The Unusual in Libraries

5  Reaching Farther: The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library
   Elizabeth Eisenhood, Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

8  A Library Oral History Project at Whitworth College
   Janet Hauck, Whitworth College

11 The Mattawa Library, Made of Straw
   Dan Howard, North Central Regional Library System

16 The Northwest Room of the Everett Public Library
   Marge Bodre, Everett Public Library

20 Celebrating Success: Tacoma’s SRP Party Goes to the Zoo
   Deb Freedman, Tacoma Public Library
CAROL GILL SCHUYLER

**Unusual Things, As-Usual Values**

The theme of this *Alki* issue is unusual or innovative library “things”—services, partnerships, processes, collections. It shows the excitement that can occur in our profession, and demonstrates our willingness to move forward with enthusiasm. We care deeply about meeting our communities’ needs, and are even willing to risk anticipating those needs. There are no gray buns or “shhhss” in this group although there may be a few pairs of glasses. 😊

In the past months, I had the privilege to attend the Pacific Northwest Library Association Conference, the Washington Association of Library Employees (WALE) Conference, and the Washington Library Friends, Foundations, and Trustees (WLFFTA) Planning Session. Each was valuable, and their programs and discussions impressed me with shared common threads: our ongoing and future commitment to library values such as customer service, intellectual freedom, and confidentiality.

Customer service is usually a driver for library innovation. How can we provide better service or meet unmet needs? What are we not doing that we should be? In the early 1990s, Kitsap Regional Library did a customer survey showing that the majority of county residents had no interest in either Internet access or email. Michael felt that they did not understand what they did not have, so we provided the services anyway. We all live every day with “the end of the story.”

Customer service is not only *what* service is provided, but *how* it is provided. Sessions at both conferences had wonderful ideas for programs and services, and provided much discussion about how to work well with the people we serve. Ideally, we want positive communication and a “feel good” environment. We want all interactions to be successful, even those with potential for conflict. The WLFFTA Board meeting mirrored these concerns and centered on how friends and trustees could better meet their customers’ needs by strengthening advocacy and making their group larger and more inclusive.

Catherine Lord presented WALE sessions on intellectual freedom and defending access to information. She has also provided training for frontline staff in library systems, including Kitsap, and has designed WLAs intellectual freedom page. Catherine supports intellectual freedom, but does so with a “light touch.” Ideally, we can promote intellectual freedom, protect our customers’ rights to information, and simultaneously share these principles with others. And as our understanding of intellectual freedom grows, we can agree to disagree on a particular item without undermining the common goal. Libraries throughout the region regularly face intellectual freedom challenges. Some challenges are “small”: a mother wants to know why a particular book was checked out to her child, or a father wants to know why a book is classified as juvenile rather than as young adult. People want to be listened to and have their concerns acknowledged. Other challenges are “large,” involving library boards and the press. Our library community is strengthened each time we meet and resolve an intellectual freedom issue of any size.

Maintaining confidentiality becomes increasingly difficult as technology progresses. Personal customer information is a mere keystroke away. With the passage of the “Patriot Act” we now need to respond more rapidly to government requests for customer information. Canadian provinces are watching—with not-so-quiet concern—to see how U.S. libraries respond to pressures on confidentiality. Historically, what happens to U.S. libraries gradually impacts those in Canada. We each face a delicate balance between obeying the law and protecting the privacy of our customers.

At the last WLA Board meeting we discussed the mission versus the purpose of WLA. Part of the discussion explored whether we are inwardly (for our members) or outwardly (for the people of Washington state) focused. The answer was “yes.” As you look at the association’s activities and at *Alki*’s themes, the answer is also revealed to be “yes.” Does this mean we are not focused? I do not think so. Our members and the people that we serve are integrally entwined and inseparable. Issues we’ve faced this past year demonstrate this inseparability: our helping the State Library and the Stevens County Library District; our responding to Internet filtering decisions; our meeting legal challenges to materials and access to computer information; and our addressing tax initiatives that limit levy levels.

While we cannot predict the future of libraries with certainty, we can be more confident if we hold to our traditional values of customer service, intellectual freedom, and confidentiality. I am excited about the adventures ahead.
5 Reaching Farther: The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library
   Elizabeth Eisenhood, Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

8 A Library Oral History Project at Whitworth College
   Janet Hauck, Whitworth College

10 “SuzzaPalooza”: Celebrating Suzallo’s Renovation
   Gary Menges, University of Washington Libraries

11 The Mattawa Library, Made of Straw
   Dan Howard, North Central Regional Library System

13 New Approach to Summer Reading Program Saves Time and Money!
   Kristie Kirkpatrick, Whitman County Library

14 Uniquely Worthy of Recognition: the Kim Lafferty Lecture
   Angelina Benedetti, King County Library System

15 Gold is Where You Find It:
   Library Workers and Their Occupational Equivalents
   Sarah Hunt, King County Library System

16 The Northwest Room of the Everett Public Library
   Marge Bodre, Everett Public Library

20 Celebrating Success: Tacoma’s SRP Party Goes to the Zoo
   Deb Freedman, Tacoma Public Library

23 Techno Teens Give to the Community Through the Library
   Allison Wherry, King County Library System

24 Reference Transformed: State Library Initiative Proves Its Worth
   Mary Stillwell, Washington State Library
   Mary Moore, Freelance Consultant and Trainer

28 The Energy Library and Its Homegrown Products
   Margaret Thomas, WSU Cooperative Extension Energy Program Library

2 Upfront: The WLA President Speaks

4 From the Editor

26 WLA Communiqué
   2003 WLA Conference: Roadmap to a Journey
   Seamless WLA Membership
   Visit the WLA SRRT Website!

29 Who’s on First?
   Isn’t It Unusual—or Is It Business as Usual?

31 I’d Rather Be Reading
   Multiplying the Enjoyment of Books
From the Editor

CAMERON A. JOHNSON

The Unusual in Alki

The unique in libraries: where do we find it? We all have books, chairs, tables, reading areas, and periodicals. We all have circulation, reference, and technical services. Library classification systems prescribe places for books, which reside everywhere in identical stacks. Computers are present in nearly every library building. We have a unified jargon, and national and state professional bodies that communicate with each other. As for librarians—some people even say we look alike.

This issue’s article topics are self-selected by their authors and self-described as unusual. When contributors asked if an idea was unusual or interesting enough, I always said, “Anything can be interesting—it is all in what you include and how you say it.” In the end it is the reader that judges, but I think we have assembled an interesting set of pieces.

Elizabeth Eisenhood provides a long-deserved Alki treatment for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL). Janet Hauck of Whitworth College demonstrates how an MLS degree can lead to archival work. Marge Bodre’s piece on two historians’ long tenure at Everett Public Library demonstrates how a commitment to local history fits into a library setting. Dan Howard’s piece tells how the construction of Mattawa’s straw-bale library combines appropriate technology, multilevel partnerships, and community effort. Deb Freedman’s piece tells of the unusual size and ambitiousness of Tacoma Public Library’s annual zoo party for summer reading program finishers.

We all distribute information, but some libraries also produce it in large amounts: note the WSU Energy Library’s web publications, WTBBL’s huge contributions, Everett Public Library’s Northwest Room’s many efforts, and Whitworth College Library’s oral history project. And some librarians even produce music, as Gary Menges’ piece on Suzzapalooza demonstrates. We thank all the contributors, and hope readers enjoy the offerings.

Speaking of unusual, Alki has suffered somewhat of an upheaval. After years of relative stability, Alki in the past year has absorbed a new editor, a new board chair (Carla McLean), and four new board members. Our longtime IF columnist, Tom Reynolds, departed. Authorship of the column will now rotate, with Cher Ravagni leading the way in this issue. The year also has seen adoption of a new association logo and a new set of graphical standards—courtesy of WLA’s branding strategy. The new standards have prescribed font families for WLA publications, and the new fonts have provoked other design changes. Alki is now being prepared by us using sophisticated publishing and imaging software before going to the printer. The changes are intended to give the journal a modern, optimistic look. Readers, please comment.

This issue also gives me the unusual opportunity to showcase some of the usually unsung, but unusually talented, people with whom I work: author Marge Bodre, cover artists Joan Blacker and Kevin Duncan, and our peerless historians David Dilgard and Margaret Riddle. I thank the Alki board’s Emily Hull, Bryn Martin, and Carla McLean for their assistance in editing articles for this issue, and my wife Laura for her assistance in this issue’s design and layout. As always, I must rely on a wider network of library staff and co-workers to make it possible to do quality work on behalf of the association.

I welcome new Alki board members Nicole Campbell, Emily Hull, Bryn Martin, and Bonnie Taylor. I also bestow kudos on past editor Carolynne Myall, who has moved on to other activities and other challenges. Her patient tutelage during the past year has permitted me to assume this post with confidence. Her high editorial standards brought to Alki a new level of exposure, which I hope to extend still further with the help of our board and all WLA members. To quote my favorite Bush-ism: “Make the pie higher! Make the pie higher!”

Our March 2003 issue theme is timely: intellectual freedom. Already we have an interview with Sanford Berman on workplace free speech, and someone will explore the historical elements of intellectual freedom in Washington. Today, threats to intellectual freedom have reached historical proportions, coming not only from governments, but also from corporations hoping to cash in on the information market. The threats are many: the USA PATRIOT Act; GATS; CIPA; UCITA; library surveillance; the drying up, manipulation, and privatization of government resources; and threats to fair use. Members of the Washington library community have been thinking about intellectual freedom principles for most of their working lives. I invite you to share your thoughts and concerns.
ELIZABETH EISENHOOD

Reaching Farther: The Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

Which Washington library employs a Radio Program Librarian for its twenty-four-hour-a-day Radio Reading Service, a crew of pages who mail out over 2,000 books a day, and two specialists who produce books to be read by touch, not sight? The Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL)! Located in an inviting 26,000-square-foot facility in the Denny Triangle neighborhood of Seattle’s downtown area, the WTBBL belongs to a national cooperating network of regional and subregional libraries administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress (NLS). The library serves Washington residents of any age—infancy to elderhood—with vision loss or with a learning disability due to organic dysfunction. Anyone unable to comfortably hold a book or turn pages because of a temporary or permanent disability is eligible for the library's free services.

The WTBBL provides a customary range of public library services, including a circulating collection of 76,000 titles; two reader advisors; a reference librarian; a children’s room; children’s services; and a collection built on reader requests as well as standard review tools. WTBBL is unique, however, in the way that these services are delivered and in the formats of the books.

WTBBL’s specialized services, which support the information and reading needs of non-print readers, include: the Evergreen Radio Reading Service, which broadcasts information of immediacy such as newspapers, grocery ads, shopping news, and magazines as well as disability-related programming; the Taping Service, which uses volunteer narrators and state-of-the-art digital equipment to produce locally-taped books with special emphasis on patron requests as well as Northwest and children’s titles; and the Braille Service which uses volunteers to produce Braille books supplementing the national collection. The Braille Service also transcribes Northwest and children’s materials, as well as graded readers for those learning Braille.

