All public libraries in Washington are governed by a non-paid board of individuals, as specified in The Revised Code of Washington. Whether the individuals are appointed by the Governor, as are the State Library Commissioners, or appointed by a mayor or by county commissioners, as are all library trustees, their duties are comparable. The board and the library director have specific, separate responsibilities: The board establishes the policies and the director administers the policies.

State law delineates the major duties of the commissioners and of trustees:
1. Develop policies and give general guidance concerning library management.
2. Set the direction of the library and its service to the community by planning for the future and evaluate the library’s effectiveness.
3. Obtain and advocate for adequate funding to support the mission of the library.
4. Establish a budget and monitor the library’s finances. Ensure that the budget reflects the mission statement, goals, and objectives of the library.
5. Hire and evaluate the library director.
And perhaps most important:
6. Advocate for excellence in library service.

The ultimate accountability and liability for the library (including ensuring compliance with state and local laws and ordinances, and all major signatory obligations) rest with this collective group of individuals. Board members represent the interests of and are the voice for the community. Every commissioner or trustee plays a critical role in the development of adequate library services for the citizens of Washington.

The governing body of public educational institutions is also a Board of Trustees. K-12 board members are elected, and higher education board members are appointed by the Governor. These boards have ultimate responsibility for the entire school, not just the library. Therefore, in many schools, faculty councils or some comparable group of constituent help the library staff set the direction of the library and advocate for adequate funding and excellence in service. As with public library boards, these individuals are invaluable contributors to the success of the libraries.

Similar groups of individuals and structures are also part of many private institutions and special libraries. Excellence in library service, regardless of the type of library involved, requires involvement from individuals who are not part of the paid staff. Libraries recognize that effective advocacy must come from lay persons, not practitioners.

In addition to the individuals who have legal responsibilities for libraries, many libraries also rely on other individuals within the community for support and advocacy. Friends organizations provide invaluable support and advocacy for most public libraries and for many school, academic and special libraries.

This issue of ALKI is devoted to every non-staff individual who is involved with the governance or committed to be an advocate for library service in Washington State. Each person’s commitment and dedication to the success of Washington libraries is to be commended. Their work also supports the mission of WLA:

The purpose of the WLA shall be the promotion of library service, continuing education, and library advocacy on behalf of the people of Washington state.

On behalf of the Washington Library Association Executive Board, I extend thanks to these dedicated individuals.
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From the Editor

This Issue

This Alki focuses on library boards, trustees, Friends, and advocates. The authors have examined practice and issues from a variety of perspectives, and they haven’t hesitated to ask hard questions: Is board governance still viable? Under what conditions do governing or advisory boards function well, or poorly? What do we lose by not having elected public library boards? How can Friends of the Library contribute to library programs and services? How might library advocates of all types respond to outsourcing and privatization?

The Alki Editorial Committee and I are delighted to have received such a wide range of essays on this theme. We noted an omission, however: discussion of youth participation in library governance or advisory boards. We are interested in this gap, and hope to follow up on the topic in future. In the meantime, if you know of Washington libraries which involve youth in their planning processes or boards, we would appreciate hearing from you.

Coming Issues

Themes of upcoming issues are as follows:

- March 1999: School Libraries and Librarianship
- July 1999: WLA Conference Issue
- December 1999: The Library as Place

Do you have ideas for articles, themes, columns, possible contributors? Members of the Alki Editorial Committee and I are eager to receive your suggestions.

Carolyne Myall is Head of Collection Services, Eastern Washington University Libraries.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

Alki is published three times per year (March, July and December). Each issue is centered on a theme relevant to Washington libraries. Unsolicited contributions are welcome and encouraged, but will be published based on the needs of specific issues. All submissions may be edited. The Editor and the Alki Editorial Committee reserve the right to make the final decision on any submitted material.

Deadlines for submissions are January 15 for the March issue, May 15 for the July issue and October 15 for the December issue.

Format: Submissions should be in electronic form, if possible. The preferred formats are any WORD for Windows or ASCII text transmitted as an e-mail message of submitted on a PC-formatted 3.5” disc. Hard copy will be accepted if the author does not have other options. Photos should be black-and-white. The Editor should be contacted before submitting artwork. Photographic prints and artwork will be returned, if requested. Otherwise, they will not be returned.

Articles typically range in length from 1,000-5,000 words and need not conform to the issue’s theme; although theme-related articles are more likely to be published in the corresponding issue. Unsolicited articles unrelated to the theme, if they are selected for publication, will be published on a space-available basis. Articles should be in-depth examinations of issues of importance to Washington libraries. Alki publishes library news and announcements in a column format.

News of personnel changes, professional organizations, awards, grants, elections, facility moves or construction, and/or establishment of newsworthy services can be submitted, and may be edited and included on a space-available basis. Items that require a timely response should be submitted to The WLA LINK, instead. Columns appear regularly and cover specific areas of library service or operations. Columns typically are pre-assigned in advance, and any be written or administered by a designated person. Anyone interested in submitting material for a specific column should contact the Editor.

Alki retains electronic representation and distribution rights to contents. Alki reserves the right to re-use text, photos and artwork in subsequent editions, with notification to the submitter, if possible. Otherwise, all rights revert to the creator/author of the work.

Alki in the Electronic Information World

Thanks to the work of Martha Parsons, many articles in the most recent issues of Alki are already available on WLA’s Website. In 1999, Alki will appear in another electronic form as well: in the Wilson Fulltext Databases. The Alki Editorial Committee hopes that this will make articles in the journal more widely accessible to the library community. This change is reflected in an additional statement in Instructions to Contributors, which notes that Alki retains electronic representation and distribution rights to contents.

Alki Personnel Changes

This issue marks several changes in Alki. Kathleen Ardrey and Cameron Johnson have joined the Alki Editorial Committee, an active group headed by V. Louise Saylor. Kathy Bullene, winner of the 1998 WLA Graduate Library Scholarship and a student in the University of Arizona’s distance education program in library and information science, is now the Committee’s intern.

Alki has had a fortunate history in its editors, from the first, V. Louise Saylor, to the most recent, Vince Kueter. I was honored to be asked to serve as editor for the current two-year term, as well as with earlier meeting the standards WLA members have come to expect in their journal! Right now I am still learning the job, with the help of the Committee, advice from Vince, and the collaboration of Louise in much of the process. I thank them all very much. And I hope to hear from many of you about how Alki can help serve the library community of Washington.
Sherman and the Heavy Hitters
by Brian Soneda, Mid-Columbia Library

WLA's 1999 Annual Conference in Pasco, "Fond Farewells, Bold Beginnings," features an exciting lineup of speakers, including librarian/legislator, Lisa Kinney; children's book author and illustrator, Bernard Waber; Internet filter expert, Karen G. Schneider; Director of the University of Washington School of Library and Information Science (UW-SLIS), Michael Eisenberg; and ALA Executive Director, William Gordon.

All these speakers will have compelling, relevant stories to tell. Do politicians understand librarians? Talk to someone who is both. Are there picture book characters more endearing than Waber's Lyle the Crocodile? If so, not many. Internet filtering software—good, bad or something in between? Find out. What directions do the new guys at ALA and the UW-SLIS intend to take? Find out in Pasco.

Heavy hitters all, and I will do everything I can to hear each of their stories. But I am most excited, shivering in my shoes excited, by the presence of Sherman Alexie on the Conference schedule. Mr. Alexie is the speaker at the Thursday evening banquet, on April 29. He was born on the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1966 and currently lives in Seattle. His novels, Reservation Blues and Indian Killer, have received critical acclaim (and reasonable sales), as have his poetry collections, including Old Shirts & New Skins.

I first heard the buzz about Sherman Alexie in the journals that all librarians are forced to read, and the buzz was good. If The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven was half as good as its title, I thought, this will be a good read.

The book was twice as good and better than its title. While some of the buzz in the early '90s was about a "new, great Native-American" poet/writer, Lone Ranger was clearly the work of a great writer, period. The engaging characters of the book are Indians (Alexie prefers that term), but these are not "just" stories about Indians like Victor and Thomas Builds-the-Fire. They are about people like you and me trying to live their lives. There are big truths at work in The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven that transcend ethnicity or nation of origin. Compelling stories are compelling stories.

Sherman Alexie is the co-producer and screenwriter of the new movie, Smoke Signals, which is based on The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, particularly on the chapter entitled, "This Is What It Means To Say Phoenix, Arizona." Getting a movie made, from idea phase to in-the-theater phase, takes a lot of money. If you don't have a really great story to present to the money guys, don't even bother showing up. Sherman Alexie showed up with Victor and Thomas Builds-the-Fire, the money guys opened their wallets, the movie got made, and it dominated the prestigious Sundance Film Festival. Case closed.

Poetry doesn't engage me the way a good short story or novel can, so my introduction to the Sherman Alexie's work had to wait until the publication of The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven. But when I was handed the assignment of writing an article on the 1999 WLA Conference for Alki, I decided to do some research on Alexie's poetry. Purely by chance, my Internet search turned up an excerpt from the collection, The Summer of Black Widows, a poem entitled, "Inside Dachau."

This is powerful stuff. You don't have to be a poetry lover to be stunned by the imagery of cold, of hatred, of horror, of guilt. At first, a visit to Dachau is merely subject matter and metaphor for Sherman Alexie, poet. The poem turns into a rumination on what it is like to be Spokane in America, and what it must have been like to be a Jew in Nazi Germany. Might a member of an often persecuted minority in the United States have some unique insights into the horrific persecutions of Jews in wartime Europe? Alexie seems to think, yes, then take a step back in the face of the ghosts of Dachau. He writes:

I am not a Jew. I was just a guest in that theater which will never close.
I have nothing new to say about death.

The guy writes novels. He writes poetry and short stories. He makes movies (with two more on the way after Smoke Signals). He's even produced Reservation Blues: The Soundtrack. Words, movies, music. What doesn't he do? I can't wait to hear what Sherman Alexie has to say on April 29, 1999. Make plans to be in warm, sunny, dry Pasco from April 28-30, for the whole, heavy-hitting WLA Conference 1999, "Fond Farewells, Bold Beginnings."

(Continued on page 9)

ALKI Volume 14, Number 3
Library Boards: Underachievers or Front-Line Leaders?

by Cameron A. Johnson

To hear some tell it, library boards of trustees are about as relevant to governance as Prince Charles is.

In some states and provinces in North America, there have been legislative attempts to eliminate boards, or to reduce them to advisory status. Driving such efforts is the conviction that boards are amateurish, ineffective bodies that are irrelevant anachronisms of a simpler time. Authors of such efforts can point to evidence that these unpaid, appointive citizen boards are ill-trained, unsure of their responsibilities, and lack the time and will to adequately fulfill their legal, moral and fiduciary responsibilities for library service.

Consider this statement, written about library boards in 1960 by Morton Kroll in *The Public Libraries of the Pacific Northwest*:

Cavalierly appointed and similarly regarded, they often have a hard time convincing friends in city or county government of the importance of their impoverished charge. Nor can it be said that generally speaking, they burn with a desire or feel a sense of crisis sufficient to fight for the library’s program ...

Citizens are chosen for library boards because they are civic leaders in their communities. Surveys have shown them to be older, better educated, richer, and whiter than average. Members represent the cream of our communities, and yet are being accused of substandard performance in governing our libraries. Rather than place blame on individual trustees or directors, critics say the library board as an institution is at fault. Abolish boards, they say, and get on with good library governance, by which they most often mean direct governance by the city or county where the library lies.

Does Kroll’s 1960 critique of board of trustee complacency still hold true? If so, what factors contribute to boards’ ineffectiveness? And what, if any, remedies can be applied to improve boards’ performance? Or is the board form of governance flawed beyond reach of remedy?

