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Video Article

eScience Symposium Reflections from Jian Qin: Finding Inspiration for Librarians in Data Science

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Abstract

Jian Qin, Professor, School of Information Studies, Syracuse University shares her multiple experiences at the University of Massachusetts and New England Area Librarian eScience Symposium, as well as her current efforts in library science and data science education. Jian presented on a panel at the Eighth Annual eScience Symposium discussing the "future of data science" from an educator's perspective. See the video of this panel presentation on the 2016 eScience Symposium website.

Describe your previous involvement with the eScience Symposium

Well, I came to the [University of Massachusetts] Medical School Library back in 2010 or 2011. I don't remember the exact year, but I was invited to give a one-day development workshop to the librarians in the Northeast region. The topic was about e-science librarianship.

And so, a few years later, I came again to attend the symposium. I found the symposium was very interesting and inspiring and gave me opportunities to talk to professional librarians from a variety of discipline areas. And that's very helpful to my teaching and to my connections to the field. So, this is how I ended up here the third time.

Describe the value you experienced from the eScience Symposium

I had the opportunity to talk to librarians, [to] understand what they are currently doing. And because this topic is about e-science librarianship, I had a grant from IMLS [with] exactly the

same title, "e-Science Librarianship Curriculum Development." What I learned from this symposium, I can bring back to my classroom, which has been very, very valuable.

Why have you accepted to present at this symposium?

Ever since I [attended the previous symposium], I've been doing work related to e-science librarianship, and this symposium title fits exactly into my research and the teaching area and fits exactly into what I have been and am doing right now.

So, I received the invitation [to] "talk about the data science education." This is what I have been trying to do and have been doing in the last, I could say, about decade now. I [could] bring my experience and my reflection to the meeting, and then at the same time get feedback from the field. That's the attraction [to present at this symposium].

In Syracuse, we have had a number of projects related to data science, starting back in 2006. With a grant from NSF, we were teaching students data literacy, [and] science data literacy. And then we also had grants for cyberinfrastructure facilitators, and an e-science librarianship grant. So, as a result, we developed a curriculum that teaches students about data curation, data management, as well as data analytics.

I have been going out to work with scientists in science fields, earth science, gravitational wave research field, and other fields. All of this is intertwined, and we have a very rich offering at Syracuse. So, I wanted to share our experience with the audience, and at the same time get validation from practicing librarians.

Share your experience participating in the symposium

One thing that I felt really strongly about was the keynote speaker from two years ago. I was really inspired, and I got a lot of research ideas, and at the same time, I feel what I've been doing was validated.

That's why I said earlier I came here to share my experience in teaching and research, and at the same time to get validation about whether what I'm doing is correct or [if it's in] the right direction. I think [hearing] an inspiring keynote speaker was very, very valuable. And I feel I didn't waste my time driving four hours to come all the way here!

That's one thing. And the other one is the poster presentation: I had the opportunity to stop at different posters and ask questions about what [other librarians] are doing. Sometimes I can share my research, insights, and findings with the person who's standing by the poster. And that kind of exchange was really helpful, and I feel I accomplished my goal. At the same time, I might have provided some useful information to the person who I was talking to. So, that was a very satisfying result.

I work with faculty members helping them with data management and with librarians and talk about data curation practices. Because of my research and teaching areas, I think this eScience Symposium is exactly the venue that fits right into my areas. And that's that, I think.

Another purpose for me [participating] is that I can make a contribution based on what I have

been doing, my findings, my lessons learned. I can share, and I'm not afraid to tell people about my mistakes I made along the way or something.

I think the good and the successful stories and the failed experiences can be very helpful if I share [them] with the profession. So, I think it [goes] both ways. I'm not just receiving [information], but I'm also contributing.

Why do you think the eScience Symposium is important for librarians to attend and participate in?

So, in general, for a professional librarian in the field and who's interested in doing something new, exploring e-science library services, I think this is the right venue to come to because, one, you can learn valuable experiences, as well as new trends and get information, rich information, and take it back to your job. Then you can perform better. You can stay ahead of the curve.

The other benefit is that because you do your work and you must have some successful stories and even failed projects, when you share all of that, you are making a contribution to the profession.

Describe a specific inspirational experience you had at the symposium

A couple of years ago, I [attended] the eScience Symposium, and the keynote speaker I remember came from UNC[1]. And that speaker's team just received a large NSF grant managing long-tail data, and at my school, a team was going to put in a proposal for that call. So, when I heard their successful story about that proposal, I was truly inspired, and I know why they succeeded in getting that grant, because their idea was really great.

The person presented [on what] they proposed to do or they already did. And at the same time, I [thought back to] what we were trying to do, and there were certainly gaps that we didn't fill at the time.

Disclosure

The author reports no conflict of interest.

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1   Arcot Rajasekar, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, gave the keynote address at the 2014 eScience Symposium. View his presentation: http://escholarship.umassmed.edu/escience_symposium/2014/program/6/