WTBBL’s staff of twenty is supplemented by more than 400 volunteers who contribute over 33,000 hours a year toward making library programs available. These volunteers are a vital underpinning for the library’s operation. In addition to Brailling, taping, and checking books, the volunteers provide clerical services, produce radio programs, repair equipment and cassette tapes, and carry out special projects.

In the WTBBL, books in all formats are arranged in browsing collections in the lobby and on compact

Below: Reader advisor Alan Bentson assists patron Wes Derby, who holds cases containing cassette books. Right: The WTBBL building is a former automobile dealership, beautifully renovated to its present use. The Orrico Room formerly housed the turntable on which automobiles were displayed. Lower right: The library depends on a wide variety of devices to make texts useful to its clientele—magnifiers, audiocassette recorders (“talking books”), and Braille-making devices.

Elizabeth Eisenhood is the Reference/Children’s Services Librarian for the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library. Photos courtesy of Linda Thorson.
Because many users of the library’s collection are spread around the state and cannot come into the physical building, much of the collection is in the mail at any one time. Cassette books are mailed in individual plastic containers, while Braille and large print are usually mailed in boxes or zippered cloth bags. All reading material for the blind or for people with physical disabilities can be mailed postage-free.

The Orrico Room

Due to a generous donation from the Orrico family in Seattle, a beautiful children’s room was included in the building’s renovation five years ago. This bright, cheerful room, with floor-to-ceiling glass walls on three sides, welcomes young patrons and their parents with its colorful and accessible furnishings and toys. Everything in the room is chosen to be stimulating, educational, and safe for young children with no usable vision. Furniture can accommodate child-sized wheelchairs, and the room’s computer is equipped for speech and Braille output.

One of the most popular collections in the Orrico room is the array of baby board books with Braille added. These books make it possible for parents to have meaningful reading experiences with visually impaired children during the first months of life. Children begin to associate “books with bumps” with the experience of being held and read to. As the children mature, they find books with textures and button-activated sounds. Toddlers can learn to operate a cassette machine (a literacy skill for children who will be using books on tape) by inserting and listening to a “toddler book on tape,” a lively four-to-seven-minute children’s book chosen to captivate the attention of young and mobile readers.

Bobby Cavanaugh of Edmonds, Washington, is an eight-year-old WTBBL patron who has enjoyed the Orrico room since he was a toddler. Bobby’s parents began bringing him into the library before he could walk, and the staff has enjoyed watching Bobby learn to ride the room’s rocking dinosaur, try out his first cane (he’s now on his second), check out his first books, and learn to read Braille. Bobby joined the annual by-mail summer reading program when he was five years old, and he now uses books in Braille in the third grade at a local private school. He particularly likes the Arthur books (by Marc Brown), and frequently attends WTBBL’s children’s programs.

Services For All Ages

Not only young patrons use the materials in the children’s room. Many people using the service are parents and grandparents who check out age-appropriate children’s materials to read to the children in their lives. Books in Braille, large print, or on tape furnish a way to share books with the younger generation despite vision loss.

The words of one long-time user of WTBBL’s services may help you visualize the unique role that this library plays in adult lives. Here is an account by Dee Goodsell of Twisp, Washington.

“In mid-February of 1981 I was admitted to Boston University Hospital after experiencing the sudden, unexpected, and essentially painless loss of my sight due to temporal arteritis. I was sixty-four years old. My independence had vanished into thin air. How was I going to cope? How was I going to regain some measure of my former sighted life?

“The answer to those questions began just ten days later when, on the morning of my hospital discharge, I had a conference with the compassionate social counselor at Boston’s Gunderson Eye Clinic. She not only introduced me to the wonders of the National Library Service for the Blind (NLS), but she had already registered me with its Boston-area branch library. My fight to regain some measure of my former fierce independence had begun. What luck!

“By May of 1982, my husband and I were back in our beloved Pacific Northwest following a thirteen-month ‘stopover’ in Cleveland where I received my basic blind rehabilitation training. My NLS registration had been transferred to the Cleveland regional library. By this time, I was not only receiving books on tape but also the recorded edition of Newsweek, thanks to the thoughtfulness of that social worker in Boston. And, three months into my rehabilitation training, I was walking to the Cleveland library by myself, using my newly acquired tool, the white Hoover cane.

“In the accumulation of mail awaiting us at our Twisp post office was a book sent from the Washington Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped (since renamed WTBBL). What service! Thus began my twenty-year association with our Seattle regional library. For me, it has been a rewarding two decades. My use of the library quickly expanded. In addition to the books I borrow, I receive mag-
azines. I was privileged to serve on the Patron Advisory Council (PAC) for four years and, following that, served as an evaluator of books being recorded for the Northwest Collection.

“The quarterly meetings of the PAC were invaluable. As a member of the user population referred to as the “elderly,” I was unaware of the library’s many resources for users with special problems in addition to their blindness. What I learned was an eye-opener! One example would be the resources available for blind children, their parents, the learning-disabled, and college students. It is impressive.

“Today I continue to take advantage of this valuable service. It was my first ‘tool’ on my march to independence and right up there with my Hoover cane and my guide dog. I am most grateful!”

Far right: Patron Jim Owens peruses the Braille stacks. Right: Some of the formats used at the WTBBL include Braille, large print, and cassette books. If you would like to contact WTBBL staff to arrange for service delivery to an eligible borrower, call the toll-free number, 1-800-542-0866, or fax your question to (206)615-0437.

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**A Library Oral History Project at Whitworth College**

*Enryo.* In Japanese, the phrase means, “I’m not worthy to be asked; I don’t know enough; there are others who know more.” According to a Japanese-American colleague, enryo was the word for what the elderly gentleman had been trying to convey, as I struggled to convince him of the importance of his story for my oral history project. I thought the man, whom I’ll call Mr. K., would leap at the chance to tell his story, yet he had responded in a way that caught me off guard. But why was I so interested in gaining an interview with this man? And how had I gotten involved with an oral history project in the first place? By way of explanation, let me go back a few steps and fill in the details.

When I was hired as the archivist at Whitworth College three years ago, I came with a master’s degree in library science and ten years of previous experience as an academic reference librarian. I also arrived with a recommendation from my former employer that went something like this: “Whatever she doesn’t know about archives, she’ll pick up quickly!” Needless to say, I was grateful for the faith placed in me, and I have taken advantage of every opportunity to learn what it means to operate a college archives. Of course, it has helped that the college’s archival collection is located within Whitworth’s library. About half the archivists I know have had specific training in history and archival work. The other half of us with library degrees most likely learn on the job, as I have.

Operating an archives has turned out to be a natural extension of all the things I enjoyed about reference work, and about library work in general. I am involved daily with the information needs of my users: students, faculty, and administration of the college, as well as visiting researchers. I work often with students whose papers are “due tomorrow.” The main difference that I’ve seen in archival work involves the type of resources my users are seeking—primary source materials, mainly manuscript collections. Though these materials are arranged and classified differently than a traditional book collection, they are still used to answer questions and meet research needs.

I do much of the selection and acquisition of materials for the two distinct collections in the archives. The general collection on college history is made up of publications and records that are either sent to me by the offices and departments on campus, or that I rout out of various campus vaults, closets, and storage rooms. The second collection is the Pacific Northwest Protestant History Collection, which I was hired to start and to develop. This collection has now grown to include the historical records of over twenty local Protestant churches and organizations. Maintaining and building these collections requires a lot of very different activities. For the past year, I have been actively collecting the oral histories of many...
of the college’s alumni, one of which was my elderly Japanese-American gentleman.

“I was only in the internment camp for a very short time,” Mr. K. told me, “and then I was sponsored out through the work of the Student Relocation Council. You won’t want to waste your time interviewing me; you’ll want to interview people who spent a much longer time there.” Enryō.

I knew about the National Japanese-American Student Relocation Council of 1942, because of preliminary research I had done when applying for a grant late last year. The Washington Civil Liberties Public Education Program of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OPSI) offered grants to carry out projects that focused on the Japanese-American internment camp experience during World War II. Whitworth had a significant Japanese-American student population during that period, and I proposed to document oral histories from this group. I felt that stories like theirs had not been well-represented in the literature, and apparently OSPI agreed, because I was awarded a grant for the 2002-2003 school year.

Mr. K.’s story was exactly what I wanted for my project, but how could I convince him of that? Enter my project assistant, who was hired with part of the grant money, and trained by me to carry out most of the interviews. She and I, with our newly gained knowledge of enryō, composed a carefully worded letter designed to persuade Mr. K. to grant us an interview. My Japanese-American colleague warned us that it might take several tries to convince him. A day later, my assistant excitedly told me that Mr. K. had called and scheduled his interview for the next morning. Finally, success!

I have to smile about all those people who’ve said they don’t see how I can enjoy working in a dusty back room with musty old stuff. When I think about how much time I am able to spend working with people, I realize that I really have the best of two worlds. At any given time, I could be processing a collection of historical records and making a rare and interesting find. I supervise volunteers, train student interns and project assistants, and instruct users in archival research. I advocate for the archives with faculty and administration, speak to groups interested in the history of the college, and network with other archivists. I teach students to do oral history interviews, attend conferences, and engage in continuing education. And I write grant proposals.

My interest in recording Japanese-American oral histories grew out of a desire to build the oral history collection of the Whitworth archives and to fill in gaps in the literature. This meshed with OSPI’s goal for this project, which is to educate school children in our communities regarding civil rights violations and how to avoid them in the future. Making such people as Mr. K. come alive to students will help them understand that discrimination should not be repeated. To that end, we’ll use part of the grant money to produce a CD-ROM containing edited portions of the interviews, which will be distributed to schools for use in the classroom. And because of people like Mr. K., students will be able to hear stories that need to be heard.

The tape recorder was running. “My mother was so worried about us being in the internment camp. She said ‘We’re going to go to waste here.’ So she approached Father T. (our priest in Seattle), and Father T. had the president of Gonzaga University sponsor me. So I was allowed to leave to attend Gonzaga University. I was on probation. Every month I had to go down to the police station and get an ‘OK’ slip for the president… (When my parents got out of camp, they bought a house near Whitworth College, so I came to school here)…It was the beginning of a different lifestyle for me. We were always taught to make the best of what was offered us. I have no complaints…”

Thank you, Mr. K. The story you have shared with us will become a new primary source document for students and future researchers. They will be able to learn more about the college’s history, our nation’s history, and also more about what it means to be human. Neither an archivist nor a librarian could ask for more.
A recent Google search on the word “palooza” got 9,580 hits, but none (yet) for “Suzza-Palooza.” Nonetheless, on 19 September 2002, “SuzzaPalooza,” described as “a fabulous party for the staff to celebrate all we have accomplished with the renovation,” was held in the Reading Room of the University of Washington’s Suzzallo Library.

The Suzzallo Library Renovation Project began in July 2000 and was “completed” with a ribbon cutting on 30 September, the first day of fall 2002 classes. The project included seismic bracing of the 1925, 1935, and 1963 sections of Suzzallo, and new mechanical, electrical, communications, and fire-alarm systems. After over two years of construction, accompanied by many moves (some off-campus) and much noise and dirt, the staff needed special recognition for their perseverance and accomplishments.