Recently retired Dr. Peter Hiatt, Professor Emeritus of the University of Washington School of Library and Information Science, says that “the bulk” of public library boards are in some measure deficient in carrying out their responsibilities. “Many smaller libraries have these problems, and some of the larger ones as well,” he commented. “The biggest problem with boards is that they don’t fight to fulfill their responsibilities.”

Hiatt continued, “There was a study done twenty years or so in California, where half the libraries operate under the city manager form of government [with no library board]. The study could find no significant difference between those libraries and ones with boards. That’s scary.”

According to Hiatt, a board’s failure to perform adequately can be laid most often at the feet of the library director. “A director has to educate his board,” Hiatt stated.

David Gray Remington echoes Hiatt. “The key to a board’s success is the motivation of the library director to work as a teacher to his board,” he said. Remington has worked forty years in libraries, in positions both high and humble: from Brodart to the Library of Congress, to Deputy State Librarian for Washington State, to various independent consultancies, to directorship at Pend Oreille County Library, to his present position as reference librarian at North Idaho College in Coeur d’Alene. He compared a library director’s educational responsibilities to that of a minister’s to a church’s board of directors. “The laity should properly run things,” Remington said. “The minister is their employee.”

Both Remington and Hiatt insist that good training is available, but say many boards and directors do not take advantage of it. Scan the literature of librarianship and you see books and articles repeating the same basic information on board responsibilities, and on how boards should view themselves and their directors. And yet how many boards actually follow the prescriptions prepared for them by luminaries in the profession?

The consequence of a lack of training is frequently dysfunction. In the worst case it can lead to truculent, meddling boards like the one in Atlanta, which recently argued for three months over purchasing a component for their computer system. On the other end of the spectrum from this is the rubber-stamp board, which subverts the public interest by allowing the library director to both make and administer policy. “Directors should not be making policy,” Hiatt says. “It doesn’t represent the public interest if the director is allowed to set the whole agenda ... and it’s illegal.”

Remington’s description is more poetic. “We’ve seen the old war horses who have been directors for years, who wink and say, ‘We need to keep the board out of this’ ... but a good director is inclusive.”

If you listen to Ed Schumacher, though, you get the idea that it is not necessarily ill will or self interest that leads directors not to keep their trustees in the loop, but ignorance. “Directors sometimes have little idea of how to work effectively with boards in the best interest of their institutions,” Schumacher says. For the last thirteen years he has operated a consulting business called Third Sector Consulting, in which he trains CEOs and board members from all types from non-profit organizations in their roles and responsibilities.

“If boards don’t act responsibly, their organizations don’t prosper,” he said. “The board is a centerpiece leadership institution in partnership with the director.” He acknowledges the amateur status of board members, and says “there’s no mandate to get training unless library directors serve them with that role.”
Schumacher notes that getting board members up to speed is a daunting task. “In fact that’s why so many people turn down appointments. It’s hard to be a board member.” Schumacher’s day-long board workshops are made up of sections on budgeting, planning, oversight and marketing. He has given workshops for the Washington State Library, and has trained individual boards and directors.

Schumacher defended boards, saying that the public seems to think libraries are doing reasonably well. But he bemoaned their lack of training. “Maybe one in ten library boards has a strategic plan,” he said. “Do they need planning? Yes. Do they get help? No.”

The majority of jurisdictions in Washington have governing boards, but in about 20 cities—“Optional Municipal Code cities”—the library is incorporated as a department of city government. Library boards in these cities are by law advisory boards, unless the city agrees to invest the board with partial or total governance powers.

According to Karen Goettling of the Washington State Library, many of these advisory boards are unaware they have no governing authority until a crisis occurs and the question arises of who is responsible for a decision. In the past few years several library boards in the state have found themselves in this dilemma, and several are in the process of negotiating with their cities for governance powers.

Most Washington cities and library districts, however, have governing boards in which

The management and control of a library shall be vested in a board of either five or seven trustees ... they shall have the supervision. care and custody of all property of the library, including the rooms or buildings ... shall employ a librarian ... shall submit annually to the legislative body a budget containing estimates in detail of the amount of money necessary for the library for the ensuing year ... shall have exclusive control of the finances of the library ... do all other acts necessary for the orderly and efficient management and control of the library... A library trustee shall not receive a salary or other compensation for services as trustee ... . (RCW 27.12)

A critical part of carrying out such responsibilities comes in the board processes of planning and evaluation. Boards should be intimately involved in formulating mission statements, roles, and goals for the library. Remington said board responsibility reaches further, to setting of measurable objectives, though others say objectives should be left to the director and his staff.

Fulfilling these legal responsibilities means board members must look critically at a director’s performance. This usually takes the form of a periodic formal evaluation. Performing such an evaluation takes a lot of time and preparation, Hiatt says. “There is no neat formula for evaluations. You look at things like ‘have the objectives been met?’ Budget priorities are set by the board during the planning process. Have these been adhered to?”

The board hires and may fire the library director if his or her performance is deficient in carrying out the board’s will and the library’s mission. The director is the professional, and knows a lot about the library and how it runs, but may suffer a kind of institutional tunnel vision, in which relevant factors from outside the library are overlooked. Boards, through a wider public perspective, can bring an independent measure of what constitutes the public good in library service.

Betty Jane Narver has been a trustee for Seattle Public Library for six years, and last year was appointed chair. She too emphasizes the hard work in fulfilling the trustee role: “We use board committees a lot, and draw on expertise in the community, such as architects and consultants. We get a lot of citizen input. We could never do it all in a two-hour meeting a month.” She emphasized the public nature of certain library issues, when reporters and photographers show up and hang on every word of the board. “We board members have to be able to take the heat,” she said. She laughed when I said it all sounded rather thankless.

When she is not working on Seattle Public Library’s problems, Narver directs the Institute for Public Policy and Management in the Graduate School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington. “We respect the librarian’s opinion, and depend on it, but bring a public voice to the table as well.”

Asked about moves in other areas of the country to de-emphasize boards, Narver chose to emphasize the positive points about boards. “There are good reasons to have it [the board] separate. It allows the community to feel closer to the institution. Abolish the library board and you’re one step closer to politics.”

It is in the dynamic, creative relationship between the board and the director that the trustee form of governance really proves itself. At the center of the successful relationship is a clear understanding of the proper roles of each, and an atmosphere of absolute trust between board and director.

“Boards and professionals working together make a value-added result,” Narver says. “We [the board] understand the political process, we work with interest groups, we help the librarian thread through the political maze. It can be quite complex.”

This ability of library boards to generate ideas and mobilize support through the local political process is a key to their effectiveness, according to Narver. It is also an area that is frequently neglected by trustees.

Hiatt agrees. “I asked a board member I know if he talked about the library with his friends out on the golf course,” said Hiatt, who served for ten years as a trustee at King County Library System. “He looked at me with horror. ‘You mean tell them I’m on the board?’ he asked. And yet promoting the library is one of the most important things board members do,” Hiatt said.

“Librarians tend to be reactive rather than proactive,” says Remington. “We really tend to be anal-retentive.” He believes that boards have been responsible for such service innovations as library cafes. “Boards suggest such stuff if the librarian welcomes their input.”

Remington stresses, however, that library directors need not play a passive role in the relationship. “Libraries are in jeopardy—in finances, and in a lack of professional leadership,” he said. “Boards are my reality check. I tell the board what I want to do, and they ask me how I’m going to afford it. They keep a director honest. If a director can be understood by a board of intelligent, well-intentioned people, then the public can also understand library issues. A good director leads without governing, has an open relationship with the board,” he said.

Hiatt points to his experience with the King County Library System as a successful model for board/director interaction. “When trustees work hard, it’s incredible,” he asserted. “Bill Ptacek un-
The board form of governance can be traced to economic and governance forms, and philosophies of the nineteenth century. Civic leaders of the time felt that educational institutions—libraries included—should be insulated from politics. The lay trustee form of governance had already been developed for social service and private charitable organizations, and was readily adapted for use by early public libraries.

According to Gordon S. Wade in his 1991 book *Working With Library Boards*, a librarian of the mid-nineteenth century...

...was often a mere custodian of the books, responsible only for loaning them out, seeing that they were returned and collecting fines. The growth of the professional librarian’s eventual responsibility for many aspects of the library and its development is a relatively recent phenomenon. The shift in authority from board to librarian became a necessity as library operations gradually became more complex. With an ever-increasing need for library administration, boards had no choice but to cede some of their absolute control of the library.

With the increasing professionalization and bureaucratization of libraries, it became easy for boards to slip into the background. For years library boards have ranked in public awareness, mostly by those who didn’t know that we were filtering only one computer per library,” Hiatt said. “It pleases me that two years later this became the ALA policy.”

What is at stake for library governance? If efforts to eliminate or weaken boards succeed widely, then the political insulation that libraries have traditionally enjoyed will be lost. Imagine library directors subject to the whims of city politics. Imagine special-interest groups making political hay over the Library Bill of Rights at election time.

Trustee governance has so far escaped a determined legislative challenge in Washington State. That should not comfort us. Politicizing library operations is a logical next step for social activists that resent public libraries’ traditional stance on freedom of access to information.

David Gray Remington knows what boards and directors can do when they work well together. He served two separate times as director of the Pend Oreille County Library, and took the unusual step recently of convincing his board that the best way of balancing its budget was to eliminate the director position—held by Remington himself—cutting in half the system’s top administrative staff. A disastrous drop in revenue made the move necessary. “The board choked on it, but did it anyway,” he said. “It was that or cut more line staff. It was a hard decision, but we couldn’t think of anything better.”

You might call it a textbook collaboration—albeit a harsh one—between board and director for the short-term survival of a library system.

In his position now as reference librarian at North Idaho College in Coeur d’Alene, Remington is philosophical, still a supporter of boards and what they bring to public libraries. “Libraries are probably as democratic an institution as we have, and I don’t think there is any alternative to citizen governance [by boards]”, Remington said. “We need help in becoming effective leaders and communicators of democratic values in a non-coercive way, as a connecting, facilitating force. That’s a lot more important than Dewey numbers.”

“Boards aren’t perfect, but citizens have the ability to influence them,” Narver said. “It’s messy—but democracy is too.”

References


CAYAS Award for Visionary Library Service to Youth: “Some Librarian!”

by Jennifer Merry

Charlotte spun “Some Pig” into her web and brought much recognition to her friend Wilbur. All you need to do is nominate the best Youth Librarian you know, and she or he will receive much recognition at the Washington Library Association Conference next spring. Don’t wait another minute! Send in your nomination today!

CAYAS (Children’s and Young Adults Services Interest Group of the Washington Library Association) is seeking nominations of remarkable individuals who are dedicated to excellence in library service to youth-children and/or young adults. Please include library staff, board members and volunteers in soliciting suggestions for a qualified individual from your institution to nominate.

The CAYAS Award for Visionary Library Service to Youth recognizes individuals who, through their practice and example, provide inspiration and leadership for others who serve children and young adults in libraries. Those eligible to be nominated for this award include staff or volunteers from public, school or special libraries. The work that qualifies an individual for nomination may include cumulated efforts over several years in the field of library service to youth, or may be a singular and exceptional effort which sets new standards for practice. The purpose of the award is not only to commend the individual who will receive it, but also to show appreciation and to bring attention to the remarkable and tireless efforts of all individuals who work with young people in libraries.

The nomination form is available on WLA’s Website, at http://www.wla.org/visaward.html; or contact Jennifer Merry, Ellensburg Public Library, 209 N. Ruby St., Ellensburg, WA 98926. email: jmerry@televar.com. Deadline for nominations is February 1, 1999.

Interest Groups: The Heart of WLA

by Nancy Collins-Warner

WLA/Interest Group Coordinator

Interest Groups are the heart of the Washington Library Association. These constituent groups, based on common work or philosophical interests, provide rich and varied continuing education workshops and conferences programs offered each year by WLA. When you join an Interest Group, you become part of a network of individuals who want to explore issues and challenges in their work lives.

