



Alki

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Up Front

The WLA President speaks

JOHN SHELLER

More, More, More

For years the Washington Library Association has been the state's premier provider of continuing education for the people that make our state's libraries great. WLA has offered personal and professional growth and development for thousands of us, and has provided many opportunities to meet and work with counterparts from around the state, and across the spectrum of library types and positions.

Even with this proud history, it is worth wondering aloud, "What can WLA do next?" The answer I keep coming up with is, "More, more, more!" We need more individual members, more institutional members, and more active members if we are to continue to stretch ourselves as individuals and increase our viability as an organization.

More Individual Members

When I started working at the King County Library System eleven years ago, our library district had around 700 employees, King County had a population of about 1.5 million, and our state had a population of roughly 4.8 million. WLA membership hovered between 600–800.

Today, KCLS has around 1,200 employees, King County has nearly 1.8 million residents, and Washington has nearly 6 million. Washington boasts more libraries and more staff, and has even added new job categories in libraries (e.g. IT people and webmasters). Yet, WLA membership hovers below 1,000.

I'd like to translate our state's growth into more WLA members, and you can help. In the coming year, please commit to bringing at least one new member into WLA. Inviting coworkers, Friends, and trustees to join tells them how much you value their contribution to libraries, and that you want them to think of their library work as a career or a way of life.

More Active Members

At the September board meeting in Kent it became apparent yet again that we expect highly active members to remain so forever. I joked that WLA some-



times seems like the Mafia, meaning you can never really leave. But this expectation is unfair not only to members but to the association as well. People should feel comfortable cycling up and cycling down their level of activity. I could not sustain the level of activity required of the WLA president beyond the end of my 2005 term. Even if I didn't know this, my family and employer would surely point it out.

To alleviate some of these pressures and expectations, I would like to post the terms for all of our board positions on our web page and rosters. I hope this will ease the jolt of transitions and will make the many people who volunteer countless hours to WLA aware that it's okay to say "I've done my share, now I would like to concentrate on another area of my life or work." And I hope this will signal to people considering taking a more active role that we appreciate whatever time they can afford us. No one should hesitate to become more active for fear of becoming enmeshed in a never-ending relationship.

More Institutional Members

WLA has become as strong and vibrant as it is by encouraging a membership not only of people but also of libraries. Public, academic, governmental, and special libraries that join WLA have a vested interest in the association's success. The institutional dues they contribute help us to hold a successful annual conference, and help to keep individual conference registration fees affordable.

Our diversity of library types challenges us to offer equally diverse programs and opportunities. Failing this, we risk a spiral of less, less, less—fewer library types means we offer a narrower range of opportunities, which appeals to fewer library types, and the cycle continues.

Our variety of institutional members makes us stronger politically. When WLA speaks on behalf of the library community we need as broad a base of input as possible. The recent challenges to the state library are a good example, where WLA could—on behalf of our members—cite public, academic, and institutional library concerns about negative impact of the proposed closure.

We are presently revisiting the dues structure for academic institutional members. Our vice-president, Carolynne Myall of Eastern Washington University, is heading a task force that will work to make institutional membership more fairly affordable and attractive to those who wish to join.

I look forward to posting an updated list of institutional members in the next *Alki*. If you are able to add one new member, please send me their name and email address and I will personally thank them for joining WLA!

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C o n t e n t s

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Alki's purpose is to communicate philosophical and substantive analyses of current and enduring issues for and about Washington libraries, personnel, and advocates, and to facilitate the exchange of research, opinion, and information.

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From the Editor

CAMERON A. JOHNSON

The Dire Hole of Irrelevance

Thanks to Brian Soneda for naming this issue theme. Once our authors got past the “what the heck is a dire hole?” stage, they delivered some fine articles. Props to all.

Only with great difficulty can we climb out of a dire hole: We are compelled to avoid it. My very own dire hole is in the crater floor of an extinct volcano called Montenuovo, west of Naples. As a 12-year-old living nearby, I would ascend the pumice-strewn, piney slopes of Montenuovo with my friends, then circle down the crater trail to the bottom (images of this amazing area can be found at www.ulixes.it/english/e_pg02dfr07a.html). In the crater floor, someone had bored a hole, probably ten feet across and a hundred feet deep, that was hidden by tall grass. No one had any idea what purpose the hole had served. It wasn't roped off, so we could have easily blundered in if we hadn't known where it was. As we approached, we would slide our feet through the grass, feeling for the edge. We knew that if we were to fall in, no one could have gotten up the mountain in time to get us out. To this day, that hole and its hidden dangers haunt me.

Many years and miles from Montenuovo, threads of a *library* dire hole surface for me in this *Alki* issue. This dire hole lies in our losing sight of the idea of libraries as a public good, in our going too far in adopting the language and style of business, in judging our success the way businesses judge theirs, and thus voluntarily forsaking our own values. I only see libraries spiraling downward when I read such things as “The Fragile Future of Public Libraries,” by New Hampshire library director Michael Sullivan (*Public Libraries*, September/October 2003). Sullivan believes that circulation is the measure of all success, that people don't want accurate information, that we can't afford librarians' salaries, and that we should mimic the model of big-box bookstores.


Our *Alki* authors agree that the primary dire hole for libraries is irrelevance. UW iSchool student Elinor



Appel sees a dire hole in our political benefactors ignoring libraries when seeking information. *Alki* intern Shireen Deboo—also from the iSchool—sees multiple dire holes within the array of issues surrounding weeding and collection development. In their article about WLA's Legislative Planning Committee, Bonnie Taylor and Mary Wise report that not complying with CIPA could create a legislative dire hole and public backlash that we must avoid.

Catherine Haras argues that to avoid irrelevance our association needs a well-conceived brand, which can help mitigate the lack of a distilled purpose and image. Rhona Klein says that to avoid irrelevance we should promote libraries as high-tech resources, using commercial-style imagery in a variety of media. Regan Robinson, in her article urging library advocates to “get political,” sees a different remedy for library irrelevance: entering the unsexy and sometimes tedious—but grindingly relevant—world of community political meetings. Mary Carr, writing on behalf of the institutionally submerged world of community college libraries, sees formal recognition by trusted authorities as a way to transcend the dire hole of irrelevance. *Here's to its being so!*

I believe that taxpaying citizens will defend and support libraries as educational institutions but not as disintermediated video arcades and paperback emporiums (with or without coffee). Library directors like Michael Sullivan think they can lowball their way to institutional security; but at some point, libraries steering this course will merely lose their credibility, and yes, become irrelevant.

Our March 2004 theme is “Non-librarian Librarians,” and focuses on either non-librarians doing librarian work, or librarians doing non-librarian work. Please send article ideas. 



The Alki Editorial Committee:
Above, from left: Tami Echavarria Robinson;
Editor Cameron Johnson; Cheryl Farabee; Mary Wise;
Chair Carla McLean; Brian Soneda; Bonnie Taylor;
Emily Hull. Not pictured: Nicole Campbell.

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MARY M. CARR

Avoiding the Dire Hole, Community College Style

All community college librarians believe the library is the heart of our institutions. We understand the importance of information literacy in the lives of the students and staff we serve. We know deeply in our bones that faculty and students who use the library and learning resources do far better teaching and learning. The library and education literature confirms our centrality to the educational process. Research bears this out, standards (that librarians write) certainly affirm this fact, and accreditation commissions tell the same tale.

Were libraries and learning resources programs really thought of as the heart of the institution, there would be no dire hole to avoid or from which to rise. Librarians and libraries would command the respect and the budgets they deserve. Libraries and learning resources programs would flourish.

Truth be told, after thirty (yes, thirty!) years of life in academic libraries, I contend that the budget is a much better barometer of a library's worth to an institution than all the standards in the world. The truth that librarians are reluctant to recognize, much less utter aloud, is that rarely are community college library/learning resources budgets adequate to allow librarians and learning resources staffs to effectively do our assigned jobs. Rarer yet do our budgets approximate the funding levels set by the ideal world of standards. While the state of Washington—on average—funds community colleges in the 3-plus percent range, standards have suggested 5–9 percent, or somewhere on the order of twice the budgets we are accorded.

Meanwhile, community college libraries deliver the best service possible given the available funding levels. Librarians and learning resources staffs continue to innovate and redirect precious resources in order to be as relevant as possible to the students and faculty they serve, to support the curriculum in the best ways possible, and to use the best delivery methods. Service, after all, is what we librarians and staffs do, no matter the budget or the conditions.

Marginal budgets beget marginalized services and so on and so on, down the dire hole. And soon college administrators, looking for places to cut, and using the Internet as an excuse, wonder (sometimes aloud) if the college could continue without the services of a library. This is the reality of libraries within community colleges, especially within the last several years of increased enrollments and declining budgets. The state of Washington has not (yet) arrived at the bottom

Mary M. Carr, is currently Dean of Instructional Services and Telecommunications and Director of College Development, Spokane Community College. She chairs both the National Council for Learning Resources and the Council of Affiliate Councils of the American Association of Community Colleges, and is chair-elect of CJCLS.

of the hole, but other community colleges in other states have. It is just a matter of degree and perhaps a matter of time. Too many college administrators look at direct instruction as revenue generation, while seeing as expenditures libraries and other student support services. As community college librarians are quite aware, we are in a dire hole. On good days, we're able to peek out. On bad days, we're simply too far down to see our way out.

Not surprisingly, this dismal scene is reflected on the national level. A particular, collective case in point is the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC has been the national voice for community colleges since 1920. Its mission is to build a nation of learners by advancing America's community colleges. The association represents more than 1,100 associate degree-granting institutions and some 10 million students. Further defining its mission, the AACC promises to:

- Provide a national voice and advocacy for the community college mission.
- Serve as a national information resource.
- Create opportunities for peer networking at all levels, professional initiatives, dialogue, connectedness, and community-building.
- Facilitate collaboration and teamwork among staff and stakeholders.
- Engender a shared commitment to the community college movement.
- Offer leadership and career development opportunities.

Certainly libraries and learning resources programs, at the heart of the community college mission, should be included in AACC's stated goals. Or so we librarians would like to think. But until recently, libraries and librarians that serve community college campuses have received little attention in the formal documents and statements of AACC. No mention was made of libraries or their importance to the community colleges' educational mission. We were invisible.

The libraries' AACC interest group, or affiliate council, is called the National Council for Learning Resources (NCLR). The council is one of the smallest but oldest councils within AACC. Its mission is

to advocate for community college libraries to community college leaders. It has done so primarily with a newsletter written to college presidents and vice presidents, and by bestowing an award recognizing administrative leadership. Several years ago, however, NCLR Chair Richard Shaw began to explore the idea of an AACC position statement regarding the centrality of library and learning resources programs. He thought this would be useful in raising the awareness of top-level administrators regarding learning resources programs. His notion was that the statement could be used locally and nationally to advocate the librarians' position.


A committee, chaired by Jules Tate, worked on a draft statement for several years. The statement was discussed broadly at ALA conferences and on the listserve of the Community and Junior College Libraries (CJCLS), a section of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). Cary Sowell, Julie Todaro, Richard Shaw and I, along with countless others, made significant contributions to the language. Finally, the draft statement went before two AACC commissions, the Commission on Learning and Communications Technologies and the Commission on Academic, Student and Community Development. Cary Sowell and I addressed both commissions and got their input in November 2001. In April 2002, Julie and I returned with a revised draft that was unanimously accepted by both commissions with a recommendation that the statement be forwarded to the AACC Board of Directors for its approval.

On 8 November 2002 the board made it official. For the first time in eighty-two years, the national organization representing community colleges had a position statement on its libraries. The statement appears on the following page.

