Partnerships: We Are Not Alone

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“Partnerships: We Are Not Alone”—the theme of the 2005 WLA conference—is an apt description of our association. As WLA members, we are not alone: We are part of a network of libraries, library workers, and library advocates, all dedicated to providing the most effective service to Washington library clients and improving our ability to do so. We are partners in supporting libraries and each other, and in working with other organizations on shared issues.

Two years ago, I was honored to be elected vice president of our small-but-mighty state library association. Since then, I’ve had the chance to see the WLA network of partnerships in action. I’ve watched in admiration as WLA members created our budget, redesigned our website, produced our journal, lobbied our legislators, delivered terrific continuing education events, and organized some great parties. I’ve seen WLA members respond valiantly and hopefully to significant challenges to providing library service.

Building partnerships—within the Washington library community, with our clients and community leaders—and extending and deepening these partnerships will be the theme of my presidency. During the next two years I hope to work with all of you on these simple, difficult goals:

• Continue to focus the activities of the association on the needs of WLA members and Washington libraries: for professional development, networking, community advocacy, and legislative support.

• Do our best to reach out to all parts of the Washington library community—including, among others, the WALE community, academic library employees, and others among our membership who are underrepresented in the association.

• Increase opportunities for members to share knowledge and experiences through regional events, listservs, blogs, and interest groups.

• Expand our array of continuing-education offerings, and explore new options for delivery.

• Identify the most effective methods of conducting association business; and strive to utilize members’ time, talents, and money in productive, satisfying, and sustainable ways.

• Honor our members and others in the Washington library community who sustain and develop library services, serve the association and its members, defend intellectual freedom, and promote a library-friendly climate in our state.

Thanks, Conference Contributors

To make a start on that last bullet: I would like to thank everyone who helped make the 2005 annual conference a success. Mike Wirt, 2005 conference coordinator, ran a remarkably tight ship under challenging local circumstances. Each of the other members of the conference committee—Claudia Parkins, programs; Mary Stillwell Power, pre-conferences; Robert Roose, local arrangements; Beth Gillespie and Eva Silverstone, communications; Priscilla Ice, treasurer; Ellen Miller, registrar; Lynn Red, exhibits; and Bruce Ziegman, corporate contributions—added essential skills to ensure that the event was well-organized, adequately funded, professionally stimulating, and fun. Interest group chairs submitted varied and challenging program requests. John Sheller, outgoing WLA president, supplied exemplary leadership, good humor, and the ability to move meetings along. Susan Madden, assisted by stalwarts of the WLA Scholarship Committee, worked throughout the conference at her jewelry booth. In addition to giving the shoppers among us a lot of enjoyment (I love my new beads!), Susan raised a substantial contribution toward graduate-school and conference scholarships. And many other members suggested topics, contacted presenters, provided hospitality and transportation, gave book-talks, asked stimulating questions, offered thoughtful responses, and more. Thank you all.

We’re a diverse group, and when we work together—as partners who bring varied expertise to the table, who play different roles in our libraries and our association, but who share goals and values—we can create helpful and supportive events and spur positive change. I am excited to have the opportunity to work with all of you for the benefit of Washington libraries. I look forward to hearing the thoughts and concerns of library workers, supporters, and clients. Please send them.

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CAMERON A. JOHNSON

Alki Housekeeping

Our WLA conference issue aims to extend the themes introduced in the Spokane conference sessions. Thanks to everyone who submitted articles and photographs. You gave me more than I could use, a good situation for any editor to be in.


Carla McLean’s term as chair of the Alki Committee ends in September, and Mary Wise of Central Washington University Library has agreed to succeed her in that post. Mary is an experienced member of the committee and has been a frequent contributor of photographs and articles, so the committee will be in very good hands. Many thanks to Carla for all the time and effort she has given on behalf of Alki and WLA.

Other big Alki news is that the WLA board has approved an assistant editor, Margaret Thomas of the Washington State University Energy Library in Olympia. Margaret, currently an Alki Committee member, is a fine writer and editor and will capably carry on the Alki tradition. She will serve as assistant editor for one year, learning how we’ve done things, and will take over as editor beginning with the December 2006 issue.

We also have a new intern, Erin Krake from Roslyn Library. Our former intern Linda Johns was named editor of YALS: Young Adult Library Services, the publication of the Young Adult Library Services Association, a division of ALA. We congratulate her and wish her luck.