You have an opportunity to impact the activities of an Interest Group directly, and to learn with colleagues from diverse library settings. You may be inspired by the wisdom of more experienced individuals, enjoy the camaraderie of people with work situations like yours, or serve as a mentor. Your involvement in a WLA Interest Group is a rewarding way to keep your membership, and our association, vital.

As you complete your membership form for 1999, take time to look at the list of WLA Interest Groups. Join as many as possible; and through your membership in IGs, become actively involved in the Washington Library Association.

ACCESS (Access Interest Group) advocates for access to library services and materials for disabled and elderly patrons.

ARGH! (Automation Resources Interest Group) is dedicated to elucidation of elusive electronic elements in libraries.

CAYAS (Children’s and Young Adult Services) promotes excellence in library service to children and young adults.

CDIG (Collection Development Interest Group) discusses collection development issues, practices, and policies.

DOCSER (Documents and Serials Interest Group) provides a forum to discuss current documents and serials issues.

GRASSROOTS! (Grassroots Interest Group) works to organize WLA member support for library issues and to train WLA members to work effectively with their elected officials.

IFIG (Intellectual Freedom Interest Group) works to raise the awareness of the library community on intellectual freedom matters.

ILL (Inter-Library Loan Interest Group) provides a forum for discussion of interlibrary loan procedures, protocols, policies, and standards.

LAIG (Library Administration Interest Group) concerns itself with matters of administration and management at all levels.

LIT (Literacy Interest Group) promotes activities related to literacy and encourages partnerships between libraries and literacy groups.

PRF (Public Relations Forum) works to raise the level of library public relations expertise and awareness.

RIG (Reference Interest Group) facilitates communications among reference libraries, encourages inter-library reference, and provides training opportunities.

SRRT (Social Responsibilities Round Table) is a forum for individuals and groups who are concerned with issues of social responsibilities of libraries and librarians.

TSIG (Technical Services Interest Group) promotes technical services activities in all types of libraries.

USER ED (User Education Interest Group) facilitates communication, provides support, and develops continuing education opportunities for user education librarians.

WALE (Washington Association of Library Employees) strives to promote and provide continuing education, networking and improved library service.

WLFTA (Washington Library Friends and Trustees Association) promotes libraries and library services, assists in training and education of library trustees and helps in solving their problems, and encourages Friends of Libraries to share ideas and enthusiasm.

(Continued on page 28)
Giving a Good Account

For more than a century, the people of Washington State have benefited from the work of citizen/volunteers who have served on local public library boards. Over those years, public libraries have created a patchwork quilt of fine local institutions that provide some of the best library service in the United States. Boards and trustees have distinguished themselves by guiding Washington’s libraries to greatness. But now that many libraries and library systems have grown into significant enterprises, the accountability of those boards and trustees has come under scrutiny. With some boards having taxing authority and most boards having significant input into materials selection policies, building sites and bond elections, questions are being raised about how the general public can have more say on these issues.

**Hypothetical Questions, Real Concerns**

Most of the concerns are of the “what if?” category. In Washington’s library districts, the boards set the levy rate for property tax support. Taxpayers question how they can be represented when the board is appointed: What if the Board budgets too much and does not keep the property tax rate down?

In those district libraries and in municipal libraries whose boards are more advisory, unpopular decisions lead to questions about the board’s authority to direct operations and services without concurrent accountability to the constituents of the library’s service area: What if the library decides to change hours and make it less convenient for some patrons?

Most often comes the question of what recourse does a patron have with an appointed board of trustees that allows access to an objectionable book or Internet site: What if the library has Madonna’s Sex on the shelves?

All of these “what ifs” have led some legislators and concerned citizens to call for the election of trustees. Library districts stand out as the state’s largest districts with taxing authority whose governing bodies are not elected. Some city governments have had difficulty with the autonomy of the appointed library boards within the context of a unit of government run by elected officials.

The typical response to these concerns from library circles is “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” There has never been an instance of gross negligence or malfeasance in the history of Washington’s public libraries. Certainly, no Washington Board of Trustees has ever been involved in anything as scandalous as the 1870s lottery in Louisville, Kentucky, when library backers promoted a game of chance as a great way to fund the development of the public library. In this case, indeed, over $6 million was raised. Unfortunately, when it came time to pay up, the promoters skipped town, and a judgment was rendered against the library (U.S. Works Progress Administration).

**Checks and Balances**

Libraries in Washington do not operate in a vacuum. There are a number of checks and balances that ensure proper management and protect public property. Municipal libraries operate within the context of a larger city government. They are subject to the same oversight as all other aspects of city services. District libraries are subject to annual audit by the State Auditor’s Office. State law also limits tax levies. An elected County Executive appoints library trustees. Those appointments require ratification and, usually, hearings on the appointments by the County Councils or Commissions.

Most libraries operate according to principles and guidelines that are well developed through professional associations, such as the American Library Association and the Washington Library Association. All libraries and librarians have a strong interest in not having maverick libraries undermine the standards of service and professionalism that have grown up in the American public library.

**Library Governance: Appointments or Elections?**

A widely held belief is that insulating library governance from the electoral process is the best protection for intellectual freedom. Board members might be tempted to protect their positions by making decisions that appear to be supported by the majority, contrary to their most important mandate, which is to ensure that the library allows expression of a broad range of viewpoints. Even worse, a vocal minority of citizens with a political or religious agenda for the library may be elected to the board.

Most library districts in Washington combine rural, sparsely populated areas with sections that have cities and towns whose populations constitute the vast majority of the electorate. Through the process of appointment, officials can take into account the distribution of representation on the board to ensure that all segments of the community are included. Were trustees to be elected in these districts, it is likely that successful candidates would come from the more heavily populated areas.

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The issue of the cost of electing trustees is thought to be a problem from a number of perspectives. The districts can incur substantial cost for including candidates on a ballot. Depending on the number of other issues on the ballot and the size of the district, elections can cost in excess of $100,000. The cost for the candidate can be substantial also. Creating name recognition for candidates, especially in some of the far-reaching districts of Washington, could be a significant expense. Would those costs be worth it for an unpaid elected position? Service on the board alone requires a substantial amount of time. If campaigning and electioneering were part of the deal, there may be a serious drop-off in the pool of trustee candidates. Those engaged in a business or a career are not likely to have the time. Those with time may not have the means to mount a campaign.

Of course, none of these arguments will sit well with elected legislators who must face the same issues, and who have decided that it was worth the time, effort and money to enter elections. Cherished American concepts such as “one man, one vote” and “no taxation without representation” weaken any of the above arguments. Some would say that if libraries are worth funding, then it is worth electing the people who run the libraries.

**Intellectual Freedom**

The intellectual freedom issue also has another side. In a 1996 survey of libraries around the country, Eileen Wirth found that from 1990 through 1994 two-thirds of the libraries surveyed had requests to censor materials. In 90% of those cases, the library did not withdraw the materials. The fascinating part of the study was that of those instances when materials were withdrawn, the library director was three times as likely to be the one to make the decision as was the board of trustees. Issues of intellectual freedom rarely get to the board level. Boards only made 16.7% of those decisions. The survey did not address elected boards versus appointed boards (Wirth).

**Measuring Effectiveness**

Another study did get to the issue of types of boards and overall effectiveness of the library. In 1991, Jim Scheppke, as part of a Public Library Association Task Force on Library Governance, conducted a study of over 9,000 public libraries. Scheppke and his associates found no correlation between the kind of governance of the library and measures of the effectiveness of the library. This study looked specifically at libraries with boards that have governing responsibility, many of which have elected boards. Ultimately the study concluded “that factors other than type of governance or size of service area are the important elements in determining per capita expenditure and circulation” (Scheppke).

**Conclusions**

From both of those studies one can conclude that any concern about elected trustees with regard to censorship or library effectiveness are not supported by the experience of libraries in other parts of the country. That still does not mean that problems would not occur with elected trustees. However, such problems could just as easily occur with appointed trustees.

In the final analysis, the status quo has served quite nicely to manage and grow Washington’s public libraries. On the other hand, there may be missed opportunities for better management and other people to get involved in shaping the future of our libraries. Is it worth the risk of upsetting a system that has done so well to date? This is a question worth asking, especially when there is no crisis or breakdown in the management, or in the public confidence, of the current governance of libraries.

Every year in the process of developing a presence in the legislature, the Washington Library Association Legislative Committee deals with this issue. This subject requires preparation before it is raised so that everyone in the library community is supporting the same agenda. So far, the work has been centered on maintaining the current system of appointed trustees in municipal and district libraries. It would probably be healthy for those involved with libraries to give this issue further consideration. Within that discussion, the perspective should not be preserving that which is comfortable. The perspective must be finding and advocating for that which is best for Washington’s public libraries.

**References:**


Spokane Public Library:  
An Independent Municipal Library with a Governing Board of Trustees

Spokane Public Library operates as an independent municipal library with authority vested in the governing Board of Trustees. As with all public libraries in the state, Spokane Public Library’s legal standing is established under the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Chapter 27 and its authority is further augmented by Title 35 RCW. Sections of the code grant to the Library Board of Trustees certain legal powers and responsibilities necessary for the efficient management of the Library. However, since the majority of funding for library operations is the result of a transfer from the City of Spokane, the Library is also considered a city department. This dual relationship leads to a unique set of opportunities, circumstances and challenges for the Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director.

In addition to the state statute, the Spokane Municipal Code grants the Library Board powers and responsibilities in accordance with state law. These powers and responsibilities include recognition that the Library Board employs the librarian and other employees; that the Library Board has the authority of the City Council in relation to library matters; that the Library Director has the authority of the City Manager in relation to library matters; and that the Library Board cannot be limited by the code from carrying out functions necessary for the operation of the Library. An excellent example of the authority granted to the Library Board by the code is the relationship with the Civil Service Commission. Of all the city departments, Spokane Public Library is the only department that is not required by the city charter to participate in the Civil Service system. As can be seen, augmentation of state statute by city code ensures that the five-member Board has exclusive governance over the delivery of library services to the 188,000 residents of Spokane.

The City also has a very basic level of control, however. The mayor appoints, with City Council approval, all members of the Library Board, and the City Council has absolute control over the fund transfer that constitutes ninety-six percent of the Library’s operating budget. The outcome of this arrangement is an independent governing Board that is dependent on a legislative body for the majority of its funding. While the Board can propose a budget, the City Council can set the transfer amount at the requested level or at a lower level. This results in a situation where a good working relationship with the City Council is an essential element of the Library Board’s responsibility. In reality, the City Manager or City Budget Officer establishes the fund transfer as part of the annual budget cycle. This fund transfer is presented to the council for approval as part of the overall general fund operating budget. As a consequence, the Library Director must maintain good relations with City Administration to ensure that the amount presented to the City Council is adequate to meet the projected needs of the library.

To foster and maintain good working relationships, the Board and the Library Director work closely with the Mayor, City Council and city administrative team. Like all city departments with commissions or boards, the Mayor appoints a Council Member to serve as liaison to the Library Board. This is a non-voting position, but in all other respects, the Council Liaison is treated as a Board member. He or she receives a full Board packet prior to each monthly meeting and is briefed on issues facing the Library and Board. In addition to the Council Liaison, all newly elected Council members receive a basic orientation to Library operations and services by the Board Chair and Library Director.