Between April and November of 2002 the statement had already been put to use. Nancy DeSombre, president of Harold Washington College in Chicago,



and then-chair of the AACC Commission on Learning and Communications Technologies and a library advocate, used the statement effectively to block the outsourcing of library services within the City of Chicago's community college system. She took the statement, even without official endorsement, to the city community colleges' board of trustees and spoke passionately on the importance of community college libraries to the Chicago community college educational mission. She quoted the statement and asked the board to reconsider its decision to outsource. She was effective in her arguments and the board decided to keep libraries within the mission of the colleges. President DeSombre found the statement to be invaluable, because it had the weight of the AACC behind it and the board of trustees recognized and respected that association's authority. President DeSombre's experience in Chicago proves that the statement is an advocacy tool.

As this experience in Chicago demonstrates, it is important to speak to administrators and boards using the voice of an organization they embrace. For community colleges, AACC is that voice. Community college librarians must work harder to be seen and heard, to present cogent rationales, and to work together in strategic partnerships like the one forged with AACC. It is absolutely essential to develop the advocacy tools we need to protect and secure the information needs and services we know are vital to the students and faculty we serve. If we do this well, perhaps someday we will truly be the heart of our community colleges. 



Introducing Evelyn Lindberg: New WLA Webmaster

WLA's new webmaster is Evelyn Lindberg, presently a database analyst for the Washington State Library. Evelyn earned her MLIS degree from the University of Washington's Information School in 1999. Her official term as WLA's webmaster began on 15 August 2003. After a five-week transition, she took over full responsibility for WLA's website and electronic discussion lists, and also became the liaison to WLA's Internet service provider.

Evelyn says that her current priority for the WLA website will be conference and membership registration using secure online payment processing. Once that issue is resolved, she plans to look at reorganizing the website and making aesthetic changes. She says that a committee will be formed to help determine the future direction of the site. She hopes for a lot of member involvement.—*Martha Parsons, WSU Energy Program Library*

AACC Position Statement on Library and Learning Resource Center Programs

Community colleges are comprehensive institutions that provide a full array of educational programs. Library programs, as part of that full array, are indispensable to the teaching/learning mission of the community college. In today's world, libraries are not just a place, because many library resources and services are online and accessible from anywhere. Community colleges continue to need libraries as a physical space, as long as students need assistance to conquer the digital or information divide and there is a need to house and provide access to materials not available electronically. Whether the term used is Library, Learning Resource Center, or Instructional Resource Center, it describes a set of programs and services that provide an organized universe of knowledge to users. Library programs have long served a vital role in the mission of the community college. In fact, the concept of the learning resource center—one of creatively merging access to traditional library services with media and instructional support—had its genesis in the community college. From the beginning, library programs have promoted dynamic and efficient access to knowledge for all learners. Indeed, the management of these varied learning resources using limited budgets, consortial arrangements, and internal and external partnerships has added complexity, technical sophistication, and greater economic responsibility to librarians who staff these centers.

The term librarian describes a professional member of the academic community with, at a minimum, an appropriate master's degree in the disciplines of library science and information management. Librarianship is uniquely structured and systematized by its professional members to serve the constantly changing knowledge management needs of students, faculty, and the local community. The library profession has long shown exceptional and immediate responsiveness to managing access to widely diverse knowledge resources. Today more than ever, librarians are educators and teachers of information literacy for faculty and students, as well as the local and

worldwide community. A growing percentage of information resources are digital (online indexes, full-text databases, websites, e-books and e-journals). Yet this new format will not replace the large number of useful knowledge resources that will continue to be in print (e.g. books, newspapers, periodicals and other documents), or to be available in magnetic and optical media (e.g. tapes, CDs, DVDs). In collaboration and partnership with other faculty, librarians teach members of the community the information literacy skills necessary to access and to evaluate critically the myriad of available resources.

Learning resources programs that provide information literacy skills are essential to the development of the independent lifelong learner. Tenets of information literacy include the ability to:

- Determine the nature and extent of information needed
- Access and use needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically, and incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base and value system
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.

Libraries and librarians help to establish the foundation on which all lifelong learners can build. An information-literate person has the ability to be a knowledgeable, active participant in the workforce, the community and the democratic society in which we live.

For these reasons, the Board reaffirms the vital role of library and learning resource center programs and librarians to formal education, information literacy and to lifelong learning as a core value.

*Approved by the AACC Board of Directors
November 8, 2002*



In today's informationally overloaded environment, it is more important than ever that citizens develop critical thinking skills in locating, using, and evaluating information.

To answer this need, the Washington State Library in 2000 launched the Information Literacy Project (ILP), a statewide public service and in-service training campaign to enhance the information literacy of all Washington citizens. This groundbreaking project aimed to connect the marketing of libraries, their collections, and their services with library staff's ability to teach their clients to be information literate. The project's public service media campaign ran from November 2001 through April 2002. Funded by the federal Library Services and Technology Act, the three-year Information Literacy Project wrapped up all its activities in December 2002.

The main objectives of the Information Literacy Project were to:

- Fund a statewide publicity campaign to urge the public to use libraries' information literacy services.
- Raise awareness in the library community about its role in communicating information literacy concepts.
- Conduct information literacy training sessions for library staff throughout the state.
- Develop a specific set of information literacy tools for library staff.

The "toolbox" of resources is available, along with additional information about the project, on the ILP's website: www.librarysmart.com.

The Publicity Campaign

The ILP hired Daniels-Brown Communications, a Tumwater-based advertising/design/public relations firm, to develop and implement a public affairs program to increase citizen awareness of the importance of information literacy and of the role libraries and librarians can play in enhancing citizens' information literacy.

Rhona Klein, director of the former ILP, currently directs the Connecting Libraries and Schools Through Information Literacy Project at the Washington State Library. Artwork courtesy of Rhona Klein.

RHONA KLEIN

"Libraries— When You Really Need to Know!"

The project first undertook a market research study to determine the general public's awareness and use of their local library's services and resources. The results were quite telling:

- One in three adult Washington residents use their local public library once a month or more often.
- The leading reason people go to the library is to do research and get information.
- People whose library use has declined cite Internet access as the major reason for the decline.
- Sixty-nine percent of respondents are aware that their local library offers computers for word processing or Internet access.
- Sixty-one percent are aware that their library provides electronic access to online journals, newspapers and magazines.
- Fifty-one percent are aware that their local library offers assistance from a librarian via telephone or email.
- Forty-one percent are aware that their local library provides remote access to electronic library resources.
- And a whopping seventy-seven percent of those who said they were not aware of remote access to library resources—or that their libraries did not provide remote access—also stated that they would increase their library use if they could have remote access to electronic resources.

Development of Ads

Armed with this powerful information, we began to develop the project's public service announcements (PSAs), which would eventually constitute the campaign's major resource. We needed not only to conceive a uniform look and feel to the campaign, but also to develop a simple message to convey a complex idea: that information literacy is important, and that libraries and library staff are the best starting point for effectively accessing, evaluating, synthesizing, and using reliable information . . . all without uttering the user *unfriendly* term "information literacy."

Our first job was to create a slogan and logo, relevant to a wide variety of the public, which would get our message across as simply as possible. "Libraries—when you *really* need to know!" became the campaign slogan.

The next job was the fun part: creating the ads. Because this was a statewide campaign targeted to users of all types of libraries, we designed and developed a variety of ads utilizing various formats, including billboards, television, radio, and newspapers. Ads targeted specific audiences: school kids, adult consumers, and businesspeople. In addition, each ad focused on a different aspect of information literacy.

The billboards were designed to bring viewers' attention to several troublesome notions that library staff encounter every day, namely that "Everything is on the Internet!"; that most users—even those using search engines—struggle with the Internet's lack of organization; and that Internet searches retrieve a lot of misinformation. Our billboard image and message address these issues simply and with humor—search engine users can readily identify with the billboard's message.

The radio and television ads—also using humor—related information literacy to good and bad outcomes of everyday problems. One sixty-second radio piece features a successful, Lamborghini-owning investor who does all her investment research through the library.

Another ad, developed for both radio and television, depicts a consumer who is sold a vacation by an annoying and slick telemarketer ("Hey, this is Louise, with Heck Of a Deal Travel Company... how do the warm sands o' Bermuda grab yah.") only to end up in the tundra, shivering, and her teeth chattering. The voice-over announcer then portrays the same consumer who, after researching travel destinations with the help of a library professional, enjoys a posh island resort. This radio ad won a prestigious Puget Sound Radio Broadcasters Association Soundie award.

All the radio and television ads ended with the same message: "Libraries—when you *really* need to know. Visit librarysmart.com. Your online guide to smart information." Project members hoped that people would visit the project's website, which further encourages people to become smart information consumers.

Earned Media Strategies

Along with professionally produced advertising, Daniels-Brown developed an "earned media" strategy and campaign, which involved writing and distributing opinion columns and press releases to news sources around the state. Topics included announcement of the marketing effort, release of the survey findings, and opinion editorials ghostwritten for the state librarian about the important role library professionals can play in making smart choices about information sources (citing some of the post-9/11 Internet fraud).

The public relations industry sees such earned media placements as having a "perceived value" three times greater than paid media because readers view stories written by journalists as less biased than paid advertisements. Every marketing campaign should have a carefully crafted earned media strategy to maximize campaign dollars.

Librarysmart.com

Although the Information Literacy Project has ended, the resources on the Librarysmart website, www.librarysmart.com, continue to be available to the public and to library staff. Guides



Left: A woman shivers in the Arctic after receiving misleading information about her tropical vacation. She should have used a library! This ad was developed for both television and radio and earned a Puget Sound Radio Broadcasters Association Soundie Award.

for the public are arranged according to audience. From the home page, students and kids can link to age-appropriate resources, while parents, teachers, and families are provided a different link. On the bottom of every web page is a link to "Resources for Library Staff," where staff can start their search for information literacy resources. Basic primers or refresher courses on information literacy are located in the "Handouts for Library Staff" and "Bibliography" resources located in the "LibrarySmart Resources" sidebar at www.librarysmart.com/working/forlibraries/01_resources.asp.

The website also includes the handouts distributed at the project's introductory and advanced training workshops for library staff, including the workshops' PowerPoint shows. We encourage library staff to download, print out, and personalize for your library's use the "Handouts for Library Users" and "Posters for Library Display" resources.

Marketing Tips for All Libraries

When asked how much money is needed for a publicity campaign, the answer is inevitably, "How much do you have?" This is not a wise-guy answer; generally, the bigger the budget, the better the return on your investment. The ILP had a modest statewide marketing budget of \$200,000, which allowed us to hire the expertise of Daniels-Brown Communications. Since we could not afford to purchase placements of our PSAs, we relied on media outlets—from all counties in the state—to donate free ad placements. Their generosity resulted in over \$250,000 in placements by the end of the campaign.

If your library is considering working with a professional public relations and marketing firm, consider the following tips:

- Define your goals in a sentence or two.
- Be specific. What type of campaign will you be

On a Shoestring Budget?

Working on a shoestring budget and unable to hire an outside firm to develop your promotional campaign? A tight budget makes it even more essential for a library to develop basic promotional skills. There are a variety of simple and inexpensive actions you can take that will make a difference. Stephen Daniels-Brown offers the following tips relevant to all libraries eager to promote their services and resources:

- Develop relationships with local newspapers, and with radio and television stations. Invite the editor, news director, or owner to lunch, get to know them, and let them know how you can help them. To be aired, ads and announcements need a local touch.
- Establish Generation Y relationships. Set up an advisory council of teens. Listen to their ideas. Loyalty is one of their traits.
- Work with your area's senior centers and assisted-living homes. Consider starting Internet or computer sessions for seniors only.
- Keep the media informed about your events. Make press releases to local media a standard task of your programming activities.
- Announce to the media when new collections arrive, or when new programs are scheduled.
- Form partnerships with businesses. They may not know what libraries have to offer them. Work with your chamber of commerce or Rotary club. Create a speakers bureau and offer speakers to local clubs. Create resource lists for businesses.
- Look for opportunities to cross-promote libraries with other businesses or clubs. Become sponsors.
- Make it easy to get a library card.
- Try the Barnes & Noble approach—comfortable lounging areas and espresso bars.
- Take care of current members. Set up an email sign-up for emailed newsletters; maybe cross-promote with a local radio station or chamber, and announce your activities on the community bulletin board.

