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Report: ALA Midwinter Meeting - Boston, MA, January 2016

I was the recipient of the 2015 Ann Heidbreder Eastman Grant, and used the funds to attend [ALA's Midwinter Meeting](#) from January 8 to January 12 in Boston, MA. What follows is a summary of my experiences at the conference.

January 9 kicked off with the [GLBT Round Table](#) Board Meeting. Although, I am not a board member, regular members are encouraged to attend to gain insight into how ALA roundtable business is conducted. The most interesting item of discussion (to a non-board member) was the continuing development of a toolkit for public libraries that wish to start collecting LGBTQ-related materials. The toolkit is approaching completion, and will be available from ALA very soon. This toolkit was then presented in further detail to the general ALA membership later that day at the News You Can Use Diversity session, and is an exciting first step for libraries that require assistance in this area.

Next up was the Digital Materials Discussion Group, co-hosted by [Video Round Table](#) (VRT) and the [Library Information Technology Association](#) (LITA). This took the form of an open discussion that touched upon topics such as curating student-created music and film content for institutional repository (IR) inclusion, and encouraging students to contribute via film-festival type events; integration and display of creative commons licenses for content within university content management systems; and, finally, the notion of creating a culture of informed consent with regards to inclusion of undergraduate work in an IR, and supporting upload of anonymized content as well as allowing anonymization of preexisting content. The discussion provided me with valuable insight that may well factor into decisions related to my own institution's fledgling IR.

January 10 began with the Metadata Interest Group, and a presentation from [Emily Gore](#) of the [Digital Public Library of America](#) (DPLA) about the launch of [RightsStatements.org](#). Gore asserted that there is little to no standardization of the "Rights Statement" metadata field in our industry, and that as we attempt to aggregate digital content nationally, it's starting to become a very real problem. As somebody that works with metadata every day, I can attest to this. RightsStatements.org is an attempt to not only provide standardized statements, but actually to inform the user about what they can do with any given piece of content. The site has yet to launch in full, but related white papers from DPLA can be read [here](#) and [here](#).

The final highlight of the day was LITA's Top Technology Trends session. [Jamie Hollier](#) from [Anneal, Inc.](#) discussed the ways in which natural language interfaces (such as Siri, Cortana, and [X.AI](#)) might transform how patrons interact with the library. [Jim Hahn](#) of the [Minrva Project](#) focused on indoor positioning service tools (or IDS tools) such as [Estimote](#), which utilizes small beacons and stickers that interact with a smartphone app to show users not only how they're navigating physical space, but also intellectual space. Lastly, [Thomas Padilla](#) of Michigan State University proposed utilizing [BitTorrent](#) to allow academics to download extremely large datasets.

Midwinter was enlightening because, first of all, I had not yet witnessed firsthand the ways in which the general administrative business of ALA groups is conducted. This knowledge will undoubtedly serve me well in the future. Secondly, it was wonderful to see what other library

professionals are doing to push the field forward, and to consider how to adapt some of those approaches to my own workplace. I can't thank DCLA enough for providing me with the opportunity to attend.