The Library Director ensures good relations with city administration. The Library Director serves on the City Manager’s executive team and fully participates in activities that help foster good relations. Taking an active role on the City Manager’s Executive Team allows the director to better understand and participate in city administration’s decision making process while presenting library related issues to the team. This interaction is particularly critical during the annual budget cycle when departmental allocations are discussed and the basic approach to the next budget is decided. The result of interaction between the Library and the City, whether by Library Board members or the Library Director, is a better understanding of the issues and challenges affecting both organizations. However, the Board and Library Director must have a good relationship with the City Council and City Administration, it is critical that the Library Board and the Library Director have an open and honest relationship. The Library Board is responsible for appointing the Library Director and reviewing his actions. All parties must take care to develop a trusting relationship while maintaining the division of authority between the establishment of policy and the operation of the Library. At Spokane Public Library, regular interaction between Board Members and the Library Director helps strengthen this relationship.

During Board and Committee meetings, this interaction can be formal in nature. A less formal method employed to assist in the
The East and West of Library Trustees

by Regan Robinson

make certain that the resources are used wisely. There is a natural tendency to concentrate on the latter, which is often more comfortable to many people. This watchdog role is basically reactive. Board members only need to come together to review the librarian’s expenditures and then they can go home again. But the board that understands and accepts the first responsibility, the one that requires action, fulfills the true purpose of trusteeship.

Recently I had occasion to meet with a library’s board of trustees that suffered from what I might call the “poor-as-church-mice” syndrome. They had become proud of the meager mite, proud of the way they could stretch their pennies, proud of what they did without. They voiced some concern that the salaries they paid were low, terribly low. Weren’t they fortunate to have staff that were so understanding, so self-sacrificing? They were suspicious of other libraries’ good fortune and distrustful of anyone who suggested that their own situation could be bettered. A discussion that used the words money and library too closely together sullied the vision they had of the public library. In their hands and minds, the public library is so important, so worthy, that it is priceless—and as a result, is also worthless. They disguised their inaction by false piety.

I am fortunate to have worked with boards and trustees who are willing to accept both of their responsibilities: they watch over how the money is spent, but they also accept the more difficult challenge of raising the support to do the job. In Westerly, this meant that the trustees set themselves the task of raising $5 million in the community to build an addition that doubled the size of the library. The decision to reach for this goal was made while the community was experiencing the downsizing of the local defense industry. The decision was made even though it meant more meetings, more public appearances, and most onerous of all, asking others for money. And they succeeded. And they didn’t stop then. They continued to set goals for themselves so that the library could provide the services that the new facility promised.

The Stevens County Board of Trustees was appointed right after the voters approved the formation of the County Library District in November 1996. Because no tax revenue would be available to the new district until the spring of 1998, a whole year and four months away, they applied for and received a grant that would allow them to develop the foundation for the new district. Working with consultants and a part-time secretary, the Board conducted public forums in over fourteen communities in the

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Memorial and Library Association of Westerly, Rhode Island
Scene: Board of Trustees Meeting, Westerly, 4:30 on the third Tuesday every month.
Cast of characters: Seventeen trustees, plus one library director and one administrative assistant. No other staff or public are present.

Stevens County Rural Library District, Washington
Scene: Board of Trustees Meeting, Loon Lake, 4:00 on the first and third Thursday of every month.
Cast of characters: Five trustees, one library director, one administrative assistant, and quite often, the president of the local Friends of the Library group, and the husband of one of the trustees.

My 12-year old son, describing one of the Stevens County trustees to a friend back east, explained, “No, they don’t wear suits here.”

That’s true. At the Westerly (RI) Public Library where I served five years as director, most of the seventeen board members showed up at the monthly meeting, which started at 4:30, in their work clothes—which were generally suits, even for the women. Here in Stevens County, the five board members gather at 4:00 for their twice-a-month meeting and while they may be in work clothes, the style is definitely casual.

Even with seventeen members in Westerly, the board meetings moved along quickly and were over within an hour and a half. Each trustee served on at least one committee (at last count there were eight standing committees), and that meant at least one other meeting during the month.

Here in Washington state, the five board members gather twice a month; and perhaps it is because the distances are greater, but the meetings last for three hours. Between meetings, trustees communicate with each other and with the director via email.

Superficial differences of dress and length of meeting aside, there are more similarities between the two boards than differences. Both are made up of generous, caring, and hard-working individuals who have volunteered their time to support their library. And while they come together as individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, wants, and dreams, they manage to work together toward one goal: excellent public library service.

Someone once described the role of the trustees this way: out of the cloud of humanity, a few good souls precipitate. They are the ones who will make a difference. Their challenge and purpose as library trustees are twofold: first, to garner the resources necessary to provide the community with library service; second, to
Both Sides Now

With all the jokes about committees—“A group of the unfit, appointed by the unwilling, to do the unnecessary” (Henry Cooke), “A committee is a group that keeps minutes and loses hours” (Milton Berle), “A committee is an animal with four back legs” (John Le Carre)—and Peter Drucker’s admonition that “there is one thing all boards have in common ... they do not function,” one wonders why we bother at all with boards. The law says boards have certain rights and responsibilities depending upon the type of organization—public, for-profit, not-for-profit. Boards may establish policy, approve budgets, levy taxes, enter into contracts, hire staff, lease or purchase real estate, supervise management, inspect all corporate documents, and are elected or appointed according to the appropriate statute or bylaws. This is the stuff of minutes.

The real function of boards, on the other hand, is to provide counsel, advice, and oversight. I expect the board of the Yakima Valley Regional Library (of which I am library director) to ask inconvenient and/or uncomfortable questions; and I do the same as a board member. I expect my board to want to know why a recommendation is proposed, and I learn from sitting on boards what should constitute adequate staff work to explain and support these recommendations. I expect my board to have a fifth sense for the political ramifications of actions, and I try to provide the same for the boards on which I sit. I insist on being informed, and participated in a proxy fight to get that right. I expect and work to build a symbiotic relationship between staff and board in which each in turn provides leadership and a healthy skepticism for the other. I tell myself that I both staff and sit on boards to keep myself honest.

To a library advisory board in an optional municipal code city and a district library’s governing board, I am staff, and bringing staffing experience. For boards of not-for-profit organizations (such as Project Read, United Way, Camp Fire and Allied Arts), professional associations (such as the Washington Library Association and the Pacific Northwest Library Association), public organizations (such as the Washington State Library Commission), and for-profit companies (such as Brown & Haley), I am or have been a board member, and provide board experience.

Is this schizophrenic? No. It is just different perspectives on making organizations run smoothly, effectively, and profitably. Both staffing a board and sitting on a board require a sincere commitment to furthering the interests of the organization. The board’s business in large organizations is more global and distant from daily operations than in small organizations with few or no staff members. In these organizations, each member of the “working board” is responsible for certain functions of the organization. The president or chair often assumes management responsibilities for moving forward the business of the organization that staff would otherwise perform in larger organizations. The greatest differences between organizations, and types of organizations, are their measures of success, not how their boards function.

As a board member, my greatest fear for an organization is becoming insolvent. This fear is not as farfetched as it sounds. Both WLA and PNLA were spending into their reserves when I was elected president. An epidemic of grocery, drug and discount company consolidations is increasing the normal level of stress on Brown & Haley’s bottom-line. Financial reports tell more about an organization’s real objectives than does its strategic plan.

As staff reporting to a board, my greatest fear is getting out too far in front of the board. It is easy to get caught up in the momentum and flurry of activity at the staff level without stepping back, thinking through the policy implications, and synchronizing staff planning with board review and approval. The pressure on us who are staff to public sector organization boards is less than in the private sector because board members of for-profit companies invested their own money.

The skills and information I glean on boards of all types are transferable. They enrich my contributions to the organization where I work, and provide staff support to its board and to the boards on which I sit. What keeps me committed to the work of boards and committees is the sincere conviction that these organizations have clear and present missions, unique roles in their communities, and perform useful services.

Two over-riding mottoes keep me out of trouble. These messages are in the imaginary player imbedded in the back of my neck where the hair grows to a point. One voice is audible only during board meetings. It says, “It is now time to shut up.” The other voice is heard only in preparation for driving under winter travelers’ highway advisory warnings to attend board and committee meetings. It says “Is this meeting worth your life?”

References:
Serving on a library board is like downhill skiing in new terrain—you don’t know what lies ahead, but you know that it will be exciting.

There may have been times in recent history when a willingness to serve, and a love of books and libraries were the primary qualifications for library board members. Today, those are still valid and important considerations, along with an understanding of the role of stewardship, a capacity to tackle tough issues, and a sense of curiosity. Working together on behalf of the patrons, the Library Board, and the Director and staff set the foundation for developing creative and equitable services. This partnership creates the vision for the library as well as the policies and budgets that guide day-to-day operations.

The issues may not be all that different from the past—budgets, bond issues, materials challenges, etc.—but today they are definitely more complicated. While it is not necessary to have an MBA with an emphasis in accounting, one should have a grasp of the budget process and categories as a way of judging whether the library is living up to its mission and scope of service. Nor is it necessary to have a law degree, though it is useful to wade carefully through legal documents, such as contracts, to ensure that the library is well protected. And, it certainly is not necessary for a board member to have a library school degree. One of the best qualifications is to be a library user—to experience the services firsthand as a patron—in order to understand the impacts of changes in policies and practices.

As stewards of the public purse and trust, Board members are responsible for hiring the Director and developing the library’s mission. Exercising prudence in the use of human, financial, and physical resources, and for providing open non-judgmental access to collections and services represent key aspects of board responsibility.

Board members bring their experience in community activities and work in the private, public and non-profit sectors to the process. The Director and staff bring their expertise in the management of libraries and delivery of library service. Working together, they can make the best decisions to create programs, and restructure or expand services—all in the best interests of the library user. To help Board members better understand the business of the business, there should be time in Board meetings to feature or focus on particular aspects of library services. This gives Board members a greater understanding of the array of services and the scope of issues. Another way to review issues in more detail is through Board committees. At committee sessions, there is time more for in-depth discussion of the services and issues than during the monthly meeting. Curiosity is key. It is important that Board members ask questions and fully understand the information when making decisions and when called upon for opinions outside the board meeting.

Annual Board retreats provide another valuable forum for in-depth discussion. At retreats, short- and long-range planning, financial strategies, and capital plans can be explored. One valuable outcome is that the retreat discussion sets the tone and guidelines for the coming budget process; another is the opportunity for longer-range service perspective.

The Board relies on the Director and staff to raise issues promptly so that members can make informed, reasoned decisions. Keeping Board members apprised of issues that are brewing—especially the bad-news ones—ensures open communication and opens the door for creative thinking. This clear communication is useful at all times, and in the glare of the media spotlight its benefit cannot be overstated. The organization—through its Board President, Director or spokesperson—must speak with one voice.

As policy makers responsible for the library district’s fiscal, capital, and programmatic plans, Board members contribute their expertise, judgment, and passion for quality services to each meeting and each decision. Like skiing, there will be obstacles and quick decisions required. Outfitted with information and trust that all aspects of a decision have been reviewed, these actions can be confidently taken. The exhilaration comes in watching residents of a community visiting its new library or a child enjoying the wonder of a story time. Serving on a library board is like skiing—only better.

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Changing Library Circulation Policy in a Shared-Governance System

by Patricia M. Kelley

In 1995 Eastern Washington University Libraries implemented a new integrated library system. The library staff saw this as the perfect opportunity to review policies and procedures in light of the new system’s capabilities. With respect to our loan and fines policy, however, change was not an option: it was a requirement. The new circulation module could not support the existing loan and fines policy.

The circulation system in use at EWU in 1995 had been developed by EWU and Washington State University. It was designed to accommodate a policy on overdues and fines that had been developed many years before by a local consortium of public and academic libraries. We did not actually charge fines. We charged a fee for the overdue notice. The charge for the notice was two dollars, no matter how many overdue items were listed on the notice. In the interest of providing consistency for our students, many of whom use public and community college libraries in addition to our own, we had maintained the fee for notice in lieu of daily fines. Needless to say, Innovative Interfaces’ circulation module did not accommodate such a policy.