Bottom line: Remember where your audience is—the community.

Right: This billboard image concisely and humorously relayed three points: that the Internet can't answer every question; that useful answers to questions are often hidden in an information jumble; and that Internet searches turn up a lot of misinformation. And, of course, that libraries are the place to turn for help.



conducting—Advocacy? Marketing? Public relations? All of the above? PSA? If PSA, will you rely wholly on donated ad placements, or on a combination of paid and donated?

- Look for flexibility in the marketing firm you hire. Quiz them about their style of working with clients. They will not know all about the latest trends in libraries, but should be willing to learn, and you must have confidence that they will.
- Trust their expertise, and know they will trust yours. You each have complementary skills and knowledge. Your job is to educate them on libraries and their issues, on your specific library, and on your library's services and resources. If you are to make informed decisions, they must also educate you and keep you informed every step of the way.
- Stay on top of the project. Don't wait for the marketing firm to bring developments to you. If you think it's time you heard from them, contact them. That's your job. They're used to being "pestered" by clients. Their job is to respond. Remember, they're working for *you*.

Conclusions

Creating interest around the term "information literacy" was, and always will be, a challenge. But by using creative professionals, combined with a lot of "sweat equity" from Washington library professionals, we were able to promote the value of using library resources to navigate that sea of information. Your library is one of the most revered institutions in your community, but its value diminishes when it is not fully utilized and supported. With every agency and institution vying for limited public dollars, we in libraries cannot sit back and wait for the world to come to us—either in person or electronically. Reach out and let your community know *why* we're there, *what* we have, and *how* we can help them. Libraries—When you *really* need to know!

ILP's ads and the results of the market research study are available on the Librarysmart.com website. Washington State Library owns the ads and invites individual libraries to use them for local library marketing campaigns. There are small fees involved to cover licensing and other legal issues. To find out more, please contact Rhona Klein at rklein@secstate.wa.gov.



SHIREEN DEBOO

Weeding Polarities: 'Hoarders' and 'Chuckers'

Weeding is the left hand of selection. If weeding and selection aren't coordinated to meet the goals outlined in your library's strategic plan, then you've failed in your responsibilities as a collection development librarian.
—Rip Strautman, Spokane Public Library

Weeding is critical to successful collection development. We want our libraries to be a vital, relevant public resource. We want our shelves to be uncluttered and have space for new materials. We want our collections to include current information and popular requests. Informed weeding helps us meet these goals.

But how libraries and librarians around Washington approach their weeding responsibilities varies greatly. How do rural libraries develop their weeding criteria, and what unique challenges do they face? How are weeding criteria established in multi-branch systems, and how are diverse opinions about criteria reconciled? What, if any, role does community preference play in developing weeding policy?

Weeding issues, although perennial at libraries nationwide, were brought to the national forefront in 1996 when *The New Yorker* published Nicholson Baker's diatribe against the practices of the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL). At that time, SFPL was preparing to move to a renovated main branch and had, Baker reported, removed from its collection over 200,000 items, many of which he believed to be rare and out of print.

Librarians around the country felt that Baker's piece did not reflect the context in which collection development decisions are made. Nonetheless, the article spurred librarians to reconsider policies and practices at their own institutions and, as significantly, to consider how best to communicate those practices to their patrons and the community. In a 1996 *Library Journal* editorial, John Berry wrote:

The first lesson in all of this is that librarians do and always have done a lousy job of explaining the weeding of their collections and the disposing of the weeded books...The criteria and practices for dumping the public's books are still a mystery to most citizens. That fact alone gives weeding an undeserved sinister image. Even Baker agrees that weeding is necessary, but he found the version of the practice he saw at SFPL both secretive and suspect. We have to find better, more open ways to weed, to communicate about weeding, and to get rid of the results. (1)

Dispassion or Humanism

The traditional weeding debate, which is still playing out in libraries here in Washington, highlights the tension between the roles of the "dispassionate manager" and "intellectual humanist." Dispassionate managers focus on item circulation, shelf space, and

organizational goals. They see weeding as a critical element in presenting the library as a "vital, vibrant, and up-to-date community resource." Intellectual humanists champion the library as community storehouse of knowledge, not just as repository for popular items. They want to balance the high-circulating items in a collection with materials that reflect the community's alternative voices and minority interests. (2)

Only rarely, however, is the divide so clearly defined, and most librarians are not simply either 'hoarders' or 'chuckers.' Rip Strautman, deputy director of support services for Spokane Public Library, stresses that weeding practices must balance customer demand, financial resources, staff time, shelf space, and the library's strategic plan: "All of those things are a factor in selection and weeding of material," Strautman said. The importance of balance is echoed by Rayna Holtz, a reference and YA librarian with King County Library System's Vashon branch. But she also argues:

One of the most important roles a library plays is to have less well-known items, more specialized, out-of-print, unusual, and local items that bookstores won't carry because they're not popular. We have to recognize the value of those items, and our libraries' collections should have the depth, richness, and diversity to balance those high-circulating items.

Strautman and Holtz make compelling and equally convincing arguments for their approaches to weeding. But what happens when these approaches clash? Strautman argues that a low-circulating item, regardless of its quality, has no place on the shelf. "If it's not being used, then there is something wrong with your collection development practice or your marketing; your collection is not really reflecting your customers' interests." For Holtz and like-minded colleagues, some low-circulating items still serve an important purpose on the shelf. A book on alternative energy sources, for example, might not have many readers. But the few people who investigate this resource represent a minority interest that public libraries have traditionally made a priority.

Weeding Guidelines

Beyond arguing the merits of individual items, libraries must equip themselves with detailed collection development plans and weeding guidelines to

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help themselves approach the task with clear objectives and shared values. King County Library System developed a weeding plan in 2002 as part of its strategic collection development goals. In anticipation of a 30 percent increase in the collection budget, each branch needed to assess space, age and condition of materials, turnover, and overall collection goals. The system developed a “team weed” process that brought managerial, collection development, and subject expertise to each branch, then coordinated branch staff input for visiting weeders. Books that contributed to the overall collection or had significance in some way but were not circulating could be tagged for central storage and remain accessible through the online catalog. One safety feature of the process was that no final copies were removed from the collection. The yearlong process weeded out nearly 20 percent of the KCLS collection.

Although KCLS’s weeding followed written guidelines, allowed for branch staff input, and had management oversight, it still had its critics. Patrons and staff at one branch resisted a deep weed of reference sources and nonfiction materials. Bruce Schauer, KCLS associate director of Collection Management Services, admits that a library’s weeding practices must be sensitive to staff, to policy-makers and board members, and to the community; but he also acknowledges that in a large system “it’s hard to make sure that everyone understands it or buys into it, and at some point you have to accept that.” Marilee Cogswell, a Newport Way branch manager at KCLS, stresses that weeding is critical to responsible collection development and, moreover, that proactive weeding can help librarians identify collection strengths and weaknesses, create room for in-demand items, and improve circulation.

Smaller libraries and those in rural areas of Washington have a significantly different set of challenges in weeding their collections. With fewer staff, and often no professional librarians in branch locations, many of these multi-branch systems have limited ability to weed systematically. Some have not developed weeding criteria. Also, smaller branches often send their discards to a larger central library, which may have inadequate information to reassign the books to branches that may need them. Mike Cook, collection development librarian at the Mid-Columbia Library District, is revising its collection development policy, aiming to create guidelines and criteria that individual branches can use as they conduct their individual weeds. The policy includes weeding guidelines based on the CREW method developed by the Texas State Library. (3)



Above: A library patron seeks bargains among discarded library books.

The thirteen-branch Whitman County Library’s small collection budget, along with routine loss and damage, constitutes a sort of built-in involuntary weeding practice. System director Kristie Kirkpatrick would like to more thoroughly weed the collection, but is prevented by limited replacement dollars. But Kirkpatrick says that the system’s inability to weed preserves what otherwise might be lost: “People from other cities come to our libraries and find items that are rare or valuable and couldn’t be found on the shelves in bigger collections.”

Summary

Weeding issues are at the heart of librarianship. It is an ongoing challenge for systems of any size and capacity to develop a weeding plan that reflects the library’s collection development goals, that maintains collection breadth and diversity, and that honors the community’s expectations. Making weeding decisions with a united purpose and vision is an equally significant challenge. As the libraries highlighted here demonstrate, however, any system will benefit from being sensitive to these factors and developing a proactive perspective on weeding.

Thanks to Rip Strautman, Spokane Public Library; Rayna Holtz, KCLS; Bruce Schauer, KCLS; Marilee Cogswell, KCLS; Kristie Kirkpatrick, Whitman County Library; and Mike Cook, Mid-Columbia Library District.

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ELINOR APPEL

Seattle's Municipal Reference Library (1913–1992)

Numerous funding cutbacks to libraries at both the state and local levels have brought home just how much librarians and their institutions depend for support on elected officials. We would hope that these people on which we depend—our legislators, council members, and other government officials—would depend on us in turn, would see libraries as a consistent and reliable source of information for their own work in carrying on the public's business. Unfortunately, research shows a history of declining dependence by government officials on libraries and library research.

As recently as the early 1970s municipal reference libraries supplied up-to-date, relevant information to officials in major cities throughout the United States. But owing to reasons as diverse as multiple budget cuts, the exponential growth of the Internet, and the increasingly reactive and complicated world of local politics, elected officials look less and less to public librarians to provide them with these services. What accounts for this decline of direct library services to government? A study of Seattle's Municipal Reference Library (MRL) provides insight.



Above: The arrival of the first computer and modem in 1977 was a watershed moment at Seattle's Municipal Reference Library. While early database searches retrieved only references to print resources, later searches retrieved full-text abstracts and articles. The appeal of the quick computer search was readily apparent to harried officials, who soon lost interest in the more in-depth material offered by specialist journals and books. At left is Barbara Guptill, head of the MRL at that time. Seated is Jeanette Voiland.

Elinor Appel is an MLIS candidate at the University of Washington Information School. Photos courtesy of Elinor Appel.

The Early Years at the MRL

The idea of a municipal reference library to serve local government officials was popular at the turn of the century. Cities were growing rapidly, bringing the need for information on how to administer them. Special libraries for municipal administrators were established in Chicago (1900), Baltimore (1907), Milwaukee (1908), Cleveland and Philadelphia (1912), and New York (1913).

In arguing its case for a special library, the Municipal League of Seattle reflected the progressive movement of the time:

The idea of a municipal library arises from the increasing demand on the part of citizens that city government in all departments be administered not only honestly but efficiently [I]t is recognized that there must be a thorough knowledge of facts relating to each question that comes up for consideration.

In 1912, and again in 1913, Seattle head librarian Judson Jennings lobbied the mayor and city council to back the formation of a municipal library at city hall. When no official action was taken, Jennings started his own collection and offered services out of the reference division in the central branch. He immediately began to market his services, sending the mayor and other city officials a list of references to topical city issues.

By 1916 the municipal reference librarian was an officially recognized position at the library, and in 1920 the Municipal Reference Department began submitting an annual report, a task that continued into 1989. These reports, available at the history reference desk at the central library, provide a fascinating account of city issues during the past century, from Prohibition and slaughterhouses, to wartime building assessment and street railways, to go-go girls, "women's lib," and a facelift for the ill-fated "domed stadium."

