

## Librarian's Shelf

By Lori Juhlin

### Books are just the beginning @ Columbus Public Library

October 9-11<sup>th</sup> librarians and library staff from across Nebraska descended the Kearney Younes Conference Center for the Nebraska Library Association and Nebraska School Librarians Association Annual Conference. It offered everything from training sessions to business meetings to evening social events for attendees.

Things kicked off early Wednesday afternoon with a pre-conference session on customer service. Theresa Dickson of the Pioneer Library System in Norman, Oklahoma shared her years of experience working in libraries and how they are implementing changes to provide better service to their customers including how they are working to open two 24/7 branches that will allow customers to pick up books on hold 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from branches that are operated by computers. If you think this sounds a bit futuristic, you are not alone. I was blown away that technology is advancing so much that allows this to be a reality. She also shared that many of the libraries in her system have a Redbox type unit called Moviebox that allows patrons to check out DVDs even when the library isn't open.

Thursday brought many more training sessions, and more information on promoting your library, programming ideas, and top books that are available. The topics of sessions are so wide-ranging the theme of my first session of the day sums the whole conference: "Books are just the beginning." While some sessions are devoted to books, and even e-books, so many more of them are about what else the library can provide to a community, such as entertainment, e-resources, technology, and so much more. I love the thought behind this slogan as well, not dismissing books, but emphasizing that libraries provide service in many ways in addition to books.

After lunch, everyone gathered for a Keynote speech by Stephanie Vance, the "Advocacy Guru," who provided insight and tips on promoting your library with a little fun and humor mixed in.

As one session ended and another began, the chance to learn about new and exciting things happening in libraries across the state kept us thinking of how we could implement change in our own libraries. At the end of the day, I felt like I was bursting with ideas, trying to figure out how to use the tools and resources presented to better serve the patrons of Columbus Public Library.

After a relaxing evening, Friday came with new experiences, and new learning opportunities. Sessions were presented on a variety of topics, from promoting programs, to viewing your library from a customer's point of view, and even information about resources available on the Affordable Care Act. As the day wound to a close, librarians headed back to their communities, buzzing with ideas to better serve their customers, and draw new customers to their library. The hard part comes now that we are back from conference, catching up from being gone, and also trying to move forward with what we learned, so that we can provide better experiences and service to our community.