

President's Update - August 13, 2015

It's almost time for students to show up at Northern Michigan University. Classes start in less than two weeks. All of us on campus will soon feel the students' excitement at the start of the fall semester. The returning students will reconnect with their friends and instructors. The new students will have so much to learn about themselves, their roommates, the campus and their majors.

I have to confess I still feel some of that same nervous excitement when I go to conferences. Now, of course, I go to a lot of conferences -- like MLA's upcoming annual gathering -- where I know other attendees. I'm already looking forward to catching up with friends, celebrating the successes of the last year and laughing at the failures that (eventually) make such good stories.

I haven't forgotten the days when I was absolutely new to professional conferences, though. It was a lot like being a new freshman, figuring out where to go, what to learn and how to meet new people. I remember being more than a little intimidated.

I now try to watch out for conference newbies just like I try to watch out for the incoming freshmen on campus. I want the newbies (and our freshmen) to learn new things and be comfortable in this new setting.

Please excuse me while I pause here to give a shout out to Kalamazoo College Library Director Stacy Nowicki, who I met many years ago at one of my first professional conferences. It was a small education technology conference outside of Chicago and I didn't know anyone. I was so excited to hear the women next to me talk about being librarians! After all these years, I am still grateful that Stacy and her colleague invited me to join them at lunch.

So if this MLA Annual Conference is your first MLA conference -- or your first conference, period -- and you don't know where to sit for lunch, please join me. And if this is NOT your first conference, please make sure you say hello to a newbie and maybe invite the newbie to sit with you at lunch. You never know, you just might end up being friends with that person for a long time and over several states.

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