The Heyday

Over the next decade, the municipal collection grew. In 1929 a committee of three (including Jennings) reiterated the importance to city officials of on-site reference. This time their bid for a city-hall location was successful, and in January 1931 they finally took up residence in a fifth floor room of the County-City Building. The library remained there until

1962, when it moved into the new city hall along with the other city departments. The on-site MRL had proved its worth to its city-hall patrons.

As the early annual reports show, however, marketing the municipal library to its patrons could prove vexing, and how best to do it was never quite resolved. Publicity efforts—their successes and failures—were listed in early annual reports. The 1956 report describes in detail the work librarians did to promote the MRL:

The library has always sent letters to incoming elected officials and appointed department heads, inviting them to use the library, and expressing interest in their needs. This interest has been sustained in several ways. The library's weekly list *News Notes and Recent Additions*, which began regular publication in 1945, has both publicity and solid information value. However, many new books, pamphlets, ordinances and magazines articles are

also called to the attention of individuals, as they come in. . . . Other public relations aspects of the work are attendance at City Council meetings, participation in 'buzz sessions' of public relations representatives from various city departments [and a] friendly relationship with rank and file employees, and the general public.

A later report announces enthusiastically that "the Municipal Reference Library was publicized in 1960–1964, for the first time in its thirty-one-year history."

The late 1960s and early 1970s proved to be the busiest time for the MRL. In 1968 "heavy use of our resources by City Council Members" was reported; 1970 saw a 16 percent increase in reference questions over the previous year. The 1970 report also comments: "Not only government employees but also the general public made use of our services" and the 1972 report happily states: "Our circulation climbed by a whopping 32%."

The Beginning of the End

With a growing city deficit in 1973, however, Seattle's budget office began to regard closing the MRL as a simple solution to their budget woes. A similar proposal in 1959 had been roundly dismissed by all departments and branches of the city. The city council even declared "the amount of money to be saved by abolishing this department and transferring it to the main library is not sufficient to compensate for the service it performs in supplying easily accessible information." However, by 1973 the idea was not so easily dismissed. The issue was raised again in 1974 and 1976 and again in the 1980s. Each time, the city council refrained from voting to abolish the MRL; but changes in the library's collection, services, and clientele made the move only a matter of time.

The MRL Collection

The MRL's collection consisted of a variety of print resources. One area of focus was specialized journals like *Garbage and Parks and Recreation*, or all the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.) journals. Another important resource was the vertical file, some dozen file cabinets filled with newspaper clippings on local topics. Although the book collection contained some titles on state and local history, the collection emphasis was on national topics such as zoning, housing, planning, parks, and garbage.

In 1977 the MRL acquired its first computer terminal and modem, after which book circulation slowly but surely decreased. Jeannette Voiland, librarian there at the time, told me:

With automation we began to see the book use start to drop off and people got to the point where if it wasn't in a magazine or journal or a newspaper they weren't interested. . . . An engineer might want to use a design guide of some sort, but a lot of the people who were just trying to produce a report fast for the council on some topic didn't have patience for the tedious, often dated nature of books.

By 1983 book circulation had dropped precipitously and the library began to review its collection development guidelines and phase out print matter.

Pamphlets and documents from other cities were another important MRL print resource. Seattle municipal librarians worked hard to keep the collection current, retaining good, often reciprocal, relationships with staff in these other cities. However, owing to

What Information Do Officials Really Want?

One city librarian told me, "City councilors don't need as much information as you think."

Local politicians and other city officials often haven't the time or inclination to research a topic deeply, usually requiring only basic information like legislative agendas or municipal codes. Often, they are looking for information to support decisions they have already made, and they want the information fast and like to retrieve it online. However, some do want to learn about administrative problems and solutions in other cities. In such cases, officials prefer to receive in-depth analyses or broad overviews from professionals such as lawyers and planners.

Ways in which non-specialist librarians can help city officials retrieve the electronic information they are looking for include:

- Understanding their specialized information needs
- Providing a well-organized pathfinder page that leads quickly to trusted sources of information
- Instructing officials on the uses of databases and search engines
- Helping them develop search strategies
- Showing them how to identify which information providers are reliable and credible

For an excellent example of these suggestions in practice, see Detroit's Municipal Reference Library website: www.detroit.lib.mi.us/mrl/index.htm.

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Above: Point-of-service information provision, circa 1932. The MRL at the County-City Building served elected officials and city administrators on-site for over thirty years. **Right:** Seattle MRL librarians advertised their convenient location and continually promoted their services to city hall with pamphlets like this.



their own budget difficulties, over time cities began to charge for this material (which the MRL could not afford) or did not send it as frequently, if at all. As a result, the collection began to lose its currency and relevancy. The 1979 annual report notes that while “in-house use of materials dropped substantially” and circulation statistics also fell, computerized database searches were becoming established in reference work to city officials. This reliance on computers grew markedly through the early 1980s. In 1982 *Time* magazine’s choice of the computer as “man of the year” was announced in the annual report as indicative of the place of the computer in the municipal library department, as well as in the larger world.

MRL Services

Because during the 1970s more community members were using the MRL, the library expanded its marketing to citizens, putting together a program to take information about city hall into the community. The project culminated in a federally funded community outreach initiative, developed in 1977, which became known as the Neighborhood Resource Center program. The idea: to equip all branch libraries with municipal and pertinent local political information on city council hearings, community projects, local crime statistics, traffic, housing, and block grants. Each branch library was equipped with a separate area for this information, recognizable by its A-frame shape.

Municipal reference staff now not only attended city council hearings but also began to attend regular community meetings to advertise their services. In addition, a computer was placed in the

Columbia branch library, the site of a number of community action groups and grant-funded projects. Pamphlets left at Columbia library advertised: “COMMUNITY INFORMATION FOR YOU—FAST!” Through databases loaded on these computers, citizens were able to acquire information on census and voting information, along with other services such as job training. Despite an enthusiastic response from some community groups, this pilot program was not continued past its official end on 31 July 1980.

During these same years, the library began to serve county officials. In 1979 the MRL officially changed its name to the Governmental Research Assistance Library (GRAL) to reflect its new, broader patronage base.

The year 1983 saw an initiative to bring citizens information on local government affairs through the municipal access channel, which became known as Seattle City Cable 28 (SCC28). GRAL staff selected, edited, and entered government information on an electronic bulletin board. Over the following years they videotaped for broadcast council meetings and mayoral addresses, and also posted election and other information.

These activities diverted resources from answering questions from city hall, and from marketing the service. The 1983 annual report noted that “less special interest routing to key city officials is being done, promotional work has declined, and collection development has all but vanished.” The GRAL’s 1984 report showed that while service to citizens such as that offered by the cable service were expanding rapidly, those to their other patrons—elected officials—were faltering:

‘Frantic’ is the only word that accurately describes the staff effort to cope with some really startling increases in service requests. ‘Disappointing’ because several attempts to solve serious problems were complete or partial failures and because requests for reference assistance in some areas declined.

This is not to say, however, that services to public officials declined outright. Jeannette Voiland, who remained at the library up until its closure, described for me many hours spent developing a personal relationship with city councilors and the mayor, learning about and anticipating their information needs. However, all these efforts were not enough. When once again budget issues forced the city council to reconsider the cost of the GRAL, the agency’s position became precarious: If it were a question of closing community branches serving “South End kids who need all the help they can get with homework” or the “bureaucrat’s library,” as one 1987 *Seattle Times* article put it, surely the second would eventually go. Seattle Public Library administrators agreed.

In 1992 the library (now called the Local Government Information Center) was quietly closed, and its collection moved to the central branch. Once moved from city hall, the library was no longer visible or convenient for its primary patrons, and service to city hall ended.

Cable TV, the Internet, and the MRSC

Some municipal information services offered by the Municipal Reference Library have since been taken up by other entities. The Seattle City Cable (SCC28) initiative is now run by the City of Seattle and has become Seattle Channel 21/28, webcast around the clock through the municipal website: www.seattlechannel.org. Ordinances and codes are available to the community and the city council through the city clerk's website: www.cityofseattle.net/leg/clerk/clerk.htm.

Also, the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington (MRSC) has become a significant source of information for local elected officials. MRSC is an independent nonprofit organization that provides service through a contract with the Municipal Research Council, a state agency. Created in 1969 to provide smaller municipalities around the state with legislative information and legal advice, MRSC currently holds the state's most extensive collection of local-government documents, covering information on budgets, codes, comprehensive plans, and administration. Services include preparing special topical reports, answering reference questions, and providing a conduit for shared information on its excellent

pathfinder page: www.mrsc.org. MRSC staff members include city planners, public policy consultants, and lawyers. State law requires that member cities must provide the MRSC with pamphlets and documents for the collection. Unlike Seattle's MRL, which divided its limited resources between the community and city hall, the MRSC serves only one specific segment of the population. And luckily, the MRSC is not dependent on that segment for its funding.

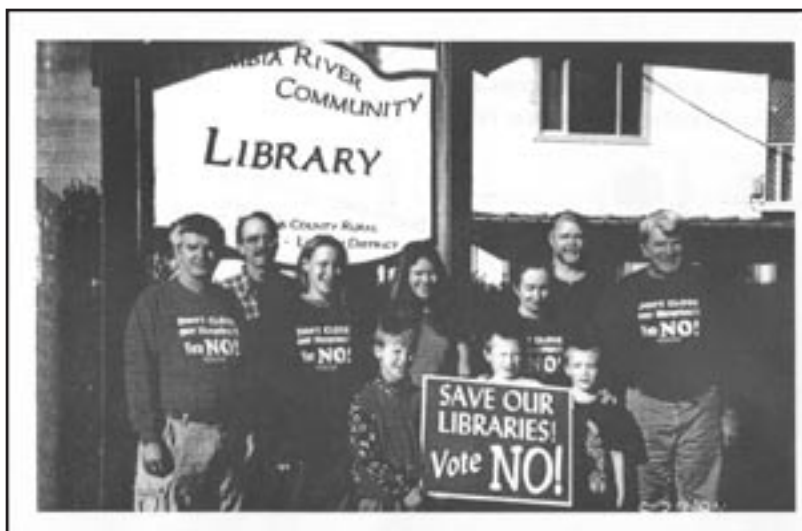
Seattle's Municipal Reference Library was closed before it could offer Internet-based services. The popularity of computer searches during the MRL's waning days proves that elected officials—like patrons everywhere—prefer information delivered as expeditiously and conveniently as possible. Today, they or their staffs retrieve much of the information themselves. The decline of the MRL and the dwindling number of municipal reference libraries throughout the country pose a troubling problem for the library community: Given that government officials view public libraries as irrelevant to public-policy making, what are the future prospects for libraries, which depend on such officials for financial and political support?

I am indebted to Jeannette Voiland of the Seattle Public Library for her many hours talking to me about the MRL and for retrieving for me annual reports and related files containing newspaper clippings, memos, and newsletters.

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Above: A postcard used in the Save Our Libraries campaign. In 2002, direct citizen action helped save the Stevens County Rural Library District. But in today's anti-government climate, reacting to threats to library service may not be enough. Library supporters should consider a permanent political role.

Robinson (Continued from page 17)

isn't real, *really* I do. So I drive to the meetings; listen to a rehashing of national issues, ponder the intricacies of state party bylaws and rules, which rival the complexity of most library classification schemes; and plan fundraisers for candidates who have yet to step forward.

It used to be cozy being apolitical, wrapped in the cloak of librarian objectivity. But I think libraries and government are at risk, and it is time for each one of us to become participants, not viewers.

Those who choose to get involved in politics and in government need our help. Without the support of those who believe in government and in communities, elected officials may continue to take the easy path: cut taxes, reduce government, and run for re-election again. A difference will only come about when each one of us makes a difference.

REGAN ROBINSON

Got Politics?

Turn off *West Wing* and get real.

One lesson we learned from last year's referendum on closing the libraries in Stevens County was that we need more people involved in local politics. We can no longer rely just on putting our message out to the public.

