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Taylor Hixson is the recipient of our Early Career Scholarship



As a new librarian, finding a home in a professional association has been a priority for me. I applied for the WAML Early Career Librarian scholarship because of WAML's reputation as a good organization for geo-spatially minded people. When I was notified of receiving the award, I did pause to consider whether or not it was an organization that was right for me. However, immediately upon arriving at the conference welcome reception I could not have been happier to have found myself among so many knowledgeable, welcoming, and wonderful people.

While working at the University of Chicago my role was more focused on digital rather than physical maps, but one of the things I liked most about the conference was that the programming ran the gamut of geospatial—from instruction and reference to innovations in mapping and map collections (both real and imaginary). I felt like the breadth of programming not only reflected how physical and digital maps could be very much intertwined but also the current range of work being done by a variety of information professionals who happen to work with maps.

Through the conference programming and conversations, I began to learn that many others were dealing with the same issues I was as far as managing patron expectations and defining success. Even though these problems were not solved at this year's conference, it was still reassuring for a new librarian like me to learn that even those with more experience did not claim to know how to do it all. After the



conference, I returned to work feeling like I now had a supportive network for asking questions and helping me overcome stumbling blocks.

Something that has stuck with me from the conference was the discussion during the 50th anniversary session when the panelists reflected on how people and inclusivity are what have set WAML apart from other organizations. Now that I find myself outside of the Western Hemisphere (because honestly, how far can the Western in WAML really be stretched), I still think of the WAML community as one that I can engage with and grow from professionally now and as long as my career in geospatial librarianship lasts. Who knows, maybe in 50 years I can reflect on my first WAML experience at the 100th anniversary conference.

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