Debunking myths is the first step in making the case that libraries matter, and matter a lot. Taking on that task at WLA's conference were myth debunkers and partnership promoters Ellen Newberg, Kitsap Regional Library (KRL) director, and Sari Perlow, KRL trustee.

The first myth they set out to debunk is that library leaders needn’t adopt innovative business strategies for their libraries. Perlow put it this way: “We need to show a profit—not in money, but in services.” The KRL trustee said that, like business owners, library boards and staff need to know who they are and what they offer. She made it clear that “visibility,” “advocacy,” and “partnerships” are, for library supporters, interchangeable words.

When Perlow asked program attendees if they could recite their library’s mission statement, only a few in the packed room spoke up. “If you can’t say it,” Perlow recommended, “you better go back and look at it.” She impressed upon them that mission statements be direct, simple, and easy to understand, thus debunking another myth—that a guiding principle needs to be both broad and detailed. Her own library board is considering a new mission statement brought forth at a recent retreat. It’s only nine words long, and Perlow much prefers it: “Kitsap Library opens the doors of knowledge to everyone.” Compare that with the current, more typical, mission: “Kitsap Regional Library serves the community as a center for life-long learning and a steward of access to stories, information, and knowledge.”

Quite a difference, right? But does the short one say enough? The board will need to decide that question, but for sure, the shorter statement would be far easier to remember. And that leads to something else the Kitsap trustee strongly recommended: Boards and library staffs should not only be able to recite their mission statement, but should use it as a pilot for partnering and advocacy.

Both of the KRL speakers made it clear that there also exists in libraryland a two-headed mythic monster which needs to be driven out. One head says that marketing is a waste of time. The other says that public libraries don’t need a marketing plan. Newberg indicated both myths harm libraries. “Our marketing person is worth her weight in gold,” she said. Unless a library has a marketing plan, she added, not many in the community will know what that library offers.

In the KRL director’s view, library directors are the origin of another marketing myth, specifically, that directors don’t need to advocate actively in the community. But library administrators can no longer take for granted that elected officials or community leaders know what’s available at libraries, Newberg said. In contrast with the low-key, isolationist ’90s, she explained, libraries today need to show their communities that library service is critical.

The two KRL presenters then asked about library “brags”—those services that make each library a special community place. Perlow suggested that trustees and library staffers write down at least ten brags about their library, and keep the list handy. You never know when a bragging opportunity will come along, she explained. She told about a recent personal experience at a business workshop. While in various sessions, she said often and clearly, “I learned that at the library.” She repeated the phrase so often and so enthusiastically that the others in the workshop began to say it with her. Whether or not they valued library services when their training began, they certainly valued them by the time it was over.

Newberg said that partnerships play an important role in visibility and advocacy. “Kitsap Regional Library’s resources, programs, and services are greatly enhanced, thanks to our many and varied community collaborations.” Newberg believes that visibility and partnerships are vital to assure the financial health of Kitsap’s libraries, and she backs up this belief with words and actions.

Newberg singled out Initiative 747, with its one percent cap on property tax increases, as both a danger to libraries and as an impetus to community involvement. “Library people need to be where decisions are made,” she said. One way Newberg stays involved is by serving on an intergovernmental council. She and the KRL Board of Trustees also encourage library staff to cultivate joint ventures out in the community. Newberg cautioned, however, that not all joint ventures are beneficial. Libraries always should ask what the potential downsides are and be ready to evaluate the success of all collaborations. “Partnering can get out of hand,” she said. “We need to discipline ourselves.”

A few of Kitsap’s successful alliances are with the Bremerton Opera Preview Group, local authors,
Collaborative Summer Library Program, and the popular Heronswood Nursery. Many partnership agreements are informal, Newberg said; but if money is exchanged, the agreement should be put on paper. She also advised that partnerships be made an integral part of strategic planning. The library director’s written guidelines for partnering include these elements:

- Potential partners are a good match for the library and enhance its image and visibility.
- The partnership creates synergy not otherwise possible.
- There is sufficient public and library staff support for the partnership.
- The board of trustees approves the alliance and the Friends and library foundation support it.
- Partnering organizations have funding, good track records, and staff with needed expertise.
- The partnership is in the best interests of all.

