I want to thank the leadership of the Ohio Valley Group of Technical Service Librarians for the scholarship awarded me to attend this year’s conference. While this is not the first professional conference I have attended, it is the first in the area of librarianship. As such, it served as an excellent introduction to the field. The opportunities to network, the geographic proximity of most of the attendees, and the variety of topics made it a valuable experience all around.

Since my program at the University of Kentucky is online, I spend little time on campus. This meant that I met people from my own school for the first time attending the conference in South Bend. In addition to fellow students and librarians at UK, I meet a number of other folks from nearby cities and universities in Kentucky, as well as Indiana and Ohio. Many of these are people I can expect to cross paths with again and again in the future, making them far more valuable than contacts at national conferences, where people are likely to be from a far greater distance.

As with most things these days dealing with libraries, the convention returned again and again to the subject of change. It seemed to me, though, that the practical aspect of the topics covered made these discussions uncharacteristically optimistic. Rather than focusing on the risks to what we have known, the conference seemed to spend most of its time grappling with how to best address and grow into the future.

I also found the conference to be a great counterbalance to the sometimes theoretical nature of my classroom studies. It is said that “in theory” theory and practice are the same, but
that “in practice”, they are not. This notion was given form during several conversations with other conference attendees, where I was disabused of notions I had learned in the classroom by the retelling of real world events. The subject of cataloging is a good example. The impression given in many of my classes is that cataloging is a skill that is increasingly unnecessary. Yet, I met and talked with nearly a dozen catalogers who made the importance of their craft evident in a number of practical ways.

The conference also introduced me to a better understanding of how library staffs work and fit together. I may be unusual in that I never worked in a library prior to enrolling in the MLS program. But since that is my experience, the conference was important in that it gave me the opportunity to observe the interplay of a number of teams from various universities. I noted a good deal of interdependence that modeled a healthy and collaborative working environment. Various panels were made up of individuals who worked together and clearly rely on and respect each other.

Several of the break out groups were particularly significant for me. The panel on Ethical Concerns was helpful. The complexity of this issue, particularly as it relates to cataloguing, was laid out. I appreciate that unlike several articles I read, the panel did not provide easy answers but rather presented an ongoing professional challenge with which I need to engage. While this was not exactly the point made in the keynote, the keynote speaker’s encouragement to “give up control” seemed pertinent and helpful in this context.

The one area of librarianship where I do have prior experience is in the area of archives and digital preservation. I was both interested and challenged by the panels on “Distributed Digital Preservation” and “Xposing the Archives”, which gave me two very different perspectives on issues relating to preservation of special collections – different from each other
and different from my background preserving court and county records. The importance of detailed assessment and the selection of proper tools to address a task were helpful emphases of both presentations.

I was able to attend the dinner at the Studebaker Museum and the lunch tour at Better World Books. Both were valuable experiences that allowed me to interact with other attendees in an informal setting. I spent part of the evening at the Studebaker talking to two of the vendors and gained valuable insights into how they work, fit into the industry, and assist librarians. The new role that Google Scholar is beginning to play was a major topic of discussion, which I also found very helpful. The BWB tour opened my eyes to a facet of librarianship – what to do with old books – that I had never thought of.

Finally, to someone coming into the discipline, the conference was occasionally a cascade of unfamiliar or barely familiar terms. EAD and DAC, ILS, Triples (to name a few) were bantered about by both presenters and audience with ease. I assembled a list for study to aid in filling out my understanding of the language of librarianship. I have been pleased to know that some of the concepts were known to me, but equally pleased to discover new concepts I need to master.

I anticipate a long association with OVGTSI as a result of my attendance at this year’s conference. I have already volunteered to assist with next year’s conference, since it will be hosted here in Lexington.

I again can’t thank you enough for a fulfilling and rewarding experience.