The Suzzallo Renovation Dedication Committee planned two special staff events. The first was a breakfast on 10 September in the new staff lounge and the second, SuzzaPalooza, was an evening event that attracted almost 650 library staff members and retirees and their guests for food, drink, music, and fun. A number of staff members who perform in musical groups expressed an interest in performing for the staff. Seven groups accepted an invitation from the committee to perform, and of the thirty-four musicians making up these groups, eleven were members of the libraries’ staff.

The evening began with Laughing Cats, a classy group that plays “jazz, swing and Latin standards from the 1920’s through the 1950’s.” It ended with Lacuna Combo, a surf-rock group “based on Vashon Island with deep roots at the U-Dub and Microsoft.” As promised, the band delivered “a spicy selection of tunes drawn from that Late Great Musical Golden Age, Southern California, 1963-1965.” It was perhaps the first time that 1960s lava lights were seen in the Suzzallo Reading Room, and the atmosphere brought many to their feet to dance to the music of their youth.

In between these groups, Betsy Wilson, Director of University Libraries, and the Denim Girls, a folk-singing duo, welcomed the staff and their guests. We also heard baroque music from a duo of viola da gambas, and from Cheep Trills, a chamber group that plays a variety of baroque-era music. Both groups performed in the Smith Room, adjacent to the Reading Room. And two groups contributed a Balkan flavor: Ensemble Sub Masa, which plays Hungarian/Romanian/Klezmer tunes “for a toe-tapping good time,” and Orkestar RTW, which plays traditional dance music of the Balkans (Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Serbia).

The Suzzallo Reading Room is slowly returning to its traditional role. Other dedicatory events have included a University Donor Recognition Gala on 13 September and a formal dedication with an academic procession on 15 November. And on 7 December, the Reading Room provided a cathedral-like setting for a holiday concert by the Seattle Medieval Women’s Choir.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

Alki: The Washington Library Association Journal is published three times per year (March, July, and December). Each issue centers on a theme selected by the Alki Editorial Board. Themes of upcoming issues are announced on the WLA website and in the editor’s columns. Articles should be in-depth examinations of issues of importance to Washington libraries. All works should be original. Unsolicited contributions and off-theme articles are encouraged but will be published based on the needs of specific issues. Submissions are edited. The editor and the Alki board make the final decision on any submitted material. Deadlines for submission are January 15 for the March issue, May 15 for the July issue, and October 15 for the December issue. We prefer article text be submitted as digital files in .doc or .rtf format. Also, we prefer that artwork be well-composed glossy black and white 35mm prints. However, we can accept some alternatives: ASCII text transmitted as an email message, in email attachments, or on a PC-formatted 3.5-inch diskette, Zip disk, or CD-ROM; and artwork transmitted as .tiff or .jpeg files of adequate resolution. Please include informative captions with artwork. We recommend that you contact the editor before submitting artwork. Artwork will be returned on request; otherwise it will not be returned. Typical article lengths range from one to three Alki pages, including artwork. A three-page article with no artwork contains about 2800 words. Announcements are normally submitted to the WLA Link. However, news items about personnel changes, professional organizations, awards, grants, elections, facility moves or construction are included in the “Communiqué” column as space permits. Columns are regular features about library service or operations. Columns are typically pre-assigned to a designated person. Anyone interested in submitting material for a specific column should contact the editor. Alki retains electronic representation and distribution rights to its contents. Alki reserves the right to re-use text, photos, and artwork in subsequent issues, with notification to the submitters, if possible. Otherwise, all rights revert to the authors.
In September 2002, the first public library in the United States built using straw bale technology opened in Mattawa, Washington. With its thick stucco walls and recessed windows, the building has Spanish and adobe influences reminiscent of Southwest style. Though made of straw, it is a sturdy building unlikely to be blown down any time soon.

The Town of Mattawa

Outside of the public schools, few educational and recreational opportunities exist within the community of Mattawa.

In his book *Washington State Place Names*, James W. Phillip says that Mattawa is “named with an Indian word meaning ‘Where is it?’” A small town on the Columbia River, Mattawa has an economy that relies on agriculture, mostly apples, cherries, pears, and grapes. The community hosts a large number of migrant farm workers, with its population of almost 3,000 more than doubling each year during the fruit harvest. According to the 2000 census, almost 90 percent of city residents are identified as Hispanic or Latino, and over 90 percent speak Spanish at home. There are lots of kids in Mattawa and many live in poverty. In the 2001-2002 school year, Mattawa Elementary had seven kindergarten, seven first-grade, and seven second-grade classrooms. Of the 400 children who attended Mattawa Elementary last year, over 90 percent received subsidized meals. The Wahluke School District’s schools are, however, among the most modern and up-to-date in the state.

Ryan Graves, executive director for the Basin Boys and Girls Club summed it up in a 20 August 2001 article in the *Wenatchee World*: “There is absolutely nothing in Mattawa for anyone to do.”

This town needed a library.

Building with straw bales

With little adequate housing, thousands of migrant workers currently camp in what are often unsafe and unsanitary conditions. The problem has been so acute that in the late 1990s Gov. Gary Locke targeted farmworker housing as the highest priority housing need in Washington state. The Mattawa Library was built as part of the Nueva Vida (or New Life) Housing Community, a demonstration project intended to explore the use of alternative forms of construction for farmworker housing. The project resulted from a partnership of several agencies: the Washington State Office of Community Development, which provided the funding; the North Columbia Community Action Council, the owner and developer of the housing project; and the Town of Mattawa, which donated the land. Straw bale building experts Spring and Michael Thomas, founders of the nonprofit IronStraw Building Group, acted as the project managers for the library portion of the project, which showcased environmentally friendly straw bale technology and the use of renewable and sustainable agriculture products.

For the city slickers among us who don’t know much about bales of hay, let’s cut to the chaff. Straw is the dry cut stalks of grain, what is left after the wheat
It does not break down quickly and cannot be tilled under year after year. The hollow stalks resist decomposition and have no nutritional value as livestock feed, making straw a hassle for farmers but a good material for construction. After the horse-drawn baler was invented in 1850, farmers had access to baled straw. The first straw-bale houses were built in the late nineteenth century in the Midwest, where wood was not sufficiently available and the soil was too sandy to make sod houses. The modern straw-bale building revival began in the mid-1980s.

The Mattawa Library is a post-and-beam structure with straw bales used as insulation. In this type of construction, the bales are stacked between posts and then covered with wire mesh and multiple layers of stucco. The final layer of stucco contains color, so the building never needs repainting. Straw bales are superb insulators with an R-value of fifty. At 1,500 square-feet, the library is cozy and energy efficient.

Some stages of construction resembled an old-fashioned barn raising. Students from the town’s Wahluke High School built the library’s wood frame using salvaged wood. In February 2002 the project served as a workshop demonstrating straw bale construction techniques when teams of volunteers from Habitat for Humanity, AmeriCorps, Portland Community College, and Evergreen State College pitched in to put 330 bales of straw in place. Volunteers from across the state and from as far away as British Columbia came to help and learn about building with straw bales.

The Library

The Mattawa Library opened on 16 September as the twenty-eighth branch of North Central Regional Library. It houses about 7,000 items, including Spanish-language books and magazines. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has funded two public-access computers, which will soon make the Internet and an assortment of computer applications available to everyone in the community.

Mattawa’s first public librarian, Josie Toscano, is new to library work. “When I first accepted the job,” Josie said, “I thought that I could look through all of the books, maybe flip through some magazines. Now, I don’t have any time for that. It’s way too busy.” People from Desert Aire, a nearby Columbia River community that attracts recreation seekers and retirees, have discovered the library. So have Mattawa’s school-aged children. Josie says that, “I can tell exactly when school is out at 3:15 because every corner of the library is packed.”

locations. Instead, we paid $130 for thirteen summer reading manuals, one for each staff person involved in the program. Our staff chose the books, crafts, and materials that best suited the needs of their young customers—usually from the manual. It was simple, and they loved the freedom of deciding which parts of CSLP best suited their own patrons!

I realize CSLP raises a few questions. Who will pay for Washington State’s membership? Can an already struggling WSL pay for us, maybe with LSTA funding? Who would serve as our representative and who would pay their travel costs? Answers to these questions can be found if Washington libraries are interested in CSLP or some type of cooperative summer reading venture. If CSLP sounds right for your library, contact Judy Willcox, Youth Services Manager at Whitman County Library, jwillcox@whitco.lib.wa.us. She is assessing interest from Washington libraries and hopes to speak on this topic at the 2003 WLA Conference in Yakima.

Left: Grocer at Rosauer’s holds up a shopping bag promoting the 2002 theme, “Join the Winner’s Circle — READ!” Bottom: Example of a bookmark that comes with the CSLP program.

Artwork reprinted courtesy of Highsmith

Kirkpatrick (Continued from page 13)
Budget woes are nothing new for Whitman County Library District, where thirteen branch libraries operate on a budget others spend to run one. To compensate for our financial challenges, we often beg, borrow and deal. We shop yard sales, solicit donations of all types, write grants, and cooperate with a variety of agencies, including other libraries.

A close relationship with the Latah County Library District, headquartered in Moscow, Idaho, led to the discovery of an unusual approach to summer reading—unusual in Washington that is. Libraries in fourteen other states participate in the Cooperative Summer Library Program (CSLP), a consortium working together to provide high-quality summer reading program materials to children at the lowest possible cost to public libraries.

Originating in 1987, the CSLP was built on the grassroots efforts and cooperation of children's librarians from ten Minnesota library systems; it continues to blossom. In 2001, participants included Alaska State Library, Idaho State Library, State Library of Iowa, Kansas State Library, Michigan State Library, Montana Library Association, Nebraska Library Commission, Nevada State Library, North Dakota Library Association, South Dakota State Library, Utah State Library Division, and the Wisconsin State Library.

The cost of membership is currently $65 per state plus $2 for each participating public library. If every public library in Washington were included, the cost would be $197. Open to regional library systems and state library organizations, a two-year minimum membership is required, and members must give one year's notice when leaving the cooperative. States can maintain their membership while skipping a year for a special theme, such as their state bicentennial. Representatives from member states attend annual business meetings to decide on future themes.

Initial reactions to the idea of a shared summer reading theme might not be positive. Washington librarians might fear a loss of control or creative freedom when sharing a theme. Here at Whitman County Library, we felt the positive aspects of CSLP outweighed the negative ones.

Why should your library consider CSLP? The reasons are many. First, we found it very easy! The program manual arrived in September, a full nine months before programming was to begin. Directions were clear and easy to follow. We ordered our materials directly from the vendor, which gave us the option of buying what we wanted and ignoring what we didn't. Because CSLP buys in bulk, the prices were very reasonable.

The quality of the themes, posters, crafts, activities and prizes was incredible. CSLP works with graphic designers and major vendors to ensure quality. You know those Upstart summer reading programs you see? They are often year-old CSLP programs, sold by the vendor after the one-year embargo on CSLP themes and products has expired. Previous themes include:

- Join the Winners’ Circle: Read! (2002)
- Reading Road Trip USA (2001)
- Cosmic Connections (2000)
- Treasure Your Library! (1999)
- Rock 'n Read (1998)

Enhanced marketing and promotion was a huge benefit for Whitman County Library District, and one that has the most potential for other Washington state libraries. Imagine the possibilities of regional, statewide or even national summer reading promotion. Perhaps if Washington's public libraries had been promoting a united theme last summer, Gov. Locke wouldn't have made up his own.