It is no simple matter to change library policies in an academic institution. The faculty must be consulted through their many committees and the Faculty Senate. The administration must adopt the changes. And, if the policy affects the public in any way or changes anything in the Washington Administrative Code, there must be a public hearing.

The process of policy change actually begins in the library, where we attempt to achieve consensus on what the policy should be. The external process begins with the Libraries Advisory Council, which is charged with advising the faculty on all matters pertaining to the library.

Internal Consensus

The first stage of policy making is to achieve internal library staff consensus on goals we want to achieve through a policy. The next step is to review existing policy to determine whether or not it supports those goals. Finally, based on collective best judgment, we draft a policy.

The library staff came to consensus on the need to update our entire loan and fines policy in summer, 1995. Most of the changes were small—tweaks to create more consistency or to take advantage of system capabilities. One major change proposed was adoption of daily fines for most overdue books and hourly fines for some other categories of material. A second major change was shortening the loan period from four weeks to three weeks, with exceptions for graduate students enrolled for thesis preparation or major research credit. No changes were proposed for faculty privileges.

The second step in the internal review process is review by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost. At that point, we ask what he thinks about the major changes. From what quarters will there be resistance? Essentially, we ask how much backing we can expect from him and from other administrators. On the Provost’s advice, I took time in a deans’ and vice provosts’ meeting to go over our desire to have a more rational policy and to “normalize” sanctions for overdues, and simply to ask the question about subjecting faculty to fines. With the informal backing of these key constituent groups, the Library took the policy proposal to the faculty.

The External Process

The faculty library policy review process at EWU begins with the Library Affairs Council, a council of the Faculty Senate and reporting directly to the Senate. Its charge is to advise the faculty on all matters pertaining to the library. To this body the Library proposed a “new” loan and fines policy in the fall of 1995. The Council, meeting twice monthly, spent three months going through the policy.

The policy document, and therefore the discussion, began with our rationale for a circulation policy and for charging for late or unreturned materials. There was little interest in the topic, probably because of a shared belief that “everybody knows” why libraries have due dates and charge fines. Members of the council accepted the importance of meaningful due dates in creating effective resource sharing within the university. Because there were virtually no penalties for late returns under the existing policy, the Library had been unable to enforce recalls, holds and other normal library practices. But that had become meaningless.

Perhaps council members learned to put too much emphasis on the importance of due dates and fines. They revised the Library’s proposal by eliminating the grace period and doubling the proposed fine structure. Moreover, they made faculty subject to fines. Such a change in faculty work life could only be proposed by a faculty committee. Politically, such a proposal from the Library would have been totally unacceptable.

The Library Affairs Council’s proposal for a new policy on loan periods and fines went to the Student Association, the Council of Deans, the Faculty Affairs Council, the Graduate Affairs Council, and the Undergraduate Affairs Council for review and advice. The Graduate and Undergraduate Affairs Councils made recommendations for modifications to reduce the fines, offer a grace period, retain the four-week loan period, and extend loan periods for

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graduate students. The Library Affairs Council reviewed these recommendations, but decided not to modify the proposal.

Library Affairs Council presented its proposal to the full Senate for adoption. There was considerable debate over the higher fines and the grace period, but surprisingly little debate over the issue of subjecting faculty to fines. Because advice from all appropriate Senate councils had already been acquired, and their responses included with the proposal, there was nowhere to refer the issue for further study. Such referrals are time-honored ways of burying issues that the Senate has trouble resolving. After much debate, the Senate adopted the proposal with the understanding that the policy would be reviewed after a year of implementation. Based on that experience, the library would propose any necessary modifications. The Senate’s recommendation went to the President’s Policy Council, where the policy was adopted with the same understanding about modification after a year’s experience.

**Implementing Change**

Using banners, handouts, and an explanation to each person who checked out materials, the Library introduced the new loan and fine structure. Through staff training, the Library worked to make staff comfortable with the new policy and their role in implementing/enforcing it. One key element of the implementation that helped both staff and users adjust was the “gift certificate” we gave each borrower to cover the first fine. In effect, we forgave the first fine, but made it clear to the borrower how expensive it would be to fail to return materials on time.

Feedback from users, advisors, and our own staff re-enforced library managers’ view that the fines were too high. After a year’s experience, the library proposed that fines be cut in half and that we introduce a three-day grace period. That proposal passed through the Senate and President’s Policy Council unchallenged.

**Lessons in Policy Making**

In a shared governance system, the library is not fully in charge of its own policies. The library must exercise leadership and work effectively within the political system to ensure that its policy proposals receive full review and do not end up buried in the policy-making machinery. Since the library has limited control over the policies that will emerge from the policy-making process, it is important that there be an opportunity for review and revision. That opportunity allows for the fine tuning needed to make the policy workable in the library.
Friendship at the Library

by Audrey R. Stupke

Much publicity and fanfare accompanied the campaign, and the process certainly worked. Another strategy that helped to grow the membership was the implementation of membership categories, rather than one flat rate. People seem to like having options and, perhaps, the little “thank-you” gifts of book bags and mugs that enhance some of the categories played a part, too.

Friends’ On-Going Projects

Friends of the Orcas Island Library are involved in a variety of projects and activities:

• Publications: The Friends’ quarterly, The Book Worm, provides capsule reviews of books around a central themes, such as gardening, cooking, mysteries, children’s books, etc.
• Monthly displays at the Library planned and mounted by the Friends have become an interesting way to entice participation from others. For example, a recent display of airplanes (including an actual full-sized glider) drew members of the Experimental Aircraft Association and many pilots. An exhibit on Moran State Park involved rangers and long-time Orcas Island residents who were excited about sharing information and artifacts. The Friends live up to their name: not just friends of the library, but of the community as a whole!
• Interaction with other community groups and cooperative efforts to achieve mutual goals is another way of sharing ideas and resources. For example, the Orcas Friends interact regularly with the Historical Society to research information, mount exhibits, and share technology resources.
• Book sales: Many books are donated annually to the Library. The Friends serve as “marketing agents” for these books with on-going lobby sales and two major all-day sales. The second book sale is the featured event at the Library Fair held each August.
• Library quilt: This is truly a community project, with more than a hundred volunteers helping to create an annual queen-sized work of art. The theme usually concerns something unique to Orcas Island. Raffle tickets are sold from May to August, with the winner announced at the Fair.
• Library Fair: The Fair is held on the second Saturday in August and spotlights not only the book sale, but also a large silent and live auction (“The Parade of the Good Stuff”), a beer and bratwurst garden, booths with crafts and food, and non-stop entertainment. The Fair ends with a catered gourmet picnic for all the workers who have helped generate more than $20,000 for the Library in a single day.
• Annual meeting: This gala event includes a brief business meeting during which the year’s events and projects are highlighted, an interesting speaker, and a sumptuous dessert buffet.
• Holiday tea: The culminating event of the calendar year is an elegant afternoon of special refreshments, sparkling silver tea service, beautiful music, and a warm feeling of community togetherness. Usually the grant amount of funds from the Library Fair is announced at this event, and the Friends have a opportunity to thank the community for its support.

Audrey Stupke is a member of the WLFTA Steering Committee and a past chairperson of the Orcas Island Friends of the Library.

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(Continued on page 29)
Reading Among Friends

by Joan I. Tracy

“I loved this book!” “Why are we reading this anyway?” “This is a wonderful writer I never knew about before!” “Can’t we have something cheerful for a change?”

These are remarks by members of the Book Discussion Group of the Friends of the Cheney Community Library. The comments reflect the lively discussions at the Group’s meetings.

Members of the Group include anyone who wishes to come to the monthly meetings, whether or not the person has read the book and whether or not he or she wishes to join in the discussion.

What the group is not: women only (men attend regularly), older people only (some are in their teens to forties), consciousness-raising (although those attending often mention personal experiences and opinions relevant to the discussion).

The Group is sponsored by the Friends of the Cheney Community Library. Expenses include purchase of several copies of each book on the reading list and also modest honorariums for guest discussion leaders. Funds come from the proceeds of the annual book sale during the Cheney Rodeo Days weekend in July.

The Group began in 1988, the same year that the Cheney Community Library was moved into a handsome building on the main street of the town. The contagious excitement about the new facility may have helped to inspire the creation of the Book Group. The original name, Adult Book Discussion Group, was given because there was also a discussion group for teenage readers at the time. I have been the chair for the past five years. As with membership, leadership is decided informally: Whoever will agree to do it.

Meetings are held on the fourth Tuesday of each month, September through May (except December) at 7:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the Cheney Community Library. Hot water, instant coffee, cocoa and tea bags are available. Sometimes a discussion leader will bring cookies or some other simple refreshments. Attendance varies from twelve or fifteen persons to more than twenty.

Books for the group are available in the library meeting room. They are borrowed on the honor system and are nearly always returned. In June the books are donated to the Friends’ annual book sale.

During the first year of the Group, books about the Northwest were read because 1989 was the centennial year for Washington State. Since then the reading lists have included fiction and non-fiction, current titles and older ones (“classics”), books by local authors and those in translation from other literatures. Most of the suggestions for titles come from the members of the Group. Each May a committee meets to select the titles for next season’s list. Copies of the books are available for the committee to examine.

Criteria for selection of a title include interest to the group, availability in print (preferably in paperback), and the fact that the author is a new one to the reading lists (to introduce the group to as many writers as possible). In recent years a “classic” has been included in the reading list: a title published in the past (from fifty to almost two hundred years ago) that has stood the test of time. Also considered in the selection process is the availability of the title in the Spokane County Library District of which the Cheney Community Library is a branch.

Meetings are publicized through notices in the local newspaper and also by lists posted and available in the Cheney Community Library and at the Book Recycler (the local bookstore). Auntie’s Bookstore in Spokane features titles selected by local book groups including the one in Cheney. People who regularly attend the meeting of the Book Discussion Group are reminded of meetings through a telephone tree.

Once the titles are chosen, the discussion leaders are assigned. Often the person who recommended a title will consent to be the discussion leader for that book. There are no fixed guidelines for the discussion, but the leader is expected to do some research to provide background information and discussion points. Formal presentations are discouraged since the purpose of the meeting is to talk about the book and to express individual reactions and opinions. When possible, reading group guides are obtained from the publisher.

Usually the discussion is lively and occasionally heated. Members of the group have varied backgrounds and experiences to enhance our appreciation of a title. Some prefer to listen only. A few who go on too long have to be restrained to give others a chance to talk.

Occasionally an author or someone with special knowledge is invited to be a discussion leader. The most famous guest so far is Ursula Hegi in her pre-Oprah days, leading the discussion of her book Stones from the River. Jack Nisbet, author of Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson Across Western North America, attracted a large audience with his enthusiastic description of his research to write his book about this remarkable figure in early Northwest history.

As chair of the group, I appreciate the interest and intelligence of the members and their contributions to the discussions. As a librarian (now retired), I welcome the opportunity to encourage reading, especially of books that people may not have considered or even encountered before.

Book List for 1998-1999
Frazier, Charles. Cold Mountain.
Graham, Katherine. Personal History.
Johnson, Diane. Le Divorce.
McBride, James. The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother.
Quindlen, Anna. One True Thing.

Joan I. Tracy is Librarian Emerita, Eastern Washington University, and a member of the Friends of the Cheney Community Library.
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strip into non-printing guide
“The greatness of our libraries and our profession has always been an unmitigated commitment to intellectual freedom: the right of every individual to seek and receive information without restriction. Libraries have always stood for more access, not less ...” Ann Symons, ALA President.