Such collaborations are not the only staff involvement that Newberg encourages. She urges all branch managers to be out in the community, to join “something” and be more engaged beyond the walls of the library. She named United Way and other civic groups such as Rotary as places to make contacts and build relationships. The library pays membership dues and reimburses the cost of required meals.

For libraries that are considering adding or expanding marketing plans, Newberg proposed that libraries borrow ideas from each other—sharing, copying, building on what other libraries are doing. “We’d be happy to talk to you,” she said. “We’re here to help.”

People attending the session then suggested that WLA should have more workshops on two challenging problems facing many of our libraries: retaining public tax support and soliciting private contributions.

Perlow, a community activist and major (retired) in the Marine Corps Reserve, proposed that a good way to learn how to raise money is to get involved in a political campaign. She also talked about the importance of getting community members and leaders into the library.

Whether or not it’s called a myth, there is a public perception that coffee and library books don’t mix, she noted with a smile. Maybe that’s why, she added, that many friends and businesspeople choose to meet at Starbucks rather than at the library. “For some, coffee is a big issue,” she said. “Personally, I think coffee’s great in the library.” She also mentioned as a myth the belief that library logos are a waste of time and effort to produce. In her opinion, they’re not a waste if the logos are good ones. Library logos and library newsletters help people remember the library, gaining the library much-needed financial support and more users. “Take advantage of every situation to gain visibility and support,” she urged. “As Donald Trump says, there’s never too much exposure.”

If the time comes when KRL needs to go to the public for a levy lift to gain funding, the library can call on its long list of community partners to swell support for this very visible library system. Meanwhile, all the efforts to be visible and valued are paying off every day for county residents. Kitsap Regional Library plans to keep it that way.

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**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 Committee. 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 committee 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 to 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, and 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.
BRIAN SONEDA

Diversity: Try Standing in Their Shoes

As befits a session dealing with the diversity of the public that libraries serve, the seven presenters of the pre-conference session “One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Working with Diverse Patrons” were themselves a diverse bunch. They were diverse in who they work for (public libraries, as well as two-year and four-year degree colleges), who they predominantly work with (young adults, English-as-a-second-language students, college students, or educators), and in who they are (including ethnicity, culture, and hair-color choice). While each of the presenters had something of value to share with the audience, I want to share my responses to three of them.

Sayumi Irey, who teaches English-as-a-second-language (ESL) at Bellevue Community College, was one of two who spoke to the topic of serving ESL students. After eliciting from the audience some classic ESL myths (such as, “English is superior to any other language” and, “If you speak really loudly and really slowly, people who understand no English will understand you”), Irey shared her observations about the internal diversity in the ESL world. To paraphrase what I think was one of her main points: How similar are agricultural worker from Slovakia, who is functionally literate in no languages, to a university professor from Uruguay fluent in six languages, not one of which is English? Irey did a good job of answering the question, “How diverse is diversity?” Answer: very diverse, up to and including the diversity among individuals. No one said serving diverse patrons was going to be easy.

An idea Irey introduced about the commonly-used ESL tool of students’ writing journals (which now seems totally obvious but had not occurred to me before hearing Irey speak) was that “pre-teaching is really important.” By “pre-teaching,” Irey meant providing ESL students with baseline rules and expectations about things like proper grammar and syntax before assigning journal writing. That way, ESL students avoid ingraining bad grammar habits as they learn to write, habits that might be hard to break later on. “A good start makes for a smoother path,” I thought to myself as I heard Irey talk about pre-teaching.

The most electric moment in the pre-conference came courtesy of Martha Savage, an ESL instructor at Gonzaga University. In her segment, Savage asked us to rate ourselves on our fluency with an “adult-learned” second language. I was sitting next to Ken Gollersrud, a young-adult (YA) librarian with Seattle Public Library, and we both self-rated ourselves as having enough of a second language (in both our cases, it was Spanish) to carry on a halting conversation on the streets of a foreign town where no English is spoken. We stood in this group at the speaker’s request.

At random, Savage asked Gollersrud to tell us about himself in Spanish. He did so briefly. Savage immediately asked him to tell us a little more. Gollersrud hesitated and then opened his mouth. “Okay, stop,” said Savage and proceeded to use Gollersrud’s slight display of being flustered as a teaching tool. “Put yourselves in the shoes of a visitor to the library who has some English, but is a little apprehensive about being there.”