In Whitman County, we didn't just have to imagine the potential of regional marketing; we experienced it! We joined with a neighboring library system, Latah County, Idaho, for summer reading promotion. Rosauer’s grocery stores, with outlets in both library districts, used grocery bags that carried our summer reading theme and told of the program's availability at the local library. News releases in regional newspapers mentioned both library systems. Next year, we will take cooperative promotion a step further when another neighboring library joins us to participate in CSLP.

Whitman County Library enjoyed the greatest benefit in staff time saved. We were able to eliminate a .25 FTE position because the children’s department no longer spent hours deciding on the best theme, selecting books to accompany the program, deciding on appropriate crafts, and writing or photocopying instructional manuals for thirteen very different programs.
Uniquely Worthy of Recognition: the Kim Lafferty Lecture

There may not be much unique about an honorary lecture, but chances are the person it honors is most certainly unique. In the case of the Kim Lafferty Lecture, the honoree is uniquely worthy of the recognition.

The Kim Lafferty Lecture is an annual King County Library System event honoring the memory of Kim Lafferty, a young-adult librarian who died in March 2001 after a seven-and-one-half-year struggle with cancer. Kim worked at King County’s Youth Detention Center Library, the Issaquah Library and finally as the Young Adult Materials Selector for the system.

Kim also served on the Best Books for Young Adults Committee of the American Library Association for three years, committing herself to reading between 300 and 500 books a year for the committee. When interviewed by the Seattle Times in 1998, Kim admitted to reading in movie theaters by book light, and also in traffic, with a book “propped against the steering wheel.” (Seattle Times, 17 June 1998) While she understood that her doctor did not want her to attend an upcoming ALA Conference, she countered, “This is really important to me. And I can’t have read this many books and not go.”

Kim’s commitment to young adult literature led the King County Library System, and her many friends and family, to honor her a few months after her death. Spokane author Chris Crutcher spoke at the first Kim Lafferty Lecture on 16 May 2001. One hundred people turned out to celebrate Kim’s life, Chris’ work, and their shared commitment to quality books for teen readers. Crutcher’s most-recent book, Whale Talk, was honored as a 2002 Best Books for Young Adults Top Ten pick.

To recognize Kim’s past involvement with the Teen Read Week Task Force, the 2002 lecture was moved closer to ALA’s Teen Read Week, celebrated in October. On 25 September 2002, the second Kim Lafferty Lecture, featuring author Will Hobbs, was held at both the Kirkland Performing Arts Center and the Covington Library. This second lecture drew 400 people to see Hobbs and to celebrate Kim.

Hobbs is known for his adventure stories, most of which take place in Alaska, Colorado, and the Pacific Northwest. Several of his books have appeared on past Best Books for Young Adults lists, and his latest book, Wild Man Island, has been nominated for this year’s list. Audiences got a sneak peak at his next book, which takes place in Seattle and involves a wildlife rescue operation.

Kim Lafferty was committed to her work, to her family, and to her friends. A lecture honoring her memory and commemorating her dedication is a fitting tribute, but the greater tribute is the joy younger members of the audience experience listening to one of their favorite authors. Even though she is no longer with us, Kim can still spread her love of good books for generations to come.

Look for the next Kim Lafferty Lecture in the fall of 2003.
Gold is Where You Find It: Library Workers and Their Occupational Equivalents

The Dictionary of Holland Occupational Codes is used (theoretically) to help you find your ideal profession after you have taken a test to find which work would best suit your interests and personality. In reality, very few people take such an analytical approach to picking a career. And what if your test indicates that your ideal job is chicken offalicer? (Note: actual job!) Anyway, these groupings of jobs by interests and personalities could be used to recruit future library professionals from the ranks of people who have already fallen into a job. And for those of you not able to do any hiring? These are the jobs you can think about after that long day when everything goes wrong. Here are some highlights from the job groupings. Library occupations are in bold.

Librarian (no specialty) and acquisitions librarian: You can find people who will enjoy these jobs among speech pathologists, dental assistants, and dental hygienists. This list makes me wonder if acquisitions has some hidden relationship to mouths.

Children’s librarian; special collections librarian; and chief librarian, branch or department: Athletic director, correspondence school instructor, counterintelligence agent, police chief, racetrack steward, executive chef in a hotel or restaurant, TV or radio show host, PE instructor, jockey agent, casino manager, fast food restaurant manager, detective, vice investigator, sanitary landfill supervisor, taster, police officer, dogcatcher, practical nurse, birth attendant, driving instructor. I wasn’t surprised to see children’s librarian and library branch manager in the same category. Anyone who is willing to cut out thirty identical nametags shaped like ducks is going to be able to make every staff member feel like a valued part of the team. And that same skill set would apparently make an excellent police officer!

Library director, special library librarian, institution librarian: City manager, residence counselor, welfare director, transplant coordinator, import-export agent, school social worker, teacher of the emotionally impaired (insert your own joke here), disc jockey, hypnotherapist, professional sports scout, kindergarten teacher (again, insert your own joke here), camp counselor, fraud investigator, rides supervisor at an amusement park, astrologer, customer complaint clerk, bartender, juggler, weight reduction specialist, escort (!?), school bus monitor. The theme here seems to be keeping a lot of people, often emotionally fragile people, happy. Sounds like a library director to me!

School library media specialist: Judge, criminal lawyer, camp director, port traffic manager, lobbyist, sales manager, literary agent, alumni secretary, contract specialist, game preserve manager, medical social worker, chief warden, interpreter, reports analyst, collection clerk, garbage collection supervisor, circus train supervisor, rug cleaning supervisor, fire lookout. Oddly, these are all things that school library media specialists already do. I was going to put fish hatchery manager in as the odd item out, but then I remembered that a school librarian I used to work with was in charge of the school’s salmon project. She kept an eye on the hatching eggs. Knitting supervisor? Maybe they do that at home. Weight guesser? I bet someone will write in with some way school librarians have to guess weights.

Catalog librarian, library assistant: Braille proofreader, coupon clerk, teller, ticket agent, post office clerk, school secretary, gambling cashier, rural mail carrier, civil service clerk, pedigree tracer, meter reader, typist, airline lounge receptionist, carbonation tester in the beverage industry, kosher dairy inspector, shoe dyer, hand rug braider, hosiery mender, showgirl. All of these jobs strike me as ones held by people who are writing a novel. They’re reading your meter while they compose the scene where the tragic family reunion reveals betrayal and pain. I’m betting they don’t make novelists take career aptitude tests. And if the novel doesn’t sell, they’ll run off to be showgirls in Vegas. Or showboys.

Young adult librarian: Music director in radio or TV, editorial writer, choral director, poet, art director, choreographer, intelligence specialist, furniture designer, set designer, printmaker, narrator, actor, cartoonist, ventriloquist, impersonator, comedian, magician, amusement park entertainer. OK, here’s where it gets personal. I’m a young adult librarian. Yes, I admit it: These jobs really are apt. We who work with teens will do anything to get their attention. We are the carnival barkers of the library world, and tend to do the sort of flamboyant programs and displays that make our managers hold their heads in dismay. We try to make award-winning books sound more exciting than blockbuster movies and video games. Chances are we even dress like some of these professions, especially amusement park entertainers.

Sarah Hunt is a Young Adult Librarian in the King County Library System. She is currently developing her Human Blockhead act and is available for birthday parties and library openings.
A recent open house at the Everett Public Library’s Northwest Room unveiled a new multi-media website featuring an event of perpetual interest in Everett’s history, a 1916 labor confrontation called the Everett Massacre.

The open house was the latest program in the over twenty-five-year history of the library’s Northwest Room with its two regional history specialists, Margaret Riddle and David Dilgard.

Margaret and David began their association with the City of Everett in 1972, when they temporarily contracted to prepare historic property surveys, gather photographs and compile oral histories. Says EPL Director Mark Nesse, “In the mid-’70s, an historical commission that reported to the library board was created to focus the community’s observation of the bicentennial. Margaret and David had done a wonderful job with several historical and bicentennial projects, and when the City of Everett became eligible for job slots under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), the two were a natural to create the library’s local history effort or Northwest Room, as it came to be called. Most public libraries subscribe to the philosophy that services should be tailored to suit the community they serve, and I have always interpreted this to mean that public libraries have the responsibility to collect and preserve their own local history. Everett has a very rich history, and the Snohomish County Museum and Historical Association was on wobbly legs, so it was particularly important for the library to do this.”

The Northwest Room—with its mission to provide materials and services to further the understanding of the history of the Pacific Northwest—was created from a small collection of books and photographs. A special and unusual public library service had begun.

The Collection

Today, visitors to the Northwest Room will find a varied adult/young adult reference collection focusing on the Pacific Northwest, with a particular emphasis on Everett and Snohomish County history. The collection includes published and unpublished monographs, reference materials, journals, diaries, correspondence, pamphlets, films, videos, maps, oral histories and over 15,000 photographs. It is particularly strong in local labor history, sawmills and logging, late 19th and early 20th century photography, and industries that shaped the region.

Antiques and realia are not included, as other community organizations collect them. Also, it is not a genealogy collection. Only family histories that contribute significantly to the understanding of local history are added.

The Services

Margaret and David are members of the library’s reference department and serve the community in person, by mail, by telephone and email, and by presenting programs to groups both inside and outside the library. On a typical day, Margaret might be in the Northwest Room scanning and emailing an old Herald newspaper article to a reporter on a deadline, helping a student locate information on the 1910 Wellington railroad disaster, and using an old Sanborn insurance map to help a new homeowner trace the history of her older home. That same day David, who has taken the lead in presenting programs, might be at the local cemetery leading a tour of the gravesites of notable early Everett residents.

Many of the Northwest Room’s efforts have entailed reaching out and involving the community in its history. Over the last twenty-five years, the Northwest Room has presented, on average, a program a week.
Bringing Everett’s history alive for young people and providing curriculum support for Everett’s teachers has always been a goal. Over the years there have been countless school visits, talks and slide programs, and bus tours around Everett to view historic buildings. Says Margaret, “One teacher brought us into his classroom to talk about what a historian does. Then we had the class over to the Northwest Room to start projects in which they participated in oral history interviews, compiled old photographs for displays, and built, with David’s help, a quarter-inch to one-foot scale model of the old Monte Cristo Hotel in Everett from the original blueprints we had in the Northwest Room.”

In the mid-1970s, Margaret and David broadcast on a local access television station interviews with local individuals who had done oral histories for the collection. At one point David did ninety-second spots on the local radio station KSER about the history of baseball in Snohomish County.