**Filtering and the Privatization of Censorship!**

Perhaps the biggest unrecognized danger to the exercise of First Amendment rights in America’s public libraries is the loss of public control over public institutions, including libraries, across the county. Finally a library leader has spoken out about this disturbing trend. In a passionate article in the August issue of *Library Journal*, former ALA President Patricia Glass Schuman calls on the library community to wake up and recognize that recent situations like those in Hawaii and Riverside, California, are not just isolated outsourcing incidents, but rather represent part of a larger effort to indoctrinate librarians and the public into accepting the eventual privatization of public libraries. This subtle “encroachment of privatization,” says Schuman, “... threatens the library profession’s core values—perhaps its very ‘soul’ as a public service” (Schuman).

One of the hard questions Schuman asks public librarians to consider is how the public’s right to know and its First Amendment freedoms will “be impacted by privatization” (Schuman). The answer, of course, is that access, equity, and diversity will all be in jeopardy if current trends continue. But as Schuman accurately points out, many in the library community appear in deep denial about what is actually happening. [Editor’s note: See related article, “To the Highest Bidder: Libraries for Sale.”]

In terms of First Amendment freedoms, there is no clearer example of the negative effects of outsourcing than the increasing use of filtering software in libraries. Those who champion the use of filters, particularly by public libraries, often argue that filtering is no different than selection. Library selection policies effectively censor some types of material, so what is the difference if the same thing is done by filtering software? But there is a problem with this rationale, one that is ignored by its proponents. When libraries install filters, they are giving the final power of selection over a huge database of electronic information not to the user or even to the library and its staff, but rather to a private company.

For censorware providers, censorship is a business. These software providers heavily market their products to libraries, while at the same time lobbying Capitol Hill for laws that would require all libraries to buy and use filters. As much as outsourcing is a major step toward the privatization of book and periodical selection, so the introduction of software to filter access to electronic information is just as major a step toward privatizing decisions about who will have access to such information in the library.

**The Facts about “Bess”**

When the Board of Trustees of the Sno-Isle Regional Library System voted 5 to 1 in May to install “Bess” filtering software on at least one children’s Internet terminal in all of its libraries (Roholt), it became the fourth major library system in the Puget Sound area to install a type of blocking software on at least some of its Internet terminals.

Sno-Isle appears to be following the lead of the King County Library System, which placed “Bess” on terminals in its children’s areas over a year ago. Both systems have tried to offer a filtered alternative for parents and kids who want it, while keeping the majority of their terminals unfiltered and open to anyone. Does such an approach represent a “new pragmatism” (Manley) which essentially preserves First Amendment rights for the vast majority of library users, or is it a dangerous foot-in-the-door—an exception which censorship groups will use to demand more and more restrictions? The jury is out on this approach, but the fears are real.

A majority of the major public and school library systems in western Washington that have chosen to filter have installed “Bess” (an exception is the Tacoma Public Library which uses a modified version of Cyber Patrol) (Denn). N2H2, the manufacturer of “Bess,” has heavily marketed its product, especially to public schools; and one of its selling points is the claim that “Bess” can be customized and that library staff can ask that specific blocked sites be made accessible.

This said, the basis of “Bess” filtering is keyword blocking, and the experience in at least one area high school where “Bess” has been installed on all terminals is that this software has some inherent problems.

Tim Ames, Chair of Hazen’s Social Studies Department, says his government and debate students often have trouble using “Bess”-filtered terminals to access information for reports on such subjects as

(Continued on next page)

Tom Reynolds is a librarian at the Edmonds branch of the Sno-Isle Regional Library system.
the legalization of marijuana. From his experience at Hazen, Ames describes “Bess” as “severely flawed,” and he lists the following five specific concerns about its use in the high school environment:

1. The software forces us to apply the same standards to all students in the District regardless of age.
2. Patron appeals to “Bess” to review a blocked page are never or rarely responded to by the company.
3. Persons outside the school district are helping to shape the curricular focus—they, not educational professionals, are making the decisions about what can be read or viewed by our students. **We have given up a large degree of control to a faceless company.**
4. My favorite example of the inane way “Bess” operates is the blocking of the middle of the Matsushita company name.
5. There is no provision to allow the teacher the ability to view a blocked site and decide whether it has appropriate educational value—this is done by the company alone (Faris).

In preparing an article on filtering, Post-Intelligencer reporter Rebekah Denn found that “Bess” actually filtered more broadly than Cyber Patrol. “For instance, a Bess-filtered terminal .... refused to search on the plant disease wheat smut. A Cyber Patrol query using the same search engine provided dozens of horticulture pages, with warning triggers on the links that provided the smut without the wheat” (Denn).

The Youth Alliance Against Internet Censorship, Peacefire, posts reports on its website about the major blocking software. Their report on “Bess” lists sixteen legal websites (on birth control, breast cancer, eating disorders, and gay and lesbian rights) that were blocked by “Bess” as of the end of 1997. Peacefire also discovered that one of “Bess’s” filtering categories was “discrimination,” defined as “denigration of others’ race, religion, gender, nationality and/or sexual orientation.” Thus “Bess” effectively screens out most (we can never say all) hate group sites, but also blocks many human rights and civil liberties sites (“BESS, the Internet Retriever’ Examined”).

A group of teenagers fighting censorship is exciting, and Peacefire has gained national attention for the work of its founder Bennett Hazelton. Hazelton and another Peacefire member appeared as part of panel at the ALA conference program on filtering decisions. The Peacefire website is at www.peacefire.org (Kowalsky).

“The day after N2H2 CEO Peter Nickerson testified at a House subcommittee hearing on protecting children from on-line smut, his firm’s Bess filter moved to block the latest high profile piece of such material, the Starr Report. Other, less restrictive software, such as Cyber Patrol, did not block the report, a fact I suspect N2H2 will use in its next marketing campaign ("Filter-Makers"). But this effectiveness comes at a high price, particularly for public and school libraries.

The blocking of the Starr Report by certain filter-making software brings into critical perspective how much power libraries that rely on filters have given up to private companies. When the report was released, libraries were sent scrambling to find out whether their filtered terminals would block the report, a question that only the software providers could answer. A long, sometimes heated, discussion ensued over PUBLYAC about which software blocked what and why. But the real point illustrated by the Starr Report confusion was how little control librarians have over this major new technology that is now effectively operating as gatekeeper, limiting and restricting access to information provided by libraries.

Jamie McCarthy framed the problem clearly in her posting during the PUBYAC discussion on the Starr Report and filters:

So the students at Hazen High School won’t have access to the Starr Report. not even on one terminal in their library. They will be able to read and hear about it everywhere else they go, but not at the school library. This is what filtering means in school and public libraries where all terminals are filtered. In these libraries, on many of the major controversial issues of the day, little or no technological information will be available to students or the public. No longer institutions that promote and expand access to information, these libraries have become “safe” places where patrons can come to hide from the world.

**ALA Raps About Intellectual Freedom**

Intellectual freedom as either a concern, issue or ideal was everywhere at ALA’s summer conference. Two stalwart First Amendment champions, Judith Krug and Dorothy Broderick, received awards for their years of work promoting intellectual freedom. A variety of programs focused on such topics as the problems with and alternatives to filters, civil liberties concerns about hate speech on the Internet, and continuing attempts on both the federal and state level to legislate restrictions on Internet access.

The IF programs were well attended, but possibly the most important IF event at conference—a hearing on the 21st Century Intellectual Freedom Statement initiative of ALA president-elect Ann Symons—was not. Only a few activists turned out for a Sunday hearing on the document that is intended to take the fight for intellectual freedom into the field in a way that makes it relevant and understandable to the public at large. Washington, however, was well represented. Seattle Public Library’s Deborah Jacobs is a member of the committee drafting the statement, and WLA Intellectual Freedom Interest Group Chair Mike Wessell was also present.

Despite this seeming lack of interest, the 21st Century Intellectual Freedom Statement Committee did receive over 150 comments in the six months they worked on the statement. Based on these comments, a revised draft of “Libraries: An American Value” was posted on the ALA President’s page of the ALA website following the conference (www.ala.org/symons/statement.htm/). ALA Council will distribute a final version before the midwinter conference.
Federal Internet Filtering Legislation Moves Forward

Despite the successful challenge to the 1996 Communications Decency Act, Congress this summer was awash in proposals to filter and restrict Internet speech with the most dangerous S.1619, the School Internet Filtering Act, specified targeting libraries.

The School Internet Filtering Act, known as the McCain Bill for its prime sponsor, would require that all public and school libraries that receive federal E-rate funding install filters on their Internet terminals. The legislation would create a federal mandate that would supersede local control on this issue. In the case of school libraries, the McCain Bill would mandate that all Internet-accessible terminals in a school be filtered, and thus create thousands of Hazen High Schools across the country (Clausing).

Opponents of S.1619, including ALA, were promised an opportunity to substitute a proposal by Senator Conrad Burns that would require local acceptable use policies rather than federally mandated filtering as a prerequisite for E-rate funding. But on July 21, Senators McCain and Coats successfully moved to have S.1619 and another Internet speech bill, S.1482, attached to the Commerce appropriations bill. It is now possible that opponents’ only opportunity to amend either proposal will come when the appropriations bill is debated before the full Senate.

While most of the Internet censorship legislation moving through Congress is likely to be declared unconstitutional when and if it reaches the courts, Bruce Ennis, lead attorney in the CDA case, is particularly concerned about S. 1619. In light of a recent Supreme Court decision which upheld Congressional restrictions on the use of federal funds by the National Endowment for the Arts, Ennis feels it is unclear how the Court might rule on the McCain Bill. One paradoxical sidelight to the continuing congressional efforts to federally mandate Net censorship involves release of the Starr Report. If the Supreme Court had not declared the CDA unconstitutional, it is possible we would today be seeing members of the House Judiciary Committee charged with distributing pornography over the Internet.

Trustees and Friends: Citizen Soldiers Against Censorship

I remember reading several years ago a Library Journal editorial by John Berry entitled “Great Libraries have Great Boards” (Berry, 1995). The sense of this editorial was that dynamic libraries are generally characterized by a “healthy well-functioning relationship” between the board of trustees and the library director and staff (Berry, 1995). Informed, supportive boards are essential to articulating and promoting the goals and services of public libraries. And these relationships often meet their greatest tests when a censorship challenge is dropped in the board’s lap.

There is no better example of the importance of a strong board of trustees in the battle against censorship than the case of the Medina County Library District (Ohio). During 1998, First Amendment freedoms came under concerted attack in Medina County. “First, a group called Citizens for the Protection of Children (CPC) demanded an ‘adults only’ (section) at the county library for books and other materials deemed ‘inappropriate’ for children.” Then with the support of Family Friendly Libraries, the CPC “atched on to the issue of ‘pornography’ on the Internet and demanded filtering and other policy changes to ‘protect’ children (Berry, 1998). When the Medina County District Library Board of Trustees failed to acquiesce, the CPC mounted a campaign to defeat a MCDL tax levy. Desperate and vicious, the CPC displayed signs calling Library Director Bob Smith a “pornographer” (Berry, 1998).

When the dust settled, the library levy passed. Then the board, upon reviewing its Internet policy, voted to keep Internet access unrestricted for all ages while adopting an acceptable Internet use policy for all library patrons. For holding the line for freedom and openness while under withering attack from both from outside groups and also other Ohio librarians, the MCDL received the Gale Research/Library Journal “Library of the Year” award.

In an open letter to Medina County and two other library systems that have successfully resisted Internet restrictions, ALA president Ann Symons commended these libraries for living their (and our) commitment to openness and access (Symons). When MCLD Board President Fran Hansen was asked if the board would reconsider their policy after the surprise resignation of Director Smith, her answer was no.

“I truly believe libraries are the main protectors of intellectual freedom,” said Hansen. “Who else will look out for that?” (Berry, 1998).

The key to meeting organized challenges like those faced by MCLD is to have a board of trustees that makes support for all patrons’ First Amendment rights and for expanding access their first priorities. Accomplishing this whether a board is elected or appointed involves working to create a library-conscious community.

