What I Learned at the URMA 2016 Conference

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I gleaned a great deal of information and inspiration from the URMA 2016 Conference, from Sean Zielinski's overview of the Harley-Davidson brand to the panel discussion on LIGO's black hole discovery.

For starters, it was a genuine thrill to plug into a community of peers who are as excited and nerdy about science communication, writing and editing as I am. That in and of itself was worth the price of admission, and I enjoyed dozens of conversations with people from across the country ... and England! ... on topics related to research magazines and science communication. I feel I now have access to a smart network of people with a passion for their work, and that is priceless.

I also took a lot from the content of the conference. Particularly useful to me were the design panel, "Science Communication through Collaboration" and "Announcing LIGO's Black Hole Discovery." The range of content and formats -- take-away tips, inspirational stories, informal discussions and in-depth looks at specific topics – made it easier to digest and process all the material.

The size of the conference made it easy for participants to connect with and learn from one another, and made it much easier to follow up with speakers and panelists for one-on-one discussions after presentations.

The timing of the conference was very propitious for me, because we are developing a new research magazine at The National MagLab. In addition to receiving a lot of relevant information that will aid in that process, I was able to button-hole designers, editors and writers, show them what we're working on, and get invaluable feedback that is sure to make our end product better.

Last but not least, I had a lot of fun! The extracurricular activities, both official and impromptu, helped to keep the group's energy up, showcase a very cool city, and provide more time for URMAns to get to know each other.

Thanks for a terrific conference ... the best I've ever attended!