Northwest Room tours of the library have also fostered an interest in the main library building, itself an historic structure originally designed in 1934 by Northwest architect Carl Gould, with an historically faithful addition done in 1991. Tours highlight architectural details and the artwork from the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Margaret and David have always been involved in community building and engendering civic pride. Activities such as oral history interviews, slide show talks, and bus tours have brought disparate neighborhood groups together for a greater appreciation of their surroundings and history. Both historians agree it is important that a community have a genuine sense of its past. Says David, who was born and raised in Everett, “Heritage is a form of connection that can be of significant value as a social bond. It’s also very useful as a means of defining and appreciating sense of place. And there are economic benefits as well.” Says Margaret, “Some say that if we don’t know where we’ve been, we’re doomed to repeat our mistakes. But I doubt that. We seem to make those mistakes with or without a knowledge of our past. It really changes little. I guess I see this somewhat in a Buddhist sense, that it helps each of us to better find and understand our place ‘on the wheel.’ One example would be in studying the Everett Massacre, which we’ve been doing a lot of lately. So many characters were involved, and when I look at them, there are ones I can truly identify with. If I had been there at that time, that might have been me. And that helps, I think, to better understand the times we are going through now. And maybe, I hope, it adds a little dignity to our efforts.”

The passion they feel for their work is evident. “The study of local history when done properly is an ongoing process of discovery, growth and understanding, both outward and inward,” says David. “I learned the local history,” says Margaret, “of at least three other regions before moving to the Pacific Northwest, and my academic studies focused on ‘public history,’ its meaning and importance to a locale. I see it as ‘story’ and the continuing unfolding of that story, and this work has given me the chance to learn how to present that story. How is our local story like other places’ stories? How is it different? How many individual stories are there that can help give it meaning? I like working with history in its everyday setting. The community support we have received over our years here shows me that people are interested in stories of their place. Many do care. It helps give meaning to some part of their lives.”

“Working with local history in a public library setting,” Margaret continues, “we respond to what people ask of us. It has been interesting and enlight-
ening to me to see how many meanings and uses there can be of the same basic history materials. Some want to find out more about their region, culturally and geographically. How did this specific place get to be the way that it is? Others may want to know more about the history of their particular house. There are those who want to find out who is the ghost who haunts their property, and others who have found an old artifact and want to know its value. Some just want to take the journey, doing research and writing their own histories.”

The Northwest Room staff’s visibility in the community has led local individuals and families to donate books, films, photographs, diaries, and other materials that otherwise might have remained unknown and in private hands. Such donations account for 90 percent of the library’s 15,000 photographs. “The permanence and security factor has been a major element in the community’s willingness to share with us. The library is not going to disappear and people trust us with things they place a high value on,” says David. David’s research and writings about the early theaters in Everett were aided by a donation of early business records of the Everett Theatre—records that documented the operation of the theater in the early 1900s, down to the details of which performers appeared and the prices the audiences paid for seats.

The Publications
Margaret and David have strived since the beginning not only to collect and interpret materials but also to publish and promote works on subjects of popular interest. Together they researched and compiled the Shoreline Historical Survey Report (1973), an historical survey of the Everett shoreline, and A Survey of Everett's Historical Properties (1976, revised 1996). These surveys are among the most popular materials in the collection and are used regularly by patrons and groups researching old homes and commercial buildings and by students and preservation groups.

From 1981 to 1989, they edited and published the Journal of Everett and Snohomish County History, a forty-page periodical providing not only articles, but also practical information for patrons doing research—information about the collection, articles about new additions to the collection, extracts from diaries and oral histories, and indices to reference materials.

David also wrote The Buildings of Early Everett; a Pictorial Survey of the Architecture of the Everett Boom, 1891-94 (1975), The Everett Theatre: A Brief History of Its 90 Years (1991), and Dark Deeds: True Tales of Territorial Treachery and Terror (1991), which tells the story of three early murders in the style of the dime novels popular at the time. His newest book, Mill Town Footlights: The Theaters of Everett, Washington (2001) currently in print and on sale at the library, includes the story of the days of traveling road shows, vaudeville, and early motion pictures in Everett with photographs and posters of the era.

The Digitization Projects
Not content to collect and interpret the photograph collection, the staff set up a darkroom and are making prints at cost upon request. Over the years, many patrons have gone away with cherished prints of their historic home, of the early days of their neighborhood, or of an ancestor.

Margaret has taken the lead in using the latest available technology to make it easier for patrons to find what they need in a 15,000 photograph collection that came to the library with no indexing or access points. “Our emphasis,” says Margaret “has always been on maximizing public access, and it must be in a public library. We’ve always asked ourselves what more could we do to make the collection more accessible.”

In 1991, with a grant from the Weyerhaeuser Company, she built a database to index the photographs using Paradox and, later, Microsoft Access. But she saw the need to improve on this approach and on the procedure of making darkroom prints upon request. Her plan was to convert the Microsoft Access database to PastPerfect Museum Software and to use Virtual Exhibit with it to catalog the photograph collection into a searchable database available in the library and eventually on the Web.

This technology would not only give patrons quick access to images, in the library, at home or at school that they could immediately print, but would also help preserve aging photographs and negatives. Although most Northwest Room materials had been cataloged and accessible to patrons via the public access catalog, the photographs were available only on the standalone database. In 1999, she secured a grant from the Howarth Trust for a personal computer, PastPerfect and Virtual Exhibit software, a scanner and a color laser printer. Using this system, Margaret has compiled an 11,000-photograph database which allows patrons to search from a variety of access points, view images, and print copies. Virtual Exhibit converted records and images stored in PastPerfect to HTML and
allowed creation of Web exhibits on the library’s website. The exhibits created are now part of the Northwest Room’s presence on the Web.

Other preservation efforts had Margaret attending the Northeast Document Conservation Center’s School for Scanning in 2000; transferring all oral history audiotapes to compact disc; and transferring all 16mm film to videotape. In 2000 she secured an LSTA grant to purchase a digital reader/printer that enables newspaper articles from old Herald microfilm to be incorporated into Web exhibits, and enables staff to send articles digitally in response to questions received from the website.

By 2001, Margaret saw the potential for offering even more access to the collection with the use of the new CONTENTdm™ software that allowed for larger exhibits with audio and video and with cataloging using Dublin Core standards. She secured another LSTA grant for the software, a personal computer, a large-format negative scanner, audio/video equipment and software, and a server. The grant also provided for consultant fees, for training in CONTENTdm™ and for transferring audio and video to the Web. The choice of initial project was easy: the Everett Massacre. The Northwest Room has always been an authority on the massacre, having a wealth of unique material on the subject and access to more through the University of Washington and Snohomish County heritage organizations.

Today the Everett Massacre exhibit is a reality, accessible from the library’s website, www.epls.org. Visitors to the web page can view over 200 images related to this historic event, can listen to labor songs of the time, listen to oral histories of Everett residents, can view a film clip of the 1916 Labor Day parade and can see “mug shots” of those arrested that day as well as scenes of Everett in 1916. Narrative interpretation accompanies the images, as do suggestions for further reading.

“We’ve been receiving very positive comments now from those looking at our massacre collection online,” says Margaret. “What makes me feel best is that people are telling us they are ‘moved’ by the presentation. That’s what we hoped to hear. It’s so easy for the story and the complexities of the event to get lost in the technology that presents it. We didn’t want that to happen. It truly is a moving story.”

The Everett Massacre exhibit is only the beginning of the Northwest Room digitization plans. “We’ve often said that Everett’s history doesn’t begin and end with the Everett Massacre,” says Margaret. “While this is our first CONTENTdm™ presentation, it is only the first of many collections we plan to make accessible. Look for more soon.”

Over the years, the activities of the Northwest Room have also brought attention to the library as a whole, and often served as an introduction for patrons who would go on to take advantage of the other library materials and services. In 2001, the library staff gathered to show their appreciation for Margaret and David and to congratulate them for twenty-five years with the library. Their anniversary was also marked by the presentation of Lifetime Achievement Awards by the League of Snohomish County Heritage Associations, and by a commendation from the Daughters of the American Revolution that proclaimed them “the jewels in the crown of Everett.”
What do polar bears, sharks and bald eagles have to do with books and libraries? Why is the zoo filled with 2,000 kids wearing library T-shirts? Why is the mayor of Tacoma on stage playing sombrero games with children? The occasion is the Tacoma Public Library's annual Summer Reading Club party at the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. And what a party it is!

Families stroll through the rolling grounds of the park, stopping to shake hands with Clifford the Big Red Dog, or gazing in awe at Maurice Sendak's Wild Thing. A visit to the library tent yields a “Free to Read” temporary tattoo. As the clouds burn off, the families begin spreading their blankets on the sloping lawn. On stage, members of the salsa band Bochinche do their last sound check. Kids wait in anticipation, hoping their names will be called as one of the final prizewinners. How did this positive, family-friendly day come about?

Evolution of a Reading Club

The Tacoma Public Library has sponsored a Summer Reading Club for longer than anyone can remember. The club has gone through a variety of changes over the years, as youth services staff have scrambled to find creative inducements for children to practice reading.

A longtime custom has been a final party for those who met the library’s summer reading goal. Some years it was a branch ice cream party, complete with gallons of ice cream and a variety of toppings. In other years kids from around the city enjoyed a bus ride to a movie theater.

During the ‘80s and ‘90s the party evolved into the mayor’s award ceremony, held at the Tacoma Dome. During a televised ceremony at a city council meeting, the kids received a certificate and a handshake from the mayor. The ceremony, however, became a victim of the club’s success. Logistics became overwhelming as participation grew, and the ceremony was no longer fun, either for kids or for staff.

In fall 1998, administration and staff held their annual “post-mortem” of the reading club. They discussed what worked and what didn’t, including the final party. All agreed it was time for another change. Library Director Susan Odencrantz encouraged the youth services staff to be creative, and they ran with it.

Staff Input

We looked around Tacoma for a site that could handle thousands of kids and would be FUN. Our first choice was the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, overlooking Puget Sound, and part of the 638-acre Point Defiance Park. The expansive lawns and excellent exhibits continue to be one of Tacoma’s greatest resources.

To our absolute delight, zoo administration quickly agreed to host the party. They volunteered to donate admission for every child who met the library’s summer reading goal, and for one accompanying adult. We agreed to hire a concert performer and to rent tents for our various activities. To provide staffing, our library board agreed to close our four smallest libraries for the day. The result was a huge success, and we are now preparing for our fifth year.

Behind the Scenes

We were able to quickly generate reports and labels, thanks to custom software written for the club by our Technical Services Manager Lare Mischo. In the two-week period between the end of the club and the zoo party we stuffed and mailed award packets to each child. The packets included their zoo ticket, a map of the zoo grounds, an award certificate and an event schedule. We ordered final prizes and crossed our fingers that they’d arrive in time.

Each youth services specialist assumed an area of responsibility. Some formed a stage crew while others planned a “meet and
Continued Refinements

After several years of misdirected mail and rising postage costs we began giving readers their packets in the library as they met their reading goal. This also provided instant gratification and an opportunity for praise.

The first year we set up a variety of small games, giving away leftover prizes from prior summers. The second year our friends of the library group sponsored a prize drawing for Harry Potter books. Another year we gave small donated prizes to the first 1,000 kids through the gates.

For several parties we hired a team of face painters. This year we found it to be cheaper and faster to apply custom temporary tattoos. (Yes, we actually timed it: about two minutes per child, at a cost of fourteen cents apiece.)