The typical public library story or message usually ends in some stirring statement about the common good and democracy. You know: The library helps the have-nots in our society; the less fortunate, the young, the old, the vulnerable, and thus our community and our democracy are strengthened.

It *is* a wonderful story, isn't it?

We grew up on tales of Robin Hood, the bold and brave and handsome hero assisted by the lovely Maid Marian (wasn't there a librarian named Marian?) who stole from the rich and gave to the poor.

Unfortunately, in many communities it seems that Prince John is back in charge and the Sheriff of Nottingham is busy cutting down the trees in Sherwood Forest, leaving Robin Hood with no place to hide.

Sound farfetched? Let's take a look. You've heard Grover Norquist, head of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR), now famously known for his statement: "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub" (*The New York Times*, 6 June 2003 in a column by Paul Krugman titled "Duped and Betrayed").

If you missed Norquist, maybe you've noticed the frequent comments in this state's media from the Evergreen Freedom Foundation (EFF), whose principles include:

- Users of a government service should be charged user fees to pay for the service.
- Taxes should not be collected to provide services that are not core functions of government.

In Stevens County, the local head of the American Heritage Party (AHP) advocated these same positions. The group's party platform states that property taxes should be abolished. And they sponsor summer camps for training voters.

People are tired, mad—you choose the verb—of paying for services which they perceive are not useful to themselves. They are



being encouraged in this view by our national and local politicians, who are listening to AHP, EFF, and ATR, and not to ALA or WLA.

Does this mean we need to change what we do as librarians? That's what I wrestled with after meetings with local politicians, who explained that they want government out of "social programs." Our story of the library's role is not only falling on deaf ears, but we are in danger of leading the sheriff to Robin Hood's hideout.

Elected officials don't have to explain who will be responsible for helping the needy; too many members of the public appear happy enough to hear that they don't have to be responsible anymore. Taxpayers won't ask. Citizens might.

It would be comforting to dismiss AHP as a fringe party. But what about the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, which is routinely quoted in our newspapers? And evidently ATR is on President Bush's dinner guest list.

The vote to keep the Stevens County Rural Library District wasn't easily won. It *wasn't* a "no-brainer." Eliminating a government program that is funded by all—but may be used by only some—was accepted by many as reasonable and fair.

I once thought voting was enough. I don't think so anymore. Participation in civic life is the essence of democracy, according to the League of Women Voters. *Participation*, not just having great libraries.

I have kept my day job, but now my evenings are often spent in more meetings. I joined the local political party that most closely represents my values. It's not perfect but it *is* viable, I hope.

Local politics doesn't resemble the drama and humor of a *West Wing* episode. Watching *West Wing* is fun, and discussing the issues that the show raises almost seems like political action, but I know that it

(Continued on previous page)

ALKI Volume 19, Number 3

Regan Robinson is the director of Stevens County Rural Library District.



WLA Conference 2004

“A New Season” is the theme of the 2004 WLA/PNLA Joint Conference to be held at the WestCoast Wenatchee Center Hotel, in Wenatchee, Washington, 11–14 August 2004. The title of the conference reflects the unique move to an August WLA conference date. August is the traditional time for the Pacific Northwest Library Association conference. We expect that competition with the 2004 PLA conference in Seattle will affect attendance at the WLA conference. Regardless, we are expecting to put on a noteworthy, if intimate, event. Planned social events include an evening at Ohme Gardens, a melding of WLA’s meet and greet with PNLA’s famous CANS across the Border, and an evening boat trip on Lake Chelan. Check out the conference web page at www.wla.org/wlapnla2004/planning.html to keep up with conference developments.

Advocacy Training

Washington State Library is pleased to announce the launch of a new multi-year statewide initiative to market, promote, and advocate for libraries. The Statewide Library Marketing Initiative is funded with Library Services and Technology Act funds from the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

The initiative’s goal is to develop and implement a coordinated library marketing program that spreads a common message about all libraries, but which also highlights the unique identities of individual libraries and projects. Training workshops and resources will be developed and distributed to libraries and library staff to help them carry out library promotion efforts. The initiative also hopes to coordinate the current and future marketing efforts of statewide projects and initiatives provided through the Washington State Library.



Washington State Library will coordinate the initiative, with the help of a seventeen-member advisory committee comprised

of library marketing professionals, library directors, and staff from all types of libraries and all geographic locations. A marketing professional will be hired to manage the initiative, and funds are available to hire a marketing firm.



For further information, contact Karen Goettling, Library Development, Washington State Library, (360) 570-5560, kgoettling@secstate.wa.gov.

CAYAS Award Nominations

CAYAS (Children’s and Young Adult Services Interest Group) is seeking nominations of individuals who are dedicated to excellence in library

service to youth—children and/or young adults. Please include library staff, board members, and volunteers in soliciting suggestions for a qualified individual from your institution to nominate. Recipients will receive recognition at the annual conference.

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

Deadline for nominations is 6 February 2004. The nomination form is accessible from both the WLA and CAYAS homepages at www.wla.org. Please send completed forms to Elise DeGuseppi, Pierce County Library System, 3005 112th Street E., Tacoma, WA, 98446-2215; phone (253) 536-6500, ext. 132; fax (253) 537-1809; elised@pcl.lib.wa.us.





CATHERINE MARLEY HARAS

Why Branding Matters to WLA

Two years ago, the WLA Board directed its Public Relations Committee (PR), then headed by Mary Kelly (and later by myself), to update the WLA logo, which was twenty years old and badly needed to evolve. PR was also asked to implement the WLA brand, that is, to apply the brand's new image to WLA print and virtual materials to achieve a consistently recognizable identity statewide.

A New Logo for WLA

Consistency is the key to branding. The new logo (or mark) had to communicate itself through a variety of formats, from *Alki's* banner and the WLA website, to interest group newsletters, business cards, letterhead, thank-you notes, brochures, and signage, not to mention tee shirts, banners, and a poster. The logo had to be professional in every sense of the word, because anything authored by the association would *become* the association, both to members and to the world at large. But it would also be unskillful to just stick the logo on everything published by WLA, because our strategy had to be executed in a society already overwhelmed by visual communication.

Branding means more than a logo, however. The WLA brand would represent the organization's identity and service, and its promises made. A good brand has a very specific meaning to individuals (whether inside or outside the organization), groups, and the general public. Brand identity conveys the promise that builds member loyalty. In our case, this promise speaks to people's sense of ownership, values, and advocacy with regard to libraries. But in redesigning our logo, PR found it necessary to address other issues as well.

The branding process is time-consuming. Just coming up with the parameters for the scope of the design took several meetings. Questions of semiotics arose, [Semiotics is the study of symbols and their interpretation.—*Ed.*] affecting everything from font selection to image orientation: How does one convey the notion of *information* in a logo? Aren't we about more than just information? Aesthetics came into play: What color is *information*? What color is Washington state? Is it Western Washington's kelly green or Eastern Washington's sage green? Do we want one logo or two—a formal logo and a casual, in-house version? We had to find a graphic artist who could design an image that spoke to all that had happened in Washington libraries since the last logo appeared—from the notion of what a library is today, to concerns east and west of the Cascades regarding association identity.

Catherine Marley Haras is a faculty librarian and instructor at Highline Community College. She currently co-chairs the Reference Interest Group for WLA, and was formerly an associate director at Tinsley Advertising in Miami, Florida.

There were time-sensitive components to consider. The budget for the redesign was approved in January 2002 and the logo was due for board approval at the June 2002 retreat, but four brochures and mailers had to be created for various membership drives in fall of 2002. We also had money issues. Our budget was a modest \$5,000, well below market price for a project of this size. All we could afford was the design for one logo, but we also needed someone who could redo all materials—such as membership brochures—affected by the graphic changes.

To determine the feel of the new logo, PR considered issues of scope, cost, and relevance, taking into account identity and cultural issues pertinent to WLA, plus the necessity of reaching out to the wider public.

That's a lot to ask of a little logo.

Brand Strength and Unity

Branding is usually seen not as the powerful communication tool it can be, but instead as a marketing ploy. We found that the biggest challenge to the WLA logo design rested in the perception among some members that branding was irrelevant to the life of a nonprofit agency like WLA.

For nonprofits especially, branding is often considered a waste of precious dollars. Yet nonprofit libraries and their associations regularly brand. ALA does, and so does King County Library System. So do universities, the U.S. Congress, and the Metropolitan Opera. A great brand reflects a sharply defined identity, whether you're an association, a cultural institution, a government agency, or a car. For any organization to succeed in the minds and hearts of both its members and the public, a brand message must be cohesive.

A nonprofit organization with limited amounts of money and energy has only so much time to make its point to an audience, including its own members. In the end, the measure of a brand's power is how quickly and viscerally members make the connection between the organization's brand and its "stuff." Great brands make emotional connections. For a nonprofit, establishing that emotional identity becomes critical to attracting ongoing community recognition—and money.

Whether we want to admit its influence, every organization has a brand. Think Coca-Cola (for-profit). Think UNICEF (non-profit). Some brands are stronger than others, and not just because of a snappy mark. In fact, brand strength usually transcends design issues. Branding is always a reflection of the unity of the organization.

Organizations must respond to membership concerns or risk becoming irrelevant. To avoid this risk, a branding process should include research, such as the use of focus groups and member surveys, as a way of determining whether the organization is achieving an internal impact—or lack thereof.

The Special Library Association (SLA) discovered the usefulness of such member polling when its public relations committee approached the New York public relations firm of Ketchum, Inc. to reconsider the SLA brand. SLA's public relations committee found that members within SLA—a national organization—held widely divergent attitudes as to what the SLA meant to them. Given the diversity of member opinion, the committee determined that graphical consistency was the one realistic way of maintaining the organization's image. Ketchum also advised SLA that branding was important for their nonprofit precisely because it raised awareness and therefore attracted donors who felt they knew what the SLA stood for.

WLA's logo-development process faced some of these same identity issues. Our constituency is varied and includes urban libraries, rural libraries, librarians, library staff, Friends of the library, trustees, directors, faculty, public libraries, school libraries, special libraries, and academic libraries. Does WLA really mean the same thing to each one of us? To keep membership up and current, nothing unifies like a strong brand.

Brand Identity

In the absence of internal consensus, brand management can ensure that the information we generate looks good to the rest of the world. Good brands are managed. If your favorite fruit drink looked like itself one day and soda pop the next, wouldn't you be a bit confused? Perplexed? Irritated? We never, *ever*, want our public to be confused about what WLA means. Branding is one way of reaching out to a world that may have a fractured view of what we do. While a logo can never take the place of organizational identity, it *can* act as a powerful control when it comes time



Left: In 2001, the WLA board felt that the image this logo portrayed was outdated. The logo had symbolized WLA for over twenty years.

to reach out to the legislature, to the media, to businesses, and to the general public. If a WLA letterhead looks different from one of our newsletter's mastheads, can the public tell that both come from the same source? Without a strong brand, "they" do not recognize "us."

It is up to us to tell the public about the big changes that have affected libraries. We can do this non-intrusively by employing reliable visual cues that remind people who we are. We promote our own advocacy and education by building on our brand. And we encourage potential donors only when we can demonstrate a strong sense of our mission.

A strong brand is more likely to be remembered than a weak one. This goes back to short attention spans, but it's true. People remember the people, places, and things that actively make themselves memorable. Think Madonna. Incredible brand identity.

Brand Implementation

WLA's Public Relations Committee ended up choosing a Seattle graphic artist who developed a look based on three factors: WLA's identity, PR's input, and the budget. To push the design ahead, the committee decided on certain adjectival descriptions of WLA—*contemporary*, *professional*, *Pacific Northwest*, *libraries*, *community*, and *information*. Unfortunately, PR never seemed to find an adequate graphic to convey all these concepts. We considered an image of a book that opened and revealed its pages as sun rays. We considered the letters *W*, *L*, and *A*, stacked in various orientations and discriminated as open books. We found it difficult to incorporate into the design such concepts as computer usage. Over several meetings (I recall six) our designer developed several "comps," or mock-ups, and delivered the logo in various formats for rendering in different media.

