussing the possibility of adopting reusable bags to transport library materials sent through the TEExpress courier service. That possibility became a reality with the



distribution of the bags from Amigos to courier service participants in early November.

Prior to distribution, each institution was notified of the number of bags they would receive as well as instructions for their use. The high-visibility, water-resistant, purple bags come in

two sizes: 11” x 14” and 14” x 18”, and are imprinted with white TAE and TEExpress logos. The distinctive look of the bags helps them stand out among other materials transported by the courier service, reducing the risk of loss or mis-shipment. Additionally, the bags provide an environmentally friendly alternative to the paper envelopes and mailers used previously. Such packaging has been a staple for transporting items since the courier program’s inception but was limited by its durability. Courier program administrators note that previous packaging can still be used if bags are unavailable or if items will not fit.

Along with the bags, Amigos shipped each participant a quantity of lockable plastic security seals. The use of seals is optional and participants may reorder them as needed either from the [TAE/TEExpress website](#) or from their supplier of choice.

Amigos invites participants with questions and comments about the new bags to contact TAE/TEExpress Support Specialist Erica Owusu at 1-800-843-8482, ext. 2827, or owusu@amigos.org. *QP*

View the Amigos Continuing Education Services Training Schedule at www.amigos.org/?q=node/57 for up-to-date training schedule and registration information.

Amigos Partners with Fearless Future to Offer Online Library Marketing Course

Amigos is partnering with [Fearless Future](#), a design and marketing consulting firm with experience supporting libraries, to offer *Selling Your Library Without Selling Out!*, an online, project-based marketing course for librarians. The course is scheduled for the Amigos online classroom the first four Mondays in March from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CDT.



Mary Evangeliste

Fearless Future instructors [Mary Evangeliste](#) and [Yvonne Mery](#) will guide attendees through the steps needed to create an effective marketing campaign, with class activities structured around the actual marketing needs of participants. In true

workshop fashion, students will leave the course with a real marketing plan.

Describing the course, [Laura Kimberly](#), Amigos’ Associate Director and Continuing Education Services Manager, said, “This

is an excellent course to take within the walls of one’s library and at the same time have access to the ideas of other students and knowledgeable instructors who span the country. Online technology allows us to offer students ample time to learn, develop, and apply new skills, and do so without incurring undue expense. Our participants will quickly find that Mary and Yvonne bring abundant energy and solid experience into the classroom.”

Fearless Future is a full-service design and marketing consulting firm committed to collaborating with non-profits and organizations that work towards the public good. Services offered include graphic design, visual identity, web design, print design, marketing consultation, marketing materials, marketing plans, workshops, group facilitation, communication positioning, publication audits, grant writing, and copy writing/editing. Principal Mary Evangeliste also serves as Director of User Services and Outreach at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA, and is co-author of *Bite-Sized Marketing: Realistic Solutions for the Overworked Librarian*, published by ALA Editions. *QP*

The objective of the program was to let Amigos member libraries have enough experience with the product for it to determine its continuing value.

Altarama trained Amigos members in the use of DeskStats and how to run reports, and issued as many login credentials for the web-based product as participating staff needed. Throughout the trial, libraries have been gathering a variety of statistical information in a manner and level of detail Brady says would not be possible without an electronic tool like DeskStats.

According to Brady, most libraries don't do comprehensive reference statistics gathering, and those that do find it "very painful". As he noted, "Reference staff put pencil tic marks on tally sheets, and some lucky person gets to count them up at the end of the week and month, and their veracity is often in question because staff will often fill out these tic sheets not throughout the day but two hours before they're due at the end of the month. What DeskStats does is give libraries an online, web-based tool that allows an institution to say, 'Here are the 300 things someone somewhere might need to count,' while at the same time allowing a staff member to say, 'Here are the five things that are relevant for me to count during the next two hours of my shift.'"

Roughly halfway through the trial, Brady says Altarama is delighted by the response. "We're very gratified," he said. "We're pleased with the partnership with Amigos, pleased with the communications Amigos has done with its members on behalf of the trial, and delighted with the response." He said that an initial spike in interest

occurred when the trial began, but noted the interest level has remained high. Nearly 30 Amigos members completed the training and had credentials issued, and of those 30 over half are actively and aggressively using DeskStats to gather statistical information and run regular reports. He cited one participating Amigos member that had collected over 26 million statistics as of the end of November, a number of items that Brady said libraries wouldn't routinely count but can with DeskStats. Other participants' statistics number in the thousands, and Brady feels each library's number and the types of items counted are an honest reflection of what is actually being done at the reference desk.

Participants will have three options at the close of the trial period that runs through the middle of 2010. Those participants choosing to continue using DeskStats can do so under a subscription arrangement through Amigos. Some trial participants may wish to continue under a shared arrangement with other libraries at a cost less than subscribing as individuals, which Brady says Altarama will be happy to do. "All options are hosted by us," said Brady. "There's no technical burden on a library beyond standard workstations and browsers." If a participating library chooses not to continue with the program, Altarama will give the library all the data collected during the trial.

Brady noted that although only about six months remain in the trial, any Amigos member who would like to participate is welcome and should contact Amigos MDS staff. "We'll make it happen," he said. "Just last week I got an email from MDS representative Carol Wattenbarger advising that two more Amigos members want to begin the training." *QP*

**Welcome to the Newest
Amigos Member!**

Texas A&M University - Central Texas
Mr. Mark Harris
Director of Library Services
Killeen, TX
Join date: November 2009

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Let Amigos Show You the Money!

The Amigos Library Services Fellowship Program awards up to \$7,500 annually to information professionals at member libraries to fund projects in research, demonstration, and education.

Preliminary Proposal Review: January 15 **Submission Deadline:** March 1

For details, visit www.amigos.org/fellowship

Want to Be Featured in *¿Que Pasa?*

Do you have a creative way to engage patrons? Doing something innovative at your library? We want to help you spread the word! Contact Larry Godwin, godwin@amigos.org, for the opportunity to be featured in an issue of *¿Que Pasa?*