A major activity has been our T-shirt tent, where kids stopped by to collect their final prize—a custom printed Tacoma Public Library T-shirt. By the second year we’d learned to offer only four sizes. By the third year we’d streamlined the distribution logistics so that lines were almost nonexistent. This year we gave away imprinted canvas book bags and sold leftovers to staff.

Costs

The Tacoma Public Library’s Summer Reading Club is funded almost totally through proceeds from our surplus book sale. Through a cooperative agreement with the Tacoma Public School District, we’ve held an annual book sale each July in the cafeteria of a local high school.

We’ve shopped carefully for prizes, comparing quality and price, and demanding shipping quotes. We were able to find sturdy canvas book bags for well under $3 each, including shipping.

Local bookstores, sports teams and restaurants have steadily supported the reading club, donating prizes and gift certificates. Western Washington Fair has donated four family passes every year. Pierce Transit has offered free bus transportation for qualified readers and their parents on zoo party day.

Over the years we’ve purchased small incidental items, such as portable radios for communication. We also found it was cheaper to buy our own canopy tents rather than rent them each year. We have reused signs and banners, SRC decorations, and stand-up characters, both at the zoo and at the book sale.

Our major party expense has been for hiring entertainment. Children’s performers like Tim Noah cost about $2,000. Sound crews can be extra. And in addition to our main stage concert we’ve also hired strolling clowns, storytellers and small musical groups.

What’s Next?

The zoo is currently building a new amphitheater with a sound system and a covered stage. It should be ready by next summer’s party.

As the club continues to grow, we’ll continue to adapt. We’ll encourage greater use of mass transit and volunteers. We hope eventually to secure a corporate sponsor or partnership.

But whatever changes we make, we’ll make them together!
WLA Personal Membership

Name_____________________________________________________ Home Phone (     ) __________

Address _______________________________________________________________________________________

City_________ State_____ ZIP_________ Library Affiliation ________________________________________________

Business Address __________________________________________________________________________________

Business Phone (     )_________________ Fax (     )_________________ Email ________________________________

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DUES: Includes one regular interest group. Additional groups add $5.00 each. Please select dues from categories listed below and check appropriate boxes.

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Calculate Dues:
Gross Annual earnings $______________  +$1,000 x $1.50 = $______________
Minimum of $35, Maximum of $100

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Individual Friend of Library □ $20
Individual Foundation Associate □ $20

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$35.00 in addition to your basic dues will give you a reciprocal voting membership to Washington Library Media Association.

DONATIONS:
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(Choose from list on web: www.wla.org)

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#2 ____________________ □ $5
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PAYMENT DUE:
Basic Membership $______________
(Minimum of $35 except individual Friend or Foundation Associate)

Additional Interest Groups $______________
Reciprocal Membership $______________
Donations $______________
TOTAL: $______________

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RETURN TO:

WLA
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Seattle, WA 98105-6502
or fax to (206) 545-1543
Questions? Gail Willis, WLA Association Coordinator, (206) 541-1529, 1-800-704-1529, e-mail: washla@wla.org
ALLISON WHERRY

Techno Teens Give to the Community Through the Library

In October 1998 King County Library System (KCLS) began an eight-month planning process funded by the Wallace Reader's Digest Fund to explore educational and employment needs for youth in low-income communities, and to develop a proposal for a youth-employment project at the public library. After a series of public meetings, focus group sessions, and interviews with service providers, youth advocates, library personnel, representatives of the business community, and the youths themselves, KCLS created a program called Techno Teens.

The three-year program provides work and library skills to youths living in low-income areas. In return, youths provide services to public libraries. KCLS hopes the program will contribute to the positive development of youth, will encourage more young adults to use community libraries, and will reflect more of the area's growing diversity in the library's own staff. It is a new way to approach service to young adults that may provide a future benefit to all public libraries as a greater number of youths are exposed to the work of public libraries and are encouraged to make it their own.

The Techno Teen program is paid work experience, and youths may receive high school Work-Based Learning credits from individual high schools. Each student works ten hours per week during the school year and fifteen hours per week during the summer. Youths have a supporting role in the development and maintenance of a KCLS youth web page, they rotate through a number of intern-like situations throughout their library branch work site, and they offer technology and homework assistance to younger patrons. Techno Teens complete a series of group-training and on-the-job modules in areas such as career development, customer service, webpage design, leadership, mentoring, and community building/service. The teens have taken the lead in organizing recognition ceremonies to mark successful completion of the program, and even for completion of individual modules. They receive certificates of achievement for these accomplishments. Parents, staff, program partners, and community organizations are invited to these events.

After the teens complete the first year of the program they move on to increased responsibility and higher skill levels. During the second year, the teens mentor youths arriving in the program, and assume some of the training responsibilities and leadership roles.

The program is currently implemented in sixteen libraries and will end 31 December 2002. After the three-year program ends, KCLS plans to continue and sustain key programmatic concepts that have worked well. For more information about the KCLS Techno Teen Project, contact Project Manager Allison Wherry at (425) 369-3325 or by email at awherry@kcls.org.

Allison Wherry is a Project Manager for the King County Library System. Photo courtesy of Allison Wherry.
In 1999 the Washington State Library initiated a three-year LSTA project to improve the accuracy of reference response for state citizens. This project has been one of the best-received training programs ever offered by the State Library, and has had a very positive impact on reference services in Washington. Its new ways of delivering training and reinforcing skills may establish statewide reference service standards.

Transform, Inc., a Columbia, Maryland company, had established admirable results in providing library reference assessment and training in such states as Maryland, Alaska, California, Connecticut and Colorado. Their program, called Effective Reference Performance (ERP), has enabled libraries around the country to break the “55 percent rule,” (Hermon and McClure) which held that “one is likely to receive a complete and correct answer to a ‘moderately difficult’ reference question only 55 percent of the time.”

To remedy this appalling track record, Transform, Inc. trainers Nancy Bolin and Ralph Gers, developed a program based on the idea that you can’t answer a reference question unless you know what the question is. One of the writers of this article clearly remembers being fresh out of graduate school and responding to her first “real life” reference question: “Do you have any books on fish?” After much embarrassing “to-ing and fro-ing” in the stacks—and disappointing the customer—this eager young librarian finally determined that the real question was, “How can I mate my goldfish?”

Clare Murphy from Pierce County Library System asserts that ERP training remedies this kind of miscommunication: “I have been happily amazed several times at how maintaining an active, open communication channel with my customer for even just a bit longer had led to a presentation of a workable solution in a scenario I initially thought would be dead-ended! The skills reinforced in the workshop have made my reference desk time much more relaxing for me.”

Transform undertook a six-month assessment of reference accuracy—between October 2000 and March 2001—utilizing a representative ten percent sample to reflect the range of library staffing in the state. The unobtrusive telephone surveys used in the assessment showed that Washington State public library customers received complete and accurate answers to reference questions an average of only 58.4 percent of the time. Though individual libraries fell above or below this level, it was not an overall figure of which to be proud. The most disturbing statistic showed that in 32 percent of cases customers received neither an answer nor a referral—in other words, no service at all.

To remedy these deficiencies, Transform conducted a whirlwind series of statewide training sessions between April and August of 2001. The sessions offered new approaches to teaching reference skills in Washington State, one of the most important being peer performance coaching. During practice sessions both in the workshop and on the job, participants practice with a partner who observes their use of the new skills and coaches to reinforce correct behaviors. This approach has proven highly effective, but requires reference supervisors to support the partner coaching necessary to facilitate the staff’s skill transfer. To achieve this buy-in from supervisors, five one-day workshops were provided at sites in Tacoma, Tri-Cities, Spokane, and Colfax. One hundred twenty-six supervisors attended.

Intensive statewide three-day reference staff training in the Model Reference Behaviors (MRBs) started in May 2001. Day one of the training included an introduction to the MRBs and their supporting rationale. Day two ingrained the behaviors through practice-practice-practice with encouragement to provide peer coaching. Day three—scheduled for three weeks later—reviewed the progress that had been made at the home libraries. Twelve three-day sessions were provided by Bolin and Gers to staff in three locations statewide. Approximately 250 staff members benefited. Session evaluations consistently rated the training as excellent.

Of the 250 staff trained initially, seventeen volunteered for an intensive train-the-trainer program. During this eight-day program held in fall 2001, these seventeen learned to effectively train others to successfully use the ERP skills. Upon completion of the program, these trainers contracted with Washington State Library to offer the training throughout the state for the next two years. The trainers are: Leslie Sakai and Pat Miraldi of Tacoma Public Library; Clare Murphy and Keith Knutsen of Pierce County Library; Judy DeBuse and Kathryn Hamilton-Wang of Washington State Library; Liz Stroup, Ellen Duffy and Alice Godeaux of Timberland Regional Library; Terry Beck and Mike Malone of Sno-Isle Regional Library; and Mary Moore and Mary Stillwell of Washington State Library.

Mary Stillwell is Library Training Coordinator for Washington State Library. Email: mstilwell@secstate.wa.gov; Mary Moore is a freelance consultant, trainer, and facilitator for libraries. Email: Mytrain@attbi.com. Photo courtesy of Mary Stillwell.
In 2002 these trainers provided three-day ERP workshops in Seattle, Bellingham, Tumwater, Clarkston, Marysville and Tacoma. Many class participants commented on how the practicing and coaching requirements contribute to effectively using the MRBs on the job. One class participant from the Bellingham workshop said, “This training has allowed me to become more confident of my work as a reference librarian. Before the training, I couldn’t be sure I’d done the reference work well. Now I have a tool to measure my effectiveness; in fact, I know when I have done my job correctly, and I get immediate feedback from the person who matters most—the patron! Bless you for making my job easier, faster and more satisfying!”

Pat Miraldi of Tacoma Public Library describes the impact that ERP training has had in the way that she does reference, “ERP training has revolutionized how I do reference. Now I don’t just take someone to the 636s when they want ‘dog books’ and assume that this answers their question. I don’t just hand them Consumer Reports. I check to make sure I have the specific reference question. I know by the end of each reference question if the patron has received the information he needed—something I used to guess about in the past. I feel better about my work, and more confident in my effectiveness in providing patrons with exactly what they wanted.”

In addition to offering the training around the state, several library systems have utilized their ERP trainers in-house to institutionalize the use of the MRBs. Terry Beck, the Adult and Teen Services Manager for the Sno-Isle Regional Library System, says, “Here at Sno-Isle we require that all librarians who are doing either real-time reference or email reference take this class and clearly demonstrate Effective Reference Performance skills.” Liz Stroup, Head of Reference at Timberland Regional Library System, describes how important the training is in her system: “We at Timberland are committed to having every public service staff member in each of our twenty-seven branches able to demonstrate the Model Reference Behaviors after training. In fact, after the Transform consultants trained fifty-two of our key staff in 2001, Ellen Duffy, Alice Goudeaux and I have offered the three-day Reference Effectiveness Training workshops to our staff (and others) each month since last December. We have trained an additional 182 staff and substitutes, and have added to job postings and to position descriptions that the ‘Ability to demonstrate the model reference behaviors, after training, is a requirement of the job.’ We include it in evaluations of staff so every one knows how important these skills are.”