We decided on one formal logo, in a vertical format, (later a horizontal design emerged in-house) given the orientation of most of the paper stock it would be seen on. I recall the discussions going round and round about the font and graphic. After considering the colors yellow or green (we could only afford one color, plus black), we selected green and left the shade up to the designer. She came back with a teal green so saturated it sometimes reads as black. The color was one of the things I liked best about the design.

The newly elected Coordinator of Communications Troy Christenson and I presented two versions of the logo to the board at the

2002 annual retreat. The logo that PR had wanted to see (open pages reading as sunrays) was not selected. I spent some time defending the two choices to board members, some of whom were unconvinced that it was a very good logo. However, this is par for the course in branding, and the vote came as a relief because we needed to move forward with the rest of our redesigns.

The years 2002–2003 turned out to be busy for the Public Relations Committee. We went on to create a suite of related materials to host the logo, such as letterhead, Post-it® notes, and thank-you notes. My friend and colleague from Seattle University, Janet Bishop, a graphic designer by training, joined me and together we designed three membership brochures (sustaining, corporate, and student). Jeanne Steffner modeled a fourth brochure for the Washington Library Friends, Foundations and Trustees Association (WLFFTA). Martha Parsons began the process of redesigning the website. Troy commissioned a poster. Cameron Johnson at *Alki* graciously consulted PR on incorporating the logo and subtly updating *Alki*. And some interest groups like Grassroots! and the Reference Interest Group (RIG) actively incorporated the logo into their newsletters.

As we worked, we found the scope of our project moving beyond graphic design. We began combining PR meetings with meetings of the membership committee, then chaired by Taylor Stoneback. At these meetings larger identity questions relating to WLA kept emerging, such as, “Who are we as an organization?” and, “Whom do we need to reach as members?”

Past and Future

PR deserves the credit for initiating and carrying through a process that took almost two years and is still ongoing. The planners were PR Chair Mary Kelly (community relations manager for Sno-Isle Regional Library System) and members John Sheller (KCLS), Julie Wallace (community relations and graphics manager at KCLS), Dolly Richendrfer (manager of community relations for Spokane Public Library), and myself, then the student representative from the University of Washington’s Information School. Troy also figured prominently later in the process.

When I asked Mary Kelly about the logo the other day, she responded, “We wanted a logo that was flexible enough to live for a few years, and was contemporary and professionally done.” She reminded me that all logos have a shelf life. In the end, even the best ones live no longer than ten to twenty years. Then some poor soul from PR has to start all over again. Don’t believe me? Recently, *The New York Times* altered its page design slightly, as it has from time to time for the last one hundred years.

For anyone who wants to see the evolution of a brand, it is worth taking a look at *Page One: One Hundred Years of Headlines as Presented by The New York Times* (New York: Galahad Books, 2000). Most people don’t notice the changes that happen over the life of a brand, but *will* notice if something does *not* change with the times. Making appropriate changes to a brand requires some vigilance on the part of the organization. In the words of one marketing guru, “When an organization understands the full implications of the brand, not simply as a mark, but as a marketing tool, and consistently manages that concept with discipline and imagination, the brand attracts customer involvement and loyalty—even zeal.”



Two logo concepts were submitted to the WLA board for their consideration. **Above:** Two versions of the logo concept the PR committee recommended: dark green with open-book pages discriminated as sun rays. **Right:** Logo concept selected by WLA board.



BONNIE TAYLOR AND MARY WISE

Vigilance Pays: WLA's Legislative Committee

Complex social issues, acting within a continually evolving digital environment, are putting enormous pressure on libraries, and may soon have major impacts on libraries' funding and operations.

This was attested to in a series of *Alki* interviews with key members of the Washington Library Association's Legislative Planning Committee (LPC)—Steve Duncan, WLA's legislative consultant; Mike Wirt and John Sheller, LPC co-chairs; Bill Ptacek, past LPC co-chair; and Patience Rogge of the Washington Friends, Foundations and Trustees Association (WLFFTA).

Duncan said that how tough the upcoming state legislative session turns out to be for all libraries depends on decisions each public library across the state makes about complying—or not complying—with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). In his opinion, if some public libraries in the state turn down federal monies under CIPA to avoid its filtering requirement for children, a host of negative consequences could be on the horizon.

One of the possible consequences, he predicted, is that the Washington Legislature will pass a "CIPA look-alike" that would prohibit public libraries from getting state funds and grants until they meet these filtering standards. Duncan said he is turning to WLA's executive board, led by Sheller, for guidance on what library positions to put forth to legislators for the upcoming session.

"If WLA opposes a state CIPA measure that is modeled on the federal one approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, I need to know why," the veteran legislative consultant said. "There is no longer any constitutional reason for us to oppose it."

Duncan cautioned that filtering and trustee-election bills waiting in the wings in Olympia will be advanced strenuously if legislators and the public perceive that library board members are going around the U.S. Congress and the Supreme Court to pursue their

own agendas. Some legislators, he added, could even call for a law changing the conditions under which library districts receive their funding from property taxes.

In stark terms, this means that the 2004 legislative session could be a contentious one for libraries and their supporters if the full political consequences of rejecting CIPA are not carefully weighed across the state. WLA's consultant said many citizens agree with the politicians who declare, "It's easier for children to see porn at a library than to walk into an adult bookstore."

These misconceptions are furthered, Duncan asserted, by the way many librarians and trustees communicate on social issues. "They make complicated, legalistic points while their opponents present sharp, crisp positions."

There is also widespread public doubt, he said, that libraries care as much for children and community values as do various crusading legislators and other political advocates. What is needed to combat these negative, mistaken perceptions?



Legislative Building, Olympia, February 2003

Bonnie Taylor is a trustee of the Mid-Columbia Library District. Mary Wise is catalog librarian at Central Washington University Library. Photos by Cameron Johnson.

King County Library System (KCLS) Director Ptacek observed that, in addition to great pressures they are bearing, libraries today are also under a lot more scrutiny than in the past. "Part of that," he said, "is due to our success and can be taken as a good sign. People are much more aware of libraries and what we are supposed to do."

Are KCLS libraries implementing the filtering requirements of CIPA? Their board of trustees voted "yes" after reviewing the act's details and considering community needs and staff recommendations. Ptacek said KCLS works hard to learn what residents in their many communities need and expect from their forty-two branches. A recent poll told them that 76 percent of their users support filtering. The library will use filtering software in the system to limit children's Internet access, but will still give adults a filtering or non-filtering choice.

Ptacek said that funding needs, as well as social and technological issues, make it mandatory for libraries, regardless of size, to develop strong connections with their communities, and also with people who go to serve in Olympia. Through continuous networking and marketing efforts, libraries may gain the support of civic-minded individuals even before they are elected to office, he noted. In King County there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of community groups that his staff, board, foundation and Friends will contact for the upcoming library bond election.

Serving the LPC since 1989, seven of those years as co-chair, Ptacek said the committee has "prevented bad things from happening to libraries" and has made it possible for libraries to maintain flexibility on intellectual freedom issues. He hypothesized that even if these were ideal times, with no economic downturns or great pressures on libraries, it would not make sense for the LPC to strive for direct state funding for libraries. It's his view that WLA's focus should be on initiatives to strengthen the relationships and cooperation among libraries. He suggested the best way to accomplish that would be to "beef up" the Washington State Library and make it a primary source for library development throughout the state.

Ptacek called for libraries and their supporters to be committed to WLA, as the association is the best way to gather and share ideas and pilot-programs among libraries. "It is in the interest of everybody to keep WLA strong. Down the line more issues will come and we will need an even stronger library association."

Wirt, who has been with Spokane County Library District for twenty-three years, said of WLA and the legislative committee, "What's too bad is that at the present time our energy is in a defensive posture." He would like to see the LPC be more proactive and tackle some positive funding programs for libraries, but the current political climate makes that extremely difficult.

"Speaking for myself, and not as a library director," Wirt said, "if half of the libraries in the state say, 'We don't have to comply with CIPA,' it will look like they are trying to get their way by stating a technical position on social issues."

Duncan agreed. He said the climate back in the late 1980s was a positive one for libraries, and WLA was able to advance the Learn

In Libraries pilot project. "Today," he noted, "our ability to promote library issues is compromised by social issues." As an example, he recalled that when the WLA two years ago supported state funding for databases, some legislators told him that they would actively work against any library funding until "you clean up your act."

What the legislators meant was clear: "Get rid of the pornography." These legislators may be on the margin, Duncan said, but there are enough of them to tip things against libraries. Many in the state see these legislators as "compassionate and caring" about children and families. Sometimes libraries are not perceived in this light.

WLA's Legislative Planning Committee is not expected to take a position on decisions individual Washington libraries make on complying with CIPA. The committee will, however, need to cope with the political consequences in the legislature.

The LPC members who were interviewed suggested a number of ways that library professionals, boards, and supporters could make a positive difference in these divisive issues. Public libraries must do a better job of communicating their positions, Duncan said. Far too often library spokespersons end up alienating people by talking in technical terms, he added.

Rogge, a Jefferson County Rural Library District trustee, said it is important that library boards keep a presence on the LPC, even though library directors dominate it. It is a basic responsibility for trustees to advocate for libraries, to encourage Friends and foundations in their community activities, and to see that library marketing and community relations policies are effective. She represented WLFETA on the LPC last year, including during the committee's weekly conference calls during the legislative session. For the upcoming session, Floyd Hodges, board chair of the Mid-Columbia Library, who shares Rogge's analysis of the importance of political awareness and participation by library trustees, will serve on LPC. He will report back to WLFETA and its members on legislative strategy.

All whom *Alki* interviewed agreed that WLA's legislative process is strengthened by grassroots activity, spelled with both a lower case *g* and an upper case *G* (for the WLA Grassroots! Interest Group). Sheller said he and Tom Moak, Mid-Columbia Library's interim director, formed Grassroots! in 1996 specifically to encourage library staff and supporters to participate in the political process. Grassroots! offers positive, easy strategies to build relationships with local and state government officials.

The LPC looks to Grassroots!, now chaired by Laura McCarty (lmccarty@wla.org), to help build needed political support throughout the state. (All WLA members involved with political activities maintain separate email addresses to keep those activities away from their work places, as required by law.)

Sheller requested that any WLA member with questions or suggestions on the legislative process or LPC should contact him at jsheller@wla.org or his co-chair Wirt at mwirt@sld.org. Sheller, as WLA's president, appoints all LPC members, who may serve for many years. Unlike other WLA interest groups, he explained, the LPC is most effective with experienced members who are ready to act quickly as bills work their way through the legislature. Duncan, Wirt and Ptacek concurred.

Wirt said a lot of the LPC work behind the scenes in Olympia is intense and sensitive. "The political process doesn't lend itself always to talking openly."

When each legislative session is over, there may



be satisfaction, or relief, in the library community on how the issues were resolved. WLA, with Duncan as its consultant, has never lost a battle in the state legislature. This record of success cannot be taken for granted, and from his comments, it is obvious that Duncan doesn't. His efforts on behalf of WLA and libraries go on all year, and for years he has asked libraries to enhance continually their community relations and political ties. Today it sounds like that request has a sense of urgency to it.

There is a call for libraries to increase involvement with community groups, and WLA's new president wants to increase contact with members about the actions of their legislative team. His first step is to add WLA's logo and Duncan's byline to the LPC's publication *The Olympia Report*.

Sheller said he plans to report regularly to the WLA membership about the association's legislative and political process. He also will encourage WLA members to become enthusiastic library advocates who deliver clear, focused messages.