Library board members and friends groups are on the front-line in the effort to maintain access and openness in our public libraries. They are the unsung heroes who make and support the policies that maintain libraries as our country’s chief promoters of intellectual freedom. Many are volunteers, and all do their work because they love libraries. In the continuing battle against the censors, they are truly the citizen soldiers the public depends on to protect their rights and their access to information.

References
There is a deafening silence in library land. Despite the fact that libraries are being sold to the “lowest bidder,” there is no orchestrated outcry from our ranks. With alarming frequency, the management of libraries, from Riverside, California, to Jersey City, New Jersey, is being turned over to a private company. More disturbing still is the fact that this is happening after a decade-long, national effort to arm libraries and library advocates with the skills necessary to tell the library story and defend publicly funded libraries, and indeed all libraries, as essential to the public good. If there were ever a need for library advocates, the time is now.

Background and Definition

In fall 1997 the American Library Association (ALA), led by President Barbara Ford, appointed an Outsourcing Task Force (OTF) to advise the Association on the issues of outsourcing, subcontracting and privatization of library services, and to make some recommendations regarding these issues to the ALA Council by Midwinter 1999.

The task force formulation came in the wake of the ill-fated attempt to outsource collection development and management in Hawaii. Its formation highlighted the issue within the profession. However, at the time, the turmoil in Hawaii was just the latest in a disturbing series of events illustrating that outsourcing, and indeed privatization, were no longer on the periphery of library management, but at its very core.

This was but one in the series of six landmark events in librarianship that have contributed to controversy that surrounds outsourcing. The other five are:

- the sale of catalog cards by the Library of Congress in 1901;
- the Greenaway Plan, a 1958 blanket order plan for new publications;
- the outsourcing or privatization of federal libraries;
- the outsourcing of cataloging at Wright State University;
- the outsourcing or privatization of all library services at Riverside County Free Library.

The terms “outsourcing” and “privatization” are difficult ones to define, both in general and as they relate to library services. For the purposes of this article, however, I will use the working definitions adopted by the OTF. As a cautionary note, these definitions are the only place where this article and the OTF document coincide. The opinions expressed in the article belong entirely to the author and do not necessarily represent the recommendations that will be forthcoming from the task force.

Outsourcing: contracting to external companies or organizations functions that would otherwise be performed by library employees.

Privatization: shifting library service from the governmental to the private sector through the transference of library management and/or the assets from a government agency to a commercial company (American Library Association. Outsourcing Task Force).

For many years library managers have used outsourcing as a viable way to accomplish the many and varied tasks facing library staffs too often short on fiscal and human resources. No one questions the outsourcing of janitorial services or even book binding. These are tasks better done by companies formed to perform such services. Examples of acceptable outsourcing abound. Library networks and consortia can also be seen as ways to outsource.

Although these terms may be new to some librarians, the practice of outsourcing is not, as the examples above illustrate. No matter who constructs the time line or which milestones are included, outsourcing has been a part of librarianship for a long time. In an overview of outsourcing presented to the OTF, Sheila S. Inter dates the practice to 1828, when a bindery in Hartford, Connecticut, published books and sold them by subscription. She further dates the controversy regarding outsourcing to the 1950s, with the advent of the Greenaway Plan.

To quote Herbert S. White:

Librarians understood then, as they should understand today, that we may get rid of as much of the routine work as possible, but that we hang on to our professional activities. We don’t farm them out to contractors, and we would be equally foolish if we insisted that end users learn to perform our professional tasks and leave us with clerical routines (White).

Privatization is not new to libraries either. Within the private and government sectors, privatization has been a reality for some time. The privatization or outsourcing of federal libraries came as a result of an Office of Management and Budget (OMB) decision that federal library services qualified for outsourcing to private companies. The focus of Circular A-76, in which the OMB decision
was published in 1983, was to prevent government competition with private industry. In this decision library operations were included with other office and administrative services as commercial activities. The result of this decision was the eventual privatization of nearly all federal libraries, which took place with little outcry from the library profession. Yes, some attempts were made to reverse this decision; but generally, since rank and file librarians were not affected, they were not moved to protest.

More recently, special libraries have begun to experience similar treatment by their parent enterprises. Law libraries are a prime example. In 1995 the Chicago offices of Baker & McKenzie made the decision to dismiss its entire library staff in favor of an outside contractor. Baker & McKenzie promised to change the way the firm did business by training its attorneys to do their own research (Miles). Again, although articles about Baker & McKenzie have appeared in the library literature, the profession seemed to take little notice and has done little to stop the continuing incursion of privatization.

Now the public library is being privatized. The first to fall to the corporate world was Riverside (California) County Library. More recently Calabasas, California, and Jersey City, New Jersey, contracted with the same private company that manages Riverside. Other local boards have been approached, including Atherton, California, and Broward County, Florida. Again, many librarians are quite complacent about these recent events. Also, there are those who say smugly that only poorly managed libraries are targets for privatization. However, as Patricia Glass Schuman pointed out in her recent article, “The Selling of the Public Library,” Broward County’s library was the 1997 LJ /Gale Research “Library of the Year.” The company in question, that has woood these public library boards and county commissioners, is Library Systems and Services (LSSI), that advertises that an “exciting approach for providing improved, cost-effective library services” (Schuman). What cost-conscious public official could resist “improved” and “cost-effective?”

The Slippery Slope

In my estimation, outsourcing of our core services, and indeed privatization, are the most critical issues facing librarianship today. Our core values and competencies, those things that define our existence as a profession, are on the auction block. Yet, even as I have voiced this assessment of the situation, I have talked to librarians throughout the country who display a definite complacency regarding outsourcing. Some express an “it’s-not-at-my-doorstep” attitude. Others cite legitimate examples of outsourcing and shrug, stating that no problem exists. Still others recognize outsourcing and privatization as inevitable, no matter the situation and suggest that the OTF focus on outsourcing/ privatization guidelines. They worry that outsourcing and privatization happen the “right” way, when it happens. I am dismayed by all of these responses, but it certainly explains why there is no outcry. Indeed, it explains why there is hardly a whimper, with few notable exceptions.

To further illustrate my point, I offer this anecdote. At a recent ALA conference, I attended an academic librarian discussion group on core values. Each table of eight in the room was instructed to rank a list of eight values from highest to lowest. I only remember the top three values: service to patrons, intellectual freedom, and collection development and preservation. I was the only one at my table to put intellectual freedom first. Most at my table listed service to patrons as their number one priority. When I asked my fellow librarians why intellectual freedom was not ranked first, one person volunteered that if our First Amendment rights were taken away, librarians would still be required to give good service. My impassioned response was if “they” rescind the First Amendment, information service is a mute point. I walked out of the session trying to recall the Pastor Martin Neimoller Holocaust quote, convinced that the parallels were there. The quote:

When Hitler attacked the Jews I was not a Jew, therefore I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic, and therefore, I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the unions and the industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned. Then Hitler attacked me and the Protestant church — and there was nobody left to be concerned.

Substitute, if you will, government libraries, special libraries, public libraries. After all, public information was the first victim of the Nazis. Public information now seems to be in jeopardy in this country.

Outsourcing vs. Privatization

When outsourcing raises a question or engenders opposition in the library world, the debate surrounding the issue is not couched in “all or nothing” terms. Outsourcing has been a reality in libraries for many years. How appropriate the outsourcing is, and how successful it may be, clearly centers on the library’s core mission and who is charged with fulfilling that mission. It also hinges on how well the contract is written and whether all the responsibilities have been clearly delineated, with core missions and services retained by the libraries’ professionals.

Library land must wake up quickly to define what are appropriate functions for outsourcing and what are not. In other words, librarians should define and embrace their core values. Once the core values are outlined, the profession also should closely examine its position on privatization, and, again, in my opinion, reject it unequivocally as it applies to these values. Finally, and most important, librarians everywhere should begin working with fervor to stop privatization’s continued incursion into publicly funded libraries.

The assumption is that a private company can deliver library services better—cheaper and more efficiently. This assumption, however, cannot necessarily be validated. What will be measured? What are the benchmarks? “Public libraries, by their very nature, are classic ‘market’ failures—as are highways, schools, police, firefighters, and national defense and security.” Also implied is that the private sector can afford greater accountability than can government. This very notion has fueled the move to privatize schools, welfare and other public programs (Schuman). Libraries are not exempt from this movement. Since free information flow and First Amendment protections are fundamental to democracy, however, I believe the public library must remain “public.”

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The OTF has struggled with the fact that ALA as an organization has never articulated the profession’s core values. What are they? What must we protect? The Intellectual Freedom 21 Committee of the American Library Association has recently completed a final draft of Libraries: An American Value. In the draft the Committee affirms certain principles. Perhaps these principles should be adopted by the OTF as the profession’s guiding values. The First Amendment, individual privacy, diversity of thought and services, and the individual’s constitutional rights are all included in the statement. (American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom 21 Committee). As a corollary to these values, the profession also should adopt core services: those services that should only be done by librarians in the public sector. Once the core values and services are identified, the answers will be clear.

Library Advocacy Now
The New York Times recently published an editorial opposing the privatization of the Jersey City’s public library. The authors reasonably questioned, “Is a library public when it is run privately?” Hanley and Strunsky recognized, perhaps more than librarians themselves, that such a move to a private company could “reverberate throughout the nation’s libraries, especially those facing budget squeezes” (Hanley). If some journalists and editors understand the implications, why not librarians?

In her recent article, “The Selling of the Public Library,” Pat Schuman issues a call to arms. She calls to librarians to tell the library story and to cast our professional outcry in terms of First Amendment rights, the public’s right to know, and the right to privacy, in the vein of the Times article. Nearly a decade ago Schuman argued that librarians should speak up with a united voice. Her media training initiatives resulted in ALA’s Library Advocacy Now program which endures today. During the intervening years the advocates network has taken several messages to the public. Library funding and intellectual freedom have been the subject of the national campaigns. However important these messages, none has been more important than the message that librarians and library advocates should now be formulating and promulgating to the public. I throw my support to Ms. Schuman and others who will speak up for keeping public libraries public. The time is now. There may not be a Later.

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What do you think? Write a letter to the editor and share your thoughts with WLA members.
According to Groucho Marx, “Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it, misdiagnosing it and then misapplying the wrong remedies.” Does this describe your legislators? You can help them avoid these political pitfalls, at least on library issues, by enlightening them on WLA Library Legislative Day on February 23, 1999.

Visiting your legislators not only gives you an opportunity to educate them about library issues of importance to you, but also gives both of you a chance to meet and know each other. If you contact them later in writing, you will be a name and face they remember. It’s good to have friends in high places when you need them. Libraries often have great Friends groups at home, but we need friends in Olympia too.

What Really Happens at WLA Legislative Day?

Each year a small WLA committee organizes a day of activities, to make visiting the legislature an easy and rewarding experience. Participants are usually library trustees, members of library Friends groups, as well as librarians volunteering their time for the day. Most of them are a little nervous about the prospect of meeting with a legislator, which is why we plan a whole morning of speakers and discussions to help prepare participants and put them at ease.

We’ll hear from Nancy Zussy, State Librarian, who always has the latest info on issues of concern to libraries across the state. Sometimes there are bills in process that affect library funding or grant distribution that directly affect our state library.

Next, Steve Duncan, WLA Olympia lobbyist, will spell out the current status of all bills that are facing the legislature that affect libraries. Steve will have just taken the pulse of the legislature and be able to give us an up-to-the-day report on the issues that involve libraries.

One of the most helpful bits of information that Steve will share with us is the number of the bills pending about which you might want to alert your legislator. Legislators are bombarded with tons of issues, so when you speak with them, a bill number helps them zero right in on the exact issue.