In August 2002, Bolin and Gers returned to Washington and reported via videoconference results of the follow-up assessment, which was conducted from January to April of 2002. The follow-up assessment revealed that on average 72 percent of customers received complete and correct reference answers, up from the pre-training average of 58 percent. Several individual outlets improved their scores by 30–40 points! Andriette Pieron, Community Services Librarian from Neill Public Library, describes the impact the training has had in her library: “Neill Public Library reference has gone from a 60 percent accuracy rating to a 95 percent accuracy rating as a result of each reference librarian attending the ERP training.”

The future of the project includes another full year of workshops offered around the state by the Washington ERP trainers. These dedicated volunteers have made an enormous investment of their own and their library system’s time and resources to be a part of this project. If results of the post-assessment surveys speak for themselves, the ERP trainers are making a big difference in the quality of reference service in Washington State. Trainer Pat Miraldi of Tacoma Public Library has these suggestions for continuing the program into the future:

• That the training continue until it becomes a statewide standard.
• That unobtrusive surveys be done every other year so we can continue to chart our progress as a state.
• That a non-reference, public service staff component be developed.
• That the methodology be talked up to directors, to obtain buy-in from administration around the state.

Updates, class schedules, and best practices from the program will continue to be available on the Washington State Library website. If you are interested in bringing the Effective Reference Performance training workshop to your part of the state, please contact Mary Stillwell.

References
2003 WLA Conference: Roadmap to a Journey

The 2003 Washington Library Association Annual Conference commences Wednesday, April 9 with five pre-conferences at the Yakima Convention Center and WestCoast Hotel Yakima Center. The pre-conferences and presenters will be: “Think Like a Boss: Getting Decision Makers to Say Yes,” by Pat Wagner (a favorite presenter at WLA and WALE conferences, Pat returns to present both the pre-conference and a conference program); “Bienvenido to the Library! Paths to Effective Library Service to the Spanish Speaking Community,” by Catherine Steele plus providers in Washington; “Help Your Organization Develop Strong Leaders through EQ,” by Janaki Severy, M.Ed.; “OCLC Connexion: Integrated Cataloging and Metadata Services,” by Rick Newell; and “Computer Training Programs for the Public,” by Mary Stillwell and Christa Hardy.

On Thursday, April 10, the annual conference officially convenes to explore the theme “Journeys of Discovery.” The conference committee, co-chaired by Lynne Zeiher and Kristy Coomes, promises that you will make many discoveries—both professional and personal—during conference sessions, benefiting you and your library.

Janaki Severy, president of Management Dynamics, will keynote the conference. This promises to be an exciting, enlightening and energizing interactive presentation. Janaki excels in executive coaching, training design and delivery, and group facilitation. Her gift is in creating an atmosphere of trust, which allows for proactive intervention and change, and encourages possibility thinking. She successfully identifies individual and group strengths and assists participants to design and implement powerful strategies for individual and organizational improvement. Janaki is committed to supporting people to reach their goals.

Janaki’s energy and spontaneous sense of humor are evident in all the work she does. Her clients range from the federal government, public utilities, and healthcare institutions to Fortune 500 corporations, biotechnology firms, and high-tech companies. She has been located in the Pacific Northwest for six years.

Wally Amos will speak at the WLA President’s Banquet. Mr. Amos may be best known as “Famous Amos” but his contributions to education, libraries, and communities reach far beyond the gourmet chocolate chip cookie business. He is a board member of the National Center for Family Literacy and Communities in Schools and, since 1979, national spokesperson for Literacy Volunteers of America. After completing his stint in the U.S. Air Force, he was hired by the William Morris Agency, where he represented Simon and Garfunkel and the Supremes. He is the author of four books on positive thinking and motivation. He has received the Horatio Alger Award, the President’s Award for Entrepreneurial Excellence, and the National Literacy Honors Award. In 1990 he received the Caring Award by the Caring Institute in Washington, D.C. for his outstanding work. He donates a portion of his cookie sales to Cities in Schools, a national dropout prevention program.

Wally is an entrepreneur, author, literacy advocate and now founder of his second cookie business, Uncle Noname Company. A dynamic, energetic and motivational speaker, he has very positive, uplifting words and stories to share. He speaks from experience of his personal successes, and of his failures, too. Wally has a lot to say to us in the library world. As we all face budget cuts and other challenges, Wally reminds us of how to meet them head on. His motivational message is one we can all use as we face these challenges. He reminds us that our attitude has everything to do with how well we meet these challenges. He is fond of saying “It’s not what happens to you that counts, but how you respond.”

Author Amy Goldman Koss will speak at the CAYAS breakfast, and will be a highlight of the conference. She is the author of eleven books for children and youth. Koss’ sense of the contemporary world of teenagers and its particular problems makes her books real, relevant, and revelatory. She is the winner of the John Burroughs List Award for outstanding nature books, and other special honors.

Walt Crawford will present “Copyright Out of Whack, Why Should You Care.” Crawford, the author of Future Libraries: Dreams, Madness & Reality, is also a regular columnist for American Libraries and Online, and is the eContent host of the ‘blog Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large. Another highlight will be Ruth Kirk, who will be the speaking on “Beyond the Pages: Books and Writing with Ruth Kirk” at the WLFHTA breakfast. Kirk is the author of many award-winning books on natural history, and her articles have appeared in several popular magazines.

Conference sessions will include
many exciting programs and pre-conferences. The sessions are divided into seven tracks, challenging us with the impacts of new technology, the future of reference (“The Desk Is Dead”), building library success, banned books, the Internet impact, levy advice, serving children, and more. Tracks include Serving Children and Young Adults, Management and Training, Trustees and Friends, Intellectual Freedom, Community Connections, and Collection Development.

A silent auction, to benefit the Beverly Cleary endowed chair at the University of Washington Information School, will be held during the President’s Reception, which will have us all on stage at the historic Capitol Theatre!

There will be planned opportunities to explore Yakima wineries, to peek behind the scenes at the Yakima Historical Museum, to dine at the Yakima Nation Cultural Center, and to explore the glories of spring in Cowiche Canyon, guided by a local expert.

Be sure to mark your calendar—you won’t want to miss journeying to Yakima and discovering what WLA has in store for you in April 2003! And be sure to check our website at www.wla.org. The full conference program and the registration form

- Kristy Coomes, Lynn Zeiher, and Mary Wise. Kristy Coomes and Lynne Zeiher are Conference Coordinator Co-chairs, and Mary Wise is Conference Communications Chair.

**Seamless WLA Membership**

WLA members: Please mark your personal calendars that WLA dues are due January 1st. A renewal form is mailed by the last day of November each year. Because untimely renewals mean inaccurate budget planning, we must cut off mailings to people not renewing by February 15.

There are exceptions to this policy: ALA/WLA joint members and WLMA/WLA reciprocal members who renew at the WLMA conference are not subject to these deadlines.

Do your part to keep the budget process seamless. Renew on time.

**Please note:** WLA’s website now features an intellectual freedom page, geared toward Washington libraries. The page features relevant associations and interest groups, a free speech and censorship watch, relevant email groups, key IF documents, sample IF policies, toolkits, and more.

The direct link is www.wla.org/iftools.html, or use this pathway: www.wla.org; select drop-down menu QUICK LINKS; select “Intellectual Freedom Tools and Resources for Libraries.”

**Visit the WLA SRRT Website!**

Gain access to:

- All the news that doesn’t fit: stories not covered by the mainstream media.
- The threat to libraries from globalization and the commodification of information.
- What the “War on Terrorism” means for access to information, patron privacy, and civil liberties.
- Critical analysis of technology and its effects on libraries, democracy, and society.
- Collection diversity - links to small presses, independent publishers, and other resources.
- Washington state social service providers and agencies.
- Library literature, weblogs, discussion lists.

And much much more.

- Scott Condon. Scott is a Reference Librarian at Everett Public Library.
Those watching their watts will want to bookmark a link to the Energy Library at www.energy.wsu.edu/library/.

The library is part of the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Energy Program, which helps businesses, industries and Washington homeowners gain savings through energy efficiency. Energy Library patrons rarely come through the door; instead, the program’s clearinghouse operators field telephone and email queries from all over the country and assign them to staff specialists or directly to the library.

In addition to answering energy questions, the library provides other unique services, some of which are now available online for free. Each week, Library Manager Angela Santamaria reviews dozens of paper and electronic trade journals, magazines, and newsletters looking for items to summarize in her weekly email column, *Energy Newsbriefs*, a sort of *Cliffs Notes* for engineers, entrepreneurs and other energy misers. *Newsbriefs* started about seven years ago as an informal in-house briefing designed to keep program staff apprised of energy issues and innovations. Today, nearly 900 organizations and individuals subscribe to the free email service.

Some of those subscribers forward *Newsbriefs* to their own reader networks. Not long ago, Santamaria learned that a subscriber at the United States Army distributes *Newsbriefs* to military installations worldwide. Another reader, at the Golden, Colorado-based National Renewable Energy Laboratory, emailed his kudos to the library earlier this year: “I keep passing the *Newsbriefs* on to the buildings [specialists] here, since you seem to come up with great stuff for them. I personally really enjoyed that lengthy article about dishwashers, since I’m thinking of ditching my old one.” About a year ago, *Newsbriefs* was made available to the public through a link on the energy program website. “I don’t even know how many readers we have. It’s hard to guess,” says Santamaria. “We’re talking about thousands of people.”

The library manager has learned to live with a deadline. Each week she spends about a day and a half researching and writing *Newsbriefs*. Its content has changed with the growth in readership. For the staff section—available only in-house—Santamaria continues to summarize highly technical, paper-only journal articles. For the public section, she highlights articles from energy publications that are typically more general and more easily accessible online. Recent editions have included articles on energy-saving rooftop gardens, methane producing microbes, and electric cars.

In recent years, *Newsbriefs* has spawned another news service specifically for building contractors interested in energy efficient and environmentally sustainable materials and techniques. Also prepared by Santamaria and her staff, *BuiltGreen* goes out monthly to a listserv for Master Builders and others.

*Newsbriefs* and *BuiltGreen* highlight the Energy Library’s unusual journal collection and dovetail with other more traditional services. While reading, Santamaria often flags articles for individuals at the energy program. “Most of what I learn that keeps me current I read, and most of what I read comes from the library,” says the program’s motor expert and senior engineer Johnny Douglass. “The library keeps me looking good and performing at my best.”

Some of the journals and newsletters that come to the Energy Library are too obscure or specialized to be included in large commercial databases. To keep track of those publications, the library started its own index, called *Endex*, which recently debuted with a new interface on the energy program’s website. Updated weekly, *Endex* came through for a Skagit Valley man who contacted the energy program not long ago looking for information about building a small hydropower system on a stream running through his property. An *Endex* search found a citation from one of the library’s paper-only publications that profiled another small, private hydro project in the Skagit Valley. The client got a detailed description of the installation process, a breakdown of project costs, and a list of contacts.

Patrons at your library that have energy-related interests can visit the energy program’s website at www.energy.wsu.edu/library. To find *Newsbriefs* and *Endex*, click on “Program Areas” and choose the library link. For personalized help, call the library at (360) 956-2067. With information on topics ranging from fuel cells to straw bale construction, we have watt it takes to help.

Margaret Thomas is a part-time research librarian at the Washington State University Cooperative Extension Energy Program library. Photo by Margaret Thomas.
Who’s On First?

