

Vendors are not the enemy!

Going to a massive conference like ALA with over 22,000 attendees, and 6,179 exhibitors is an amazing learning opportunity, and this year was no different. On the train ride home, I was thinking about the amazing exhibits and vendors to whom I spoke, and the effort they put into improving the library experience. What I have come to realize is vendors are not the enemy! From great customer service to innovation and marketing, many vendors have knowledge that we in library land need to embrace. Walking through the amazing exhibit hall, I was particularly impressed with:



- **SirsiDynix** (<http://sirsidynix.com>) who strives to reach us where we live and work. They don't pretend to be a not-for-profit; they are a corporation, but they are also great community supporters. It was impressive to see "the big bosses" on the floor talking with customers and listening to what we had to say.
- I am a huge audio book fan, and watching **Playaway** (<http://playaway.com>) is an amazing lesson in staff empowerment. This young, up and coming Ohio company has put enormous trust and confidence into their staff, and it shows as they work really hard to gain our business. Their product is good and so is the team that is bringing a new and innovative audio book format to the library community.
- I also was impressed with a small information management company called **Altarama** (<http://altarama.com>). They specialize in products that support reference services. President Arthur Brady and staff understand the collaborative nature of libraries and our need to be on the leading edge of technology, even in these economically challenging times. One of their projects is working with a huge library consortium to test reference text messaging services. I know their willingness to work with us will pay huge dividends for them and us!

Altarama, **Playaway**, and **SirsiDynix** are not the enemy. They are great, innovative businesses that make our work better, more cost effective and, best of all, they get us!!

Conferences are all about relationships, learning from each other, and redefining the library experience. I talked to librarians, authors, and vendors in; workshops, over lunch, and waiting in line. Even on the train ride home, I had an animated conversation with a group of Texas librarians who were totally excited to get back to work and explore text messaging reference services. If you get the opportunity to participate in a conference, take it. The more you put into the experience, the more you will get out of it!! Have a great week, and thanks for the photo Rhonda!