Note: We have planned legislative day for earlier in the term so that most issues will not have been decided before our voices could be heard. Some years there are serious issues at hand and other years not, but visiting your legislator is still important in both scenarios.

The Hot Topic for the Day

One of the most controversial issues facing libraries is also expected to be a legislative issue this year: filtering the Internet in schools and libraries. There is federal legislation, and there may be bills on the state level as well. Libraries have been debating this issue for years and discovered that it is a multifaceted problem without an easy black-and-white answer. Tom Mayer from Sno-Isle will explain how that library decided to filter some computers, and Candy Morgan will discuss the ongoing debate at Fort Vancouver. Both of these libraries have been at the forefront of controversial censorship issues in the past and have valuable experience to share with us all.

Then we’ll have time to digest all this information while enjoying lunch together. This year, we are not inviting legislators to lunch, since we have found in the past that they find it difficult to break away from the hill. Having lunch with each other, without our legislators present, will provide valuable time to discuss the issues of the day with each other and our speakers who are in the know.

Having years of experience working with the legislature, Steve knows many of the legislators and can give you tips on your representatives’ interests and political leanings that can be helpful before your afternoon meetings. Then, since we have selected a hotel conference center close to the hill, it will only take a brief walk to be at your legislators’ office doors.

Since we are not lunching with the legislators this year, we are urging all participants to make an appointment with their legislators for that afternoon. We’ll help you make that appointment by listing the name, addresses and phone numbers of each legislator on the WLA home page. Just check www.wla.org for your district, and call for an appointment. If you are uncertain about your legislative district number, check with your library for help in finding it.

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Tips on Visiting Your Legislator

If visiting your representatives and senators seems like a daunting task to you, here are some insights that may make you feel more comfortable:

- If your legislator is newly elected, he or she may be as new to this as you are.
- If your legislator is an incumbent, he or she is experienced enough to make you feel right at home.
- WLA will have paved the way for your visit by delivering a fun and tasty fortune cookie to your legislator earlier that same day. Word is that the legislators love the fortune cookies so you’ll have already made a good first impression even before arriving.
- Introduce yourself. Then you might say that you are participating in the Washington Library Association’s Legislative Day. Mention the fortune cookie: as an ice breaker, ask him/her what his/her fortune was. If he/she doesn’t know what you’re talking about, you know his/her legislative aide probably ate the whole box.
- Tell your legislator about the issues that are important to you. If there is a important bill pending for which you would hope they vote yea or nay, have the bill number ready (the one Steve gave you), and tell them why it is important to you.

If this is a quiet year, then it’s a great time to let your legislators know that you are taking advantage of an opportunity to establish a relationship with them. Let them know what a great library you have. It’s been useful for you and can be useful to them as well. Making this type of contact with a legislator can be very effective if you need their help on future issues.

WLA lobbyist Steve Duncan probably will have talked to your legislator on behalf of libraries, but there is nothing more powerful to a legislator than to hear what the voters from his area are thinking. Your voice will not only echo Steve’s, but will be part of a resounding chorus for your representative to hear. Making a difference sure does feel good.

So mark your calendar for February 23, 1999; and make your appointment with a legislator! An easy-to-complete registration form will soon be coming your way, or you can find a copy on the WLA Website. For more information, please contact Legislative Day co-chairs Tom Moak at Mid-Columbia Library (800) 572-6251, tom@mlc.lib.wa.us or Lynne Zeiher at Pierce County Library, (253) 851-3794, lynnez@pcl.lib.wa.us.

WLA Communiqué

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RIG Programs at the 1999 WLA Conference

by Colleen Brazil, King County Library System

Get warmed up for the Conference by attending the Reference Interest Group-sponsored Pre-Conference, “Netting Your Ancestors: Genealogical Research on the Internet.” Cyndi Howells, the creator and webmaster of “Cyndi’s List of Genealogy Sites on the Internet” will show you how to make the most of your online genealogical research so you can quit surfing and start researching. Her clear, no-nonsense approach will answer your questions about what online tools are available.

Hard hats won’t be required, but come prepared to fill up your “reference tool boxes” at the RIG-sponsored programs at the 1999 Annual Conference. Two programs, “Essential Tools for the Virtual Reference Desk” and “Power Tools for the Virtual Reference Desk” will fill the tool kits for searchers with all levels of Internet experience. These programs will be presented by Mary Ross, Staff Internet Trainer at Seattle Public Library.

Two other companion programs sponsored by RIG will be “Patent Basics” and “Trademark Basics.” Designed for those of us who shudder when faced with patent and trademark reference questions, these practical workshops will provide you with the basic steps and information resources. Your patent and trademark guides will be Donna Hanson, Science Librarian at the University of Idaho Library, and Christina Byrne, Assistant Head, Engineering Library, University of Washington.

Then, dig into your adult program files and join in an informal table talk, “Adult Programs that Work!” If you’ve had an adult program that really worked, bring details to share such as contact names, addresses, price and descriptions. If you are feeling program deficient, bring your notepad. Andriette Boersema-Pieron will also share her information about the ALA program “Lives Worth Knowing” and show you how you could have it at your library.

Finally, sit back and reflect a moment on “Old Media and New: What History Teaches about Adapting to the Internet” with Gordon Jackson, Professor of Communication Studies at Whitworth College. Without a doubt the Internet has hit our society with a bang. The telephone did that once; so did the book. For more than five centuries, society has been responding to the media. Take a journey through the past to gain insight into where we are today. This Inquiring Minds presentation is co-sponsored by the Washington Commission for the Humanities.

Look for details on all pre-conference and conference programs in upcoming Conference publicity or contact Colleen Brazil, RIG Chair at collbraz@kcls.org for more information.

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development of this relationship is the annual Board retreat. During the retreat, Board Members and the Library Director are free to explore past accomplishments, successes and failures in relation to expectations for the future. The results of these discussions help establish expectations and goals for the coming year. At Spokane Public Library, these expectations and goals are closely linked to the Board-adopted strategic service plan. By establishing these expectations and goals, the Library Board’s influence, as representatives of the citizen, has the most direct impact on the services and operations of Spokane Public Library.

As with all governing boards, the Board of Trustees at Spokane Public Library has a tremendous responsibility. The Board must ensure that the Library operates efficiently, effectively and within the budget while providing high quality library services to the citizens of the city. It must provide oversight of operations while relying on the judgment of the Library Director to carry out policies as intended and to provide the information they need to make sound decisions. By actively promoting good relations with the City Council and City Administration, and by fostering an open and honest relationship between the Board and the Director, the Board and staff of Spokane Public Library can recognize opportunities, actively manage circumstances and meet the challenges unique to the governance of a municipal public library.

The East and West of Library Trustees  
(continued from page 13)

county. They wrote press releases, published a newsletter, met with community groups, and set up a home page. They encountered and dealt with a gamut of responses from community members, everything from great expectations to indifference to animosity. And still they met, for three hours, two times a month.

In accepting the directorship of the Stevens County Rural Library District this past May, I was cautioned by friends: “The board of trustees has been working with the assistance of consultants for over a year while waiting for the district’s first tax collections. They will have a hard time letting go ... a hard time letting a director direct.” So went the caution I heard.

There’s no doubt. The Stevens County Rural Library District Board of Trustees doesn’t want to let go. Fortunately it doesn’t have to. As the libraries open and service begins, it is clear that there is more than enough work for us all, for the director and the staff as well as for the trustees. They thrive on the challenge of planning for the future, they seek out opportunities to spread the message, they rejoice as the library stations open throughout the county, and they continue to meet for three hours, two times a month.

East or west, the board that understands its twofold purpose is a treasure—no matter what they are wearing.

Friendship at the Library  
(continued from page 18)

In between major events, the Friends assist with numerous other Library projects—helping with gardening and landscaping, providing refreshments for staff and volunteer meetings, and handling on-going sales of mugs, book bags, note cards, tee-shirts and cookbooks. Recently, the Friends have established both endowment and capital funds, and have invested these through the Orcas Island Community Foundation.

Members of the Friends’ Board meet regularly with the Library Director and the Board of Trustees. Trustees and Library staff can be counted on to assist with Friends projects throughout the year. Cooperative efforts and immense pride in the community are realities on Orcas Island, and the already outstanding Library just keeps getting better as a direct result!

Mark your calendars for WLA’s Annual Conference!  
“Fond Farewells, Bold Beginnings”  
April 28-30, 1999  
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To receive 1999 mailings after March 1st and to claim WLA membership rate for annual conference, dues must be received by February 15th.

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I’d Rather Be Reading . . .

First Novels

by Nancy Pearl

I have an inordinate fondness for first novels. There’s something so brave about a writer who, for better or worse, puts enormous amounts of energy into making words and ideas and characters available for the delight or edification or entertainment of an unknown group of readers. And remember, these readers are almost always people who have nothing to lose by being viciously or judiciously or constructively critical of the work at hand.

I thought of this when I recently reread Tom Leggett’s marvelous biography, Ross and Tom: Two American Tragedies (Simon & Schuster, 1974). It makes painfully clear that sometimes a (successful) first novel is all that an author can manage to write. Faced with a runaway best seller of a first novel, many a writer falls prey to a fear that they will never be able to live up to that first published work. Certainly, success for the subjects of Leggett’s book, Ross Lockridge (Raintree County) and Tom Heggen (Mr. Roberts), was crippling in the extreme. Neither man was able to sustain any further attempts to write a second book.

And it’s equally true that when many writers do manage to get their second novel written and published, it’s quite simply not as good as the first one. A case in point is Scott Spencer, whose first novel Endless Love has never been equaled, let alone surpassed, by his subsequent novels. On the other hand, John Irving was clearly working up to his best book, The World According to Garp, even as he wrote Setting Free the Bears (1969), The Water-Method Man (1972), and The 158-Pound Marriage (1974). A rereading of these books shows how the themes and use of language that worked so well in Garp had their beginnings (or auditions, perhaps) in Irving’s first three novels.

In my reading, however, I’ve found that first time novelists often fall prey to two problems: the one-subplot-too-many syndrome and the where-is-this-book-going question. A good example of the first is Ruth L. Ozeki’s My Year of Meats (Viking, 1998). This partially humorous novel is about Jane Takagi-Little, a documentary filmmaker who is hired by a lobbying group whose purpose is to persuade Japanese housewives to serve more beef to their families. They believe that by televising a weekly series called My American Wife, featuring a “typical American family” eating large portions of beef, Japanese women will turn off the television and pick up a new one to read, because, who knows, it might be the first of many perfectly wonderful novels by this author.

Ozeki also adds in an exposé of the beef industry, à la Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle.

Mary Doria Russell’s The Sparrow (Villard, 1996) is a perfect example of the second problem. Let me hasten to say (to write, actually) that The Sparrow was my favorite book of 1996 and it has many, many strengths, including some wonderfully memorable characters. However, The Sparrow is about 100 pages too long. I think its inordinate length (408 pages) is caused by a predicament that Russell found herself in. She needed to come up with an event that would cause the main character, Jesuit priest Emilio Sandoz, to totally lose his faith. Something so terrible had to happen to Sandoz that we, the readers, would accept his anger at a god who would allow evil to arise out of an attempt to do good. And given the parlous state of the late 20th century, where horrors occur so often that it’s hard not to be blasé about them, this was a tough assignment. After Jeffrey Dahmer, after Jonestown, after Waco, after Oklahoma City, what could shock us? And Russell, it seems to me, was stuck. So she wrote and wrote and wrote some more until something came to her that seemed awful enough to justify Sandoz’s behavior. But the middle 100 pages of The Sparrow are merely spinning wheels, lots of effort but going nowhere.

Still, I always feel a rush of excitement when I pick up a new one to read, because, who knows, it might be the first of many perfectly wonderful novels by this author.

Nancy Pearl directs the Washington Center for the Book at the Seattle Public Library.
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