CHER RAVAGNI

Isn’t It Unusual—
or Is It Business as Usual?

When *Alki* editor Cameron Johnson asked me to write for this issue, I paused a bit in dismay, considering the amount and range of information out there on our current professional situation within this swift moving stream of shifting historical events.

I was furthermore hesitant to occupy the space Tom Reynolds has so ably filled; WLA owes him great thanks for his contributions in this column over the years.

After agreeing, I had to ask for a deadline extension and finally stop myself from reading and just start writing.

I collected my thoughts (and misgivings) in hopes of expressing what might be on many peoples’ minds right now. I don’t have new revelations or answers; I think our path may be already before us, waiting to be rediscovered.

Does anyone else have the eerie sense that it’s “business as usual,” only it’s not?

Is anyone else going through these experiences?

You work every day doing routine reference, support, or administrative work but with a persistent sense that something is about to happen that will change your life but that you can’t control. And everyone else knows this—but we all go about our business?

You exhaust yourself trying to keep current on the information available on terrorism, on international and domestic politics, and on religious and social issues connected to world events? It is doubly important now to be an informed citizen, both for yourself and for your library and its patrons. Sipping from that information fire hose is getting more difficult.

You have a sinking feeling that we really are at a watershed moment in history as Michael Baldwin suggests in his 15 October 2002 Library Journal “Backtalk” column “Can Libraries Save Democracy?” The long-held conviction is that in times of crisis and uncertainty, libraries rise to their true purpose and calling: providing unfettered public access to information from across the spectrum of ideas. Many of us may be personally uncertain of our own position on domestic and world affairs, but we must consider with care and articulate with certainty our professional and institutional roles at this time. Baldwin further suggests that in critical times public libraries are second in importance only to the Constitution—this may be our “usual” place at all times.

You think somehow you should be doing more, as Tom ably suggested in this space in July? Out of the vast array of activities available, how do you choose one or some? How will what you choose for yourself impact or influence your work? Being in the information business is a balancing act at best, since we routinely find information for our patrons that may influence our own lives, as our lives may influence what we find for patrons.

How then shall we live and work in these times?

As events proceed and information increasingly streams before us, how can we determine an operating principle to work upon? Are we in a new world—as some public officials suggest—calling for new and different laws, guidelines, and interpretations? As the public rhetoric from all sides increases, how can we find and maintain a visible common stance, both for ourselves as individuals, and as institutions on which our patrons rely?

As I read about what libraries around the country have been doing over the past year, it seems most of the activities could be distilled down to variations of what libraries have been doing throughout our recent history—business as usual.

None of these activities is new or original, although applications and circumstances are. We have always developed collections on emerging and controversial topics, advertised those collections through displays and programming, involved patrons, performed skillful reference tasks, and kept our doors open. Now, thanks to technology, we do all this with great speed and visibility.

In the face of oncoming events, libraries and library people are doing something important even when we think it is just business as usual.

(Continued on next page)

Cher Ravagni is a Reference Librarian at Seattle Public Library. She is also Chair of the WLA Intellectual Freedom Committee and co-Chair of the Washington Coalition Against Censorship.
What to do—really? As individuals, we can:

**Learn**—Keep informed—even if current events aren’t your subject area and even if the information is alarming, distasteful or disingenuous. In this challenging time, there is more information (and disinformation) to sort through—for both librarians and patrons. As librarians, we face the dilemma of providing information and opinions not always occurring in mainstream sources. Access is vital—it is business as usual.

Keep current on issues of intellectual freedom and freedom of expression in national and local legislation, in your library policies, and through ALA and other organizations. No one has all the information or all the right answers.

**Question/Act**—Ask questions about policies and information you don’t understand. Find ways to speak about things you don’t agree with.

**Work**—Keep patrons informed—even in spite of themselves. Patrons are overwhelmed and worried about the world situation. How can we continue to give them facts and information strategies so they can understand issues? We’ve always done this (or should have)—it is business as usual.

Guard patron privacy. Libraries have always done this but the USA PATRIOT Act makes this a more personal duty. As Karen Coyle points out in her 1 October 2002 *LJ* article, privacy literacy must become a goal for each of us. More than ever, people must work with their library administrators to develop clear policies and procedures known and understood by all employees. Any library employee may be faced with this issue in coming days; should anyone question the importance of this, please read Adam Piore’s brief article “Librarians Keep Quiet” in the 28 October 2002 *Newsweek*. Piore (and others in other sources) describes the impact of the USA PATRIOT Act and the potential necessity for one library employee or library system to break the law in order to test its legality. This is one aspect of our present situation that seems not to be business as usual.

As libraries, we can:

**Examine**—Consider our role in society. Perhaps we need to remind ourselves and our constituents and supporters that libraries are the freest forums of ideas in times of crisis. Information makes citizens strong; current discussions on limiting information about our country’s policies and actions are troubling. The American Civil Liberties Union’s recently announced campaign to remind citizens of their constitutional rights might focus attention on our role.

**Inform**—Consider becoming visible partners with other community organizations that are getting out information without taking a side in the discussion. Showcase the library as the information source for the whole community.

Educate and train employees about intellectual freedom and privacy issues before a situation arises. Do this more than once. Make sure policies are clear and visible.

**Commit**—Understand the commitment to provide access to a widely divergent range of information about the current world situation. Realize that at some point libraries might not be popular or supported for doing this. We all know about the 1950s and McCarthyism, and the 1970s and Vietnam—some of us lived through those times. The strength of library administrators and trustees is key to this component of doing business as usual.

**Connect**—Network with other libraries and encourage employees to network, so the information we all need gets around: information about incidents, situations—and solutions—will benefit everyone.

None of these concepts and ideas is new, but the context is new for many of us. If we review the path our profession has taken until now, and consider the wisdom and purpose that path has shown us and our patrons, we must seriously consider remaining committed to access, freedom, and democracy.

As I was reading post-9/11 responses written by a group of famous people, I came upon a thought expressed by playwright Wendy Wasserstein. She wrote that she intended to respond not by going out to do something flashy and different but by rededicating herself to doing her usual work more than ever to the best of her ability. I think I got it.

Now is the time to continue to do our business as usual, but with renewed attention and dedication to what we do best: free access to information without asking who wants it or why.

**References**


NANCY PEARL  

Multiplying the Enjoyment of Books

One of the reasons I love reading so much is the journeys that books take me on. I’m not just thinking about books that take place all over the world, from Africa (Looking for Lovada: Days and Nights in Africa by Ann Jones and Sabara: A Natural History by Marq de Villiers are two of my recent favorites) to the Arctic (Fergus Fleming’s Barrow’s Boys: The Original Extreme Adventurers: A Stirring Story of Daring, Fortitude, and Outright Lunacy is a terrific read) to Australia (both Tim Winton’s Dirt Music and Peter Carey’s True History of the Kelly Gang are marvelous) and every place in between, but also the way books take you by the hand and lead you from one book to another. As I’m reading a book—and it doesn’t seem to matter whether it’s fiction or nonfiction—I find myself making a note of something that I want to follow up, to find out more about.

Some books simply beg to be read sequentially, linked as they are by theme or subject matter (or both). I find that the whole of the experience is somehow much greater than the sum of its individual parts. Linking these books broadens and deepens the individual experience of reading each separately. I’ve listed here some good companion reads. You might want to suggest them to people who are looking for good reads. You might want to suggest them to people who are looking for good reads. What they’ll find is that the earlier books will inform and enrich their later discussions, making for excellent meetings. Incidentally, I’d suggest reading each grouping in the order in which they are listed.

Two good memoirs about growing up Hispanic in America:
Down These Mean Streets, by Piri Thomas
When I Was Puerto Rican, by Esmerelda Santiago
Almost a Woman, by Esmerelda Santiago

Two views of Southern life, one fiction, one memoir:
Charms for the Easy Life, by Kaye Gibbons
Addie: A Memoir, by Mary Lee Settle

Two novels about single women, written almost 100 years apart, one by a man and one by a woman:
The Odd Women, by George Gissing
The Odd Woman, by Gail Godwin

Three books about Iran, beginning with a novel about two lovers caught up in the Iranian Revolution, and two books about Iran since the revolution:
The Persian Bride, by James Buchan
The Last Great Revolution: Turmoil and Transformation in Iran, by Robin B. Wright
Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran, by Elaine Sciolino

Into the heart of the Dark Continent in four novels and one riveting work of history:
Heart of Darkness, by Joseph Conrad
Things Fall Apart, by Chinua Achebe
The Poisonwood Bible, by Barbara Kingsolver
King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa, by Adam Hochschild

One novel and one work of nonfiction consider whether Bigfoot exists:
Wild Life, by Molly Gloss
Where Bigfoot Walks: Crossing the Dark Divide, by Robert Michael Pyle

American in Vietnam is the common theme of these two powerful and moving novels, set decades apart in that war-torn country:
The Quiet American, by Graham Greene
A Dangerous Friend, by Ward Just

Travel down the Mississippi with the man who said that he learned all he needed to know about human nature by traversing the Mississippi, and with an Englishman who yearns to discover America:
Life on the Mississippi, by Mark Twain
Old Glory, by Jonathan Raban

Several writers have taken a classic work of fiction and written a novel about a minor character in it, but few have done it as well as Jean Rhys. And Jasper Fforde’s delightful fantasy is a pure joy for any Jane Eyre fan.

Jane Eyre, by Charlotte Bronte
The Wide Sargasso Sea, by Jean Rhys
The Eyre Affair, by Jasper Fforde

Dick and Nicole Diver, the main characters in Fitzgerald’s novel, were based on the lives of Sara and Gerald Murphy, big players during the Lost Generation of the 1920s and 1930s. Tomkins and Vaill explore the lives of this tragic couple in their biographies.

Tender is the Night, by F. Scott Fitzgerald
Living Well is the Best Revenge, by Calvin Tomkins
Everybody was So Young, by Amanda Vaill

Fiction and nonfiction about the West offer contrasts and similarities in:
Close Range: Wyoming Stories, by E. Annie Proulx
Lasso the Wind: Away to the New West, by Timothy Egan

Women’s lives in the Far East are explored in two different novels:
The Moon Pearl, by Ruthanne Lum McCunn
Women of the Silk, by Gail Tsukiyama

Stegner actually based the life of the main character in Angle of Repose on the life of Mary Hallock Foote, and you can appreciate this appropriation (including the title of his novel, which comes from Foote’s diaries) and his literary artistry in reading these two books together:
A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Old West, by Mary Hallock Foote
Angle of Repose, by Wallace Stegner

Three novels about watching life without fully participating in it:
The Spectator Bird, by Wallace Stegner
The Moviegoer, by Walker Percy
A Gesture Life, by Chang-rae Lee

The great Victorian explorer Mary Kingsley is a wonderful subject, as can be seen in this collection: a novel, a biography, Kingsley’s own memoir, and a book recreating her travels:
Hello to the Cannibals, by Richard Bausch
A Voyager Out, by Katherine Frank
Travels in West Africa, by Mary Kingsley
In A Dry Season: In the footsteps of Mary Kingsley, by Caroline Alexander

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