

President's Update - February 11, 2016

Show of hands, please – who wants to ride a Zamboni? Last weekend two of my student workers and I got to do just that at a Northern Michigan University hockey game. In a few days, we'll get to climb to the rafters of the Superior Dome, NMU's 14-story athletic dome. People are sometimes surprised when I tell them that I'm convinced that adventures like this contribute to the success of our library.

To be fair, I don't expect that riding a Zamboni or standing in the Superior Dome rafters will necessarily translate into immediate improvement of library service. At minimum, though, these adventures expand the library staff's connection to campus and add no-cost opportunities for fun and morale.

All libraries – public, academic, school, special – do best when we know our patrons and our patrons know us. With that assumption in mind, our library has a multi-pronged approach to getting to know the university community. In addition to seeking out opportunities to do things like ride a Zamboni, we have regular field trips on campus and we invite people from around campus to join us at monthly staff meetings. Regular readers of this column may remember that also we host a semi-annual pie social and plan other fun activities designed to bring people together.

The field trips started with a private tour of NMU's DeVos Art Museum. That tour led directly to collaboration between the museum and Olson Library, including planning for integrated catalogs. Since then, library staff have visited the Biology Department's fish lab, the university biomass heat and power plant, backstage at the Forrest Roberts Theatre and NMU's public television station.

Our visit a year ago to NMU's Human Performance Lab led to the library staff experimenting with standing desks and yoga ball chairs, which in turn led to a partnership with the campus Wellness Committee. The library now circulates standing desks, bicycle desks and other active office equipment to employees on campus so that they can try the equipment before investing in purchases.

I love that being a librarian means that I get to explore our campus. Even more, I love that I can

share that exploration with my staff and that all of us can turn those adventures into initiatives that benefit our students, faculty and staff.

In case you are wonder, yes, riding a Zamboni is as fun as it sounds. I recommend that you give it a try if you get the opportunity. If you are interested, you can see photos of my students and me on the NMU Zamboni on the Olson Library's Facebook page. We haven't figured out how to incorporate Zambonis into library services yet, but we haven't given up either. I'll keep you posted.

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