Duncan pointed to one special challenge that also must be addressed—finding out "how to break through to the younger generation that thinks all its information needs can be met by Google."

A Short History of WLA Legislative Involvement

Concern for the impact that politics and government can make on libraries is nothing new for WLA. The state association, formed in 1931 from the larger Pacific Northwest Library Association, has a long record of legislative activities, according to documents unearthed by WLA Coordinator Gail Willis.

In *The First 25 Years of WLA* (Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1956), Helen Johns says:

The major effort of the members of the Washington Library Association has been directed toward securing adequate library legislation. A review of the legislative achievements of those years and the succeeding years clearly shows the crucial role WLA has played in promoting library development in Washington State.

Public disclosure statutes passed in 1973 forbade library associations to "expend monies to inform legislators and other public officials about library needs in the State of Washington." Library advocates responded by forming a new funding mechanism for library advocacy:

On April 18, 1980 the Library Political Action Committee was incorporated with the Secretary of State, Olympia, Washington. Its purpose is to collect and disburse funds for political contributions in support of libraries in Washington State. (1)

That board—though not a part of WLA—seems to have been a precursor to today's Legislative Planning Committee (LPC).

Laws have changed over the years, and WLA is today incorporated as a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization, which allows the association to engage in "unlimited" direct lobbying within the area of its mission, and also allows it to make expenditures for political campaign activities so long as the activities do not constitute the organization's primary activity.

He suggested that community and political support for libraries today hinges on librarians doing their jobs well, then creatively marketing to the public what they are doing.

As libraries step up their efforts to market their many services, including accessing the Internet and digital information, many people will be surprised, Duncan remarked, that libraries are still in the vanguard as sources for quick, pertinent research.

“We are desperately looking for ways to get people into the library,” Ptacek said, agreeing with Duncan. He said that Washington libraries and their staffs must try new projects and ideas to bring people in.


One new service he talked about at KCLS is *Choice Reads*, a display of highly requested new books in a well-maintained paperback collection. This service keeps patrons from having to wait six months to get their hands on a bestseller—and it gets them into the library regularly. The library system also is trying out cafes at several branches.

Ptacek explained that library staff and trustees must learn to think outside the box and conduct research on what people want

from their libraries. He said that libraries used to be measured solely by the quality of their service. Because of current issues, libraries are now also measured in election results.

Spokane County Library Director Wirt and his staff and trustees recently came up with a long-range plan that will make room in a tightly monitored budget for a marketing and community relations position. There will also be funding for more technology and patron information-literacy training to meet local needs and build on local loyalty to the library.

Duncan predicted that at some point in the future the “pendulum will swing again” to favor libraries.

To help the pendulum get there, it’s the consensus of the LPC members interviewed that each Washington library, whether large or small, has a role to play. If libraries individually become a lot more politically astute, and if they work together through WLA, no challenge will be too great. 



Far left: WLA legislative consultant Steve Duncan gives a presentation to the WLA board. **Middle:** Alki Editorial Committee members Mary Wise and Bonnie Taylor interview longtime Legislative Planning Committee member Bill Ptacek. **Near left:** WLA president John Sheller, LPC Co-chair Mike Wirt, and Duncan give their views on the 2004 legislative session.

(2) Because institutional dues cannot be used to fund legislative work, individual memberships are used to finance WLA’s legislative program.

Steve Duncan has worked as WLA’s legislative consultant for fifteen years. His firm, Duncan and Associates, specializes in government relations and public relations, assisting clients in developing strategies and action plans and developing grassroots support. He and the LPC work together to educate elected officials and other governmental decision makers, regardless of which political party is in power.

Duncan’s credentials include serving on the White House staff during the Carter administration. He was also an aide to former congressmen Norm Mineta (D-Calif.) and Tony Coelho (D-Calif.) and has directed statewide campaigns for congressional and presidential candidates (1984 Washington and Oregon Walter Mondale campaign). He has also headed up successful municipal campaigns to fund art museums, zoos, and low-income housing.

His assistant, Kathie Thompson, specializes in the operations of Washington state. Her background includes thirty years of service for a variety of state legislative committees. Some of the firm’s clients include Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center in Seattle, Durham Transportation, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Washington Community Mental Health Council, Seattle Public Schools, and Washington Public Utility Districts Association.

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COLLEEN BRAZIL AND JOHN SELLER Washington Library Elections, 2002-2003

Public Library Election Results

More detailed information is available to WLA personal or institutional members through the WLA office.

Library	Measure type	Date	Pass	Fail
Castle Rock	Excess levy	Nov 2002	X	
Endicott Branch (Whitman County)	Excess levy	Mar 2002	X	
Bleyhl Community (Grandview)	City Utility Tax	Feb 2003	X	
West Richland (Mid-Columbia)	Utility Tax Increase	Feb 2003	X	
King County Library System	Levy Lid Lift	Feb 2002	X	
Orcas Library District	Levy Lid Lift	Sep 2002		X
Sno-Isle Regional Library	Levy Lid Lift	Feb 2003		X
Ellensburg Public Library	Bond	Feb 2002	X	
King County Library System	Bond	Feb 2003		X
Benton City (Mid-Columbia)	Bond	Sep 2002		X
Wilkeson (Pierce County)	Annexation	Mar 2003	X	
Stevens County RLD	Dissolution	Nov 2002		X

When Initiative 747 passed in fall 2001, the WLA shared its members' concerns about the success of library elections. Prior to I-747, Washington libraries had gone to the voters for capital bonds for buildings, and to ask for utility tax levies or their extensions; or, occasionally, to stretch beyond their then-limit of a 6 percent annual budget increase. When I-747 lowered the annual budget increase to "a one percent increase over the highest of the district's three previous annual property tax levies," libraries could see they might need to go to the voters more often to allow their annual budgets to keep pace with our state's 3 percent average annual inflation rate.

Libraries were also concerned about the increased amount of money that would be diverted from operating budgets to election efforts. I-747 did not address the cost of placing an annual budget increase (levy lid lift) measure on the ballot for voters, but such costs are significant. For example, in 2002, King County Library System spent \$800,000 placing Proposition 1 on the February ballot and having it included in the King County voters pamphlet.

From the data available, it appears that Washington libraries have spent at least \$1,125,600 on levy lid lift elections since I-747 went into effect. This is money that had to be diverted from library storytimes, book purchasing, library programs, or other operating expenses.

The prospect of voters seeing more and more funding requests on every ballot is potentially detrimental to public library service in Washington. As more and more of the public agencies affected by I-747 seek voter approval for budget increases, libraries fear voters may feel overwhelmed by the number of items on each ballot.

To assist libraries in their planning and analysis of library elections, WLA would like to produce an annual record of library election wins and losses. This report is our first attempt. While the data in this report may not be inclusive of all libraries in the state, we think it reveals the mood of the voters for the past year.

Gathering the information for this report taught the authors two things. First, there is no single, searchable source for public library election results. Polling library directors was the most effective way to identify library election measures. To verify election results, it was necessary to search county auditor websites, then poll library staff for final confirmation of the result.

The second thing we learned about was the breadth of library funding options and the creativity of library staffs in meeting their patron needs. Bundling all of the library funding activity into one neat chart was not possible for this report, but we have attempted to record all of the voter-controlled public library funding measures that took place during this time period.

Colleen Brazil is the managing librarian at Kenmore Library, KCLS. John Sheller is manager of the 320th Street Branch of KCLS, and is the president of WLA.

Of the three levy lid lifts requested by libraries, one passed and two failed. Two of those measures passed or failed by clear margins—King County’s Proposition 1 passed by over 64 percent and Orcas Island Library District’s failed at nearly 63 percent. Sno-Isle Regional Library System’s Prop 1 suffered a narrow failure, 49 percent to 51 percent.

Of the three library bond measures on the ballot, one passed and two failed. Ellensburg Public Library’s measure passed with a whopping 70 percent “yes” vote, while Mid-Columbia Library District just missed passing their Benton City Library Capital Facility Area (LCFA) bond at nearly 59 percent. King County Library System’s 2003 bond fell well short of the 60 percent “yes” vote requirement, gaining just over 52 percent of the vote.

Two utility tax increases passed, for the Bleyhl Community Library (Grandview) and for the West Richland branch of the Mid-Columbia Library. West Richland’s measure had tremendous support, recording somewhere between 70 and 75 percent “yes” votes.

Similarly, Castle Rock Public Library has been supported by an excess levy that must be renewed each year by voters. In 2002 Castle Rock citizens gave their library’s Proposition 1 a 66 percent approval vote.

In the strongest showing in our survey, the Pierce County Rural Library District received an 81 percent “yes” vote for its annexation of the Town of Wilkeson. In another strong show of support for a library, over 65 percent of Stevens County voters said “no” to a measure that would have dissolved their library district.

It is interesting to note that the one bond and one levy that did pass did so very early in 2002. Later in 2002 and into 2003, the failures held steady. The continued economic slump, the war in Iraq, and uncertainty about the state’s budget have all been cited as factors contributing to a decline in voter support during this time period. During this same period, however, utility tax support measures fared well.

Many libraries receive local funding through utility taxes or by special city elections. These have been included in this collection of data and show that small, localized funding has been and continues to be supported.

We need to collect more data if we are to accurately detect trends our data only suggests. Continually tabulating such data as it becomes available will allow us to analyze such trends as geographical success or failures, will give us a better view of the actual costs to libraries for putting measures on the ballots, and will offer insight as to whether larger, more sweeping measures have more or less success than small localized elections.

I-747’s passage means that libraries must be canner election strategists. Analyzing elections can help libraries put together more effective electoral strategies, and help us to maximize our chances on election day.

Join WLA.

The Washington Library Association includes some of the best and brightest members of the Washington library community. In our numbers we have classified staff, trustees, Friends, librarians, techies, students, book-people, cybrarians, artistic types, literary types, creative types and even library directors! We come from college and university libraries, from public libraries, from special libraries, from school libraries. Some even come from no library at all.

What unites us is our care for the well-being of Washington libraries. WLA offers an annual conference, specialized training, legislative support for libraries, a journal, and a variety of leadership and creative opportunities. WLA makes a difference in how Washington libraries see themselves and their work. For more information visit our website at www.wla.org. Explore the site, and make our business your business. Download a membership application from www.wla.org/memberap.pdf.

WLA ... A resource for Washington libraries and the people that make them great!





THE SOLINUS PAGE

ANGELINA BENEDETTI

Falling Off My Pedestal: A Slippery Defense of Popular Taste

I was having dinner with a librarian friend of mine the other night. Over a plate of hot wings, we compared the most recent books we had read. Mine was a science fiction mass-market paperback. Hers was a biography of Melvil Dewey, *The Irrepressible Reformer* by Wayne Wiegand (ALA, 1996). She said that the book talked about the controversies plaguing librarians in Dewey's time. Then, as now, librarians agonized over whether to fill their shelves with the materials their patrons *wanted*, those that fed popular interest—or the materials they *needed*, those that were good for them.

As a mass-market-reading, hot-wing-serving kind of gal, you can imagine which side of *that* fence I sit on.

Two-and-a-half years ago, I was hired as the selector of young adult materials for King County Library System. As such, I champion popular young adult materials, and also graphic novels, comic books, animé, mass-market fiction, bestsellers, and now eBooks, causing one of my colleagues to rename me the Coordinator of Dubious Collections. Point taken. While I recognize the need to build a quality collection, I advocate for relevancy above all other values. We cannot be all things to all patrons, but I am more likely to buy another copy of the book I saw advertised in *Teen People* over one earning a starred review in *SLJ*.

I was not always such a popular materials enthusiast. A comparative literature major in college, I started reading *The New York Times Book Review* at the tender age of fifteen. My junior high librarian rolled her eyes at my precocious tastes, suggesting I consider re-reading those John Irving books when I got to be thirty. Anyone who knew me in high school would not be surprised that I am the first person in my graduating class quoted in *The New York Times*. What they could not have predicted is that the subject of my *Times*

quote was not some lofty literary tome, but rather *Gossip Girl*, a fabulously trashy YA series. Further, my quote referenced two brand names, an HBO series, Judy Blume, and hot waxing.

I could not have been prouder.

The veneer of literary taste that I polished in my youth has worn away. Underneath, I found, beats a pop heart. If I am honest with myself, I admit the warning signs were there all along. There were the cartoons, after all. My first crush was the reckless Derek Wildstar on the animé series *Star Blazers*. My blood went fizzy reading Alan Moore's graphic novel *Watchmen* for the first time in high school. In college, I snuck my boyfriend's comics between the covers of Kierkegaard and Foucault.

I was in denial through most of library school. Young adult literature was in the curriculum, after all. I immersed myself in a literature that was completely new to me. The only bona fide teen book I could remember reading as a teen was Judy Blume's *Forever*, a rite of passage for all of us dying to know about *it*. Now I was encouraged to read *Sweet Valley High*. I could go to the latest Cineplex splatter fest and call it a "user study." Then came the fateful night, after finals, that I picked up my first paperback romance, read it, and started another one. I fell off my literary pedestal and landed in a sea of heaving bosoms and six-pack abs. Gladly. In two years'

Right: Library readers represent a variety of interests. Selectors must seek balance.



Angelina Benedetti is the young adult selector with King County Library System.

time I had gone from reading the *Aeneid* in Latin to being able to tell you the difference between a Harlequin, a Silhouette, and “the good stuff.” *It*, indeed.

I wondered if my high school chemistry teacher had predicted this when he loaned me his Tom Lehrer albums. He said that it was because he saw how much I loved “The Periodic Table,” sung to Gilbert and Sullivan’s “I Am the Very Model of a Modern Major General.” What ended up sticking, from Lehrer, was “Smut.” “Smut! / Give me smut and nothing but / A dirty novel I can’t shut / If it’s uncut... and unsubt-tle.”

Does my love of the low-down and the lowbrow impact my book selection? I would like to think that I am still as capable as anyone of getting a kick out of *Kirkus*, but when I first came to my job, I wrote myself off the routing list for our department’s review magazines. I asked instead if I could have a subscription to *Entertainment Weekly*. I reasoned that it was important to know who was on the cover of the new edition of a classic novel, and who had bought the film rights to what bestseller. This week’s line-up on the WB is next week’s new crop of teen series, guaranteed. Where once I only browsed the teen collections at Elliott Bay and Powell’s, I now check out the offerings at Wal-Mart and Target.

In this edition of the *Alki*, we face thorny issues, the slippery slopes that plague us despite our best intentions. Albert Einstein warns us that the “road to perdition has ever been accompanied by lip service to an ideal.” His reasoning suggests that whatever our ideals, we must strive for balance. Whether, like me, you see no problem with giving up shelf space to Mary Kate and Ashley, or if you would instead rather spend your budget on only the highest quality literature, we must find a middle ground. If anything, accepting my personal biases leads me to listen to *more* NPR, not less. I know that I will learn more from it than when I indulge in the morning musings of Howard Stern. I have even started reading the *Times* book reviews again.

I love hot wings and chocolate malteds, but if I want to live to a ripe old age I have to give over refrigerator space to soy and spelt. If our collections are to be relevant to the folks we serve, we must strive to respect, and collect, materials that serve tastes not our own. Or, as Tom Lehrer once sang, “Smut, it can be said, is in the mind of the beholder.”

In the July 2003 *Alki*, we could not identify one of these REFORMISTAS. Pictured at the conference meet and greet in Yakima, they are from left: Elena Perez of Yakima Valley Regional Library, Josephina Martinez of the Othello branch of Mid-Columbia Library, Jose Garcia of Mid-Columbia Library, and Darlene Weber of Sno-Isle Regional Library, President of Northwest REFORMA. *Alki* regrets the omission.



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. 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.



I'd Rather Be Reading

MARGE BODRE

Biographies, Autobiographies, and Memoirs

Reading biographies and memoirs is a wonderful way to vicariously experience interesting lives and interesting times. Here are a few of these absorbing works I've enjoyed recently and want to share with you.

A biography can carefully illuminate a period of history, as does Elizabeth Varon's *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy* (2003). Behind the catchy title is a well-researched story of conflicting political and moral beliefs, and of danger and intrigue in a southern city during the Civil War. Born into a prominent Richmond, Virginia family, intelligent and independent Elizabeth Van Lew emulated at an early age her mother's charitable activities and became increasingly aware of the horrors of slavery. The start of the Civil War served to solidify her opposition to slavery and her allegiance to the republic. What began with visits and kindness to suffering Union prisoners, evolved into Elizabeth's supervision of a spy network of Union supporters, African-American and white, who funneled valuable information to Union generals. Although Van Lew was suspected by Confederate officials, she was kept safe by her composure in leading a double life, and by the Confederates' prejudice—the belief that a spinster woman of breeding and wealth could not possibly be a spy. The end of the war brought appreciation from the federal government but it also brought years of isolation and hardship as Van Lew was shunned for the rest of her life by the residents of Richmond. Richmond's pre-war prosperity and its wartime chaos are recreated in this story of men and women, African-American and white, who summoned the courage to make a difference.

In *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey* (1999), a personal view of more recent history is provided by Leila Ahmed in her memoir of a journey from Egypt to England, where she earned a doctorate from Cambridge, and then to the United States, where she earned a professorship at Harvard Divinity School. Ahmed's account begins with her birth into a prominent Cairo family that

valued European education and customs. In her early schooling at Cairo's English School during the period when Egypt was a British protectorate, she encountered subtle discrimination for not being Christian and not being sufficiently European. Once British presence gave way to the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser and a surge of Arab nationalism, she found that she was not considered sufficiently Arab. She recounts her determination to go to England for a Cambridge education after her family's fortunes took a turn for the worse under Nasser's government. Once there, she was sometimes baited in conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and treated almost as if she were personally responsible. Ahmed has definite views that are thought-provoking. She questions Egypt's identity as an Arab country, contrasts a Muslim woman's Islamic faith with a man's, examines the nurturing role of the harem and the woman's world of her extended family, and admits her initial disappointment with American feminism. Hers is a compelling account of a woman with a global perspective struggling to learn, to teach, and to live.



A first-hand account of recent events and issues can give us an understanding far beyond what we might grasp from media reports. In her memoir *A Storyteller's Daughter* (2003), British-born author Saira Shah relates her personal quest to understand Afghanistan and its people after a childhood spent listening to her Afghan father tell stories of his homeland and recite the poems of Rumi over plates of *pilau*, a traditional Afghan dish. She wants to experience the country and the people for herself, and as a journalist crosses the Pakistan border to witness the Soviet occupation and later the Taliban rule. During one excursion, Shah films life with the Taliban with a camera hidden under her *burqa*, and CNN turns the film into a documentary, *Beneath the Veil*. Her story is in part an adventure tale: climbing across the Hindu Kush while battling the cold, the high altitude, and hunger, and taking part in the dangerous Afghan sport *buzkashi*, which is somewhat akin to polo, except it uses a headless

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goat carcass as the ball. The influence of her English upbringing on her Afghan heritage—and a brush with an arranged marriage—leave her trying to reconcile the Western and Eastern parts of herself, and to reconcile her father's stories with what she has actually seen and experienced.

In *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* (2003), Azar Nafisi brings us inside the Islamic Republic of Iran, where we feel the pain and desperation of life under a repressive, arbitrary regime in which physical punishment and imprisonment are a daily threat for both men and women. During the time of the Iran-Iraq war, literature becomes Nafisi's salvation. As Tehran is bombed she reads *Daisy Miller*, *Madame Bovary*, *Tom Jones*, and *Pride and Prejudice* amid the sounds of air raid sirens and explosions. When she leaves university teaching after the administration tries to control her curriculum, she feels isolated and without identity. As much for herself as for her students, she forms a reading group with seven of her former students—women she can trust. They meet weekly, in secret, for discussions of forbidden works of Persian and Western literature including Nabokov's *Lolita*. The discussions lead to very personal reflections and to some insights into the group members' own lives. Some of Nafisi's observations may resonate with American readers today—in particular, her descriptions of the government's insistence that criticism is unpatriotic and a danger to national security, and of government restrictions on literature and film.

The possibilities suggested by someone else's life decisions can also be intriguing. Leona Rostenberg and Madeleine Stern did not take the traditional path of women of their time—marriage and family—but chose instead to focus on research, writing, and rare books throughout their adult lives. In *Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion* (1997), they describe a friendship that begins during their university days and continues as companionship and a professional partnership. Sparking each other's intellectual curiosity and supporting each other's research, they write and edit forty-two books between them, including one that unmask Louisa May Alcott as the author of thrillers. Their travels to the great rare book dealers and libraries of Europe (to seek out treasures to sell to librarians and collectors) are pure pleasure for them and make their antiquarian book business a brilliant success. Their story is a testament to the power and joy of friendship.

While reading Alexandra Fuller's *Don't Let's Go To the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood* (2001), one can't help but think about the possibilities of a life lived without many conveniences and material possessions. Fuller's is the story of a childhood spent in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi as the daughter of an English couple who refuse to live in a conventional way. Fuller makes you feel that she is sharing confidences with you, so personal is the information that she communicates. In a very matter-of-fact, unblinking style she relates her parents' abuse of alcohol, their racist attitudes, her mother's mental problems, and the family's lack of financial security. While conveying her love of Africa and its beauty, she also tells some hair-raising stories: Her parents sleeping with guns at the ready during a political uprising, her mother killing a cobra in the kitchen with an Uzi, learning to shoot a gun herself at an early age, and finding scorpions in the bathroom. She grew up appreciating the landscape, the wildlife,

Book Titles:

Varon, Elizabeth. *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, A Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy*.
Ahmed, Leila. *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America—A Woman's Journey*.
Shah, Saira. *A Storyteller's Daughter*.
Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*.
Rostenberg, Leona, and Madeleine Stern. *Old Books, Rare Friends: Two Literary Sleuths and Their Shared Passion*.
Fuller, Alexandra. *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight: An African Childhood*.
Price, David. *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation*.
McBride, James. *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*.

the climate, and the sounds of Africa and received an excellent education in and out of the classroom.

Author David Price brings history alive with the story of the brave souls who endured extreme hardship to establish the Jamestown colony in *Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas, and the Heart of a New Nation* (2003), an adventure and survival tale to rival Lewis and Clark's. It is the story of Captain John Smith, an Englishman of humble beginnings who became a soldier well-equipped for such an undertaking, and of Pocahontas—the daughter of the chief of the Powhatan tribe—who rendered Smith invaluable assistance. It is also the story of the group dynamics of the colonists as they face their fears, hunger and backbreaking work, and what happens when two very different cultures collide—the English and the Native American—and struggle to understand each other. Price uses primary materials to counter myths and legends that have grown up around this period, and presents us with a very accessible history sprinkled with flashes of dry humor throughout.

Some biographies are absolutely inspirational. In James McBride's *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother* (1996), we learn of the courage of McBride's mother, a woman who refuses to let her life be limited by poverty, a harsh upbringing, racism, or the expectations of others. Ruth McBride-Jordan begins life as the daughter of a failed rabbi in rural Virginia, moves to New York, marries an African-American man, establishes a Baptist church in her Brooklyn community, and raises twelve successful children who remain close to her, and to each other, into adulthood. The author remembers his mother taking him and his siblings to every free cultural activity in the city of New York, maintaining a keen interest in the education of each child, and finding a way for them to attend the best public schools in the city. This remarkable story is made even more powerful by McBride's alternating his mother's words with his own in successive chapters.

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