Savage’s point was that whatever language ability you have might very well fail you under pressure. Let the record show that Gollersrud certainly did not choke, and in fact did far better than I would have done had I been asked to respond. But Savage’s point was well-taken. It is hard to communicate when you don’t have a comfortable command of a language, especially in tense situations, something we should all keep in mind when communicating with ESL learners. (Let the record also show that if this was the pre-conference’s electric moment for me, it must have been really special for Ken Gollersrud.)

Lisa Oldoski, the YA librarian from Puyallup Public Library, was the final speaker. She noted that she was the only full-time YA librarian (not a children’s or adult-services librarian devoting some time to YA service) in Washington state south of King County. “So, I’m the only young-adult librarian in the whole bottom part of the state!” she emphatically declared, adding the equally emphatic question, “Why?”

Oldoski posed a number of plausible reasons, including the influence of administration types who cost out the benefit of marketing to a demographic that traditionally does not use public libraries, and who come to the conclusion that serving it is just not worth the time and effort. She also noted that sometimes your community is the barrier to serving teens.” Don’t we all have some customers in our library who look at teens and automatically label them as “trouble” or “rowdy” or worse? Don’t some of these customers make their opinions very clear to staff? Aren’t these opinions often along the lines of, “What? You want
to attract these…these…people??!! Shouldn’t you be driving them away??!!”

How do you counteract this negative outlook? If you are Lisa Oldoski, you do this by being relentlessly positive and energetic. You do this by not taking “no” for an (acceptable) answer. You do this by experimenting and being willing to make mistakes. You do this by directly asking the target audience what they think their library should do for young adults. And, she is the first to admit, you do this by getting lucky in having the support of library administration and staff.

How does Oldoski run a successful YA summer reading program with a budget of $1,000? (That’s $1,000 for all YA programs, not just the summer reading program.) By doing a lot of what Oldoski calls “begging” from organizations and businesses. “Some businesses have given us some very useful prizes just so they would get me to stop whining loudly in their stores,” she quipped.

Most importantly, how do you get the young adults to participate? Some of the answers are the same ones we get at every marketing session we have attended: partner, network, survey the target audience, deliver on promises. But in Oldoski’s case, you get the feeling that energy is the key. Energy to keep going and do whatever it takes to get and keep young adults in your library. Energy to ask and actually get the director and staff to pay off on this challenge: If the participants in Puyallup’s YA summer reading program read a total of at least 150,000 pages over the summer, everyone who works for the library will dress in Goth fashion. (When the teens did in fact reach this reading goal, Oldoski, who ordinarily dresses in an “interesting” fashion, did not dress in Goth, as no one would have noticed—she dressed in the stereotypical spinster-with-hair-in-a-bun librarian instead.)

Finally, Oldoski told us, “Don’t get sad” when some of your programs don’t draw well, or if the one kid you really wanted to reach turns out to be beyond reach. “You’ll never reach some,” she said. But we could all tell how much fulfillment she has had already in her young career in reaching the ones she has drawn into the library habit.

To bring this all together: Reaching people—be they teens, ESL students, adult learners, kids, seniors, or others—is what librarianship is all about. That’s what I learned at “One Size Doesn’t Fit All: Working with Diverse Patrons.”
In the winter of 1925, a diphtheria outbreak in Nome, Alaska, precipitated events that today are commemorated by the Iditarod sled-dog race. At the CAYAS Breakfast, author Robert Blake took his audience on a virtual trip to Alaska, tracing the unlikely odyssey of a runt dog that became a sled-dog legend when he led a dog team on the first and longest leg (260 miles) of the “Great Race of Mercy” (or the “Serum Run”) from Nenana to Nome, carrying the serum that would halt the outbreak.

Blake’s breakfast talk focused on his own odyssey in doing research for the 2002 picture book Togo, winner of the Washington State Children’s Choice Award, Texas Bluebonnet Award, and Great Lakes Great Books Award for 2004.

The driver of Togo’s team was the already well-known musher Leonhard Seppala. Blake spent weeks traveling in Alaska, retracing the route that Seppala took with his dog team in 1925. Blake visited all the same stops and enjoyed talking with the locals. He found the best sources of information to be young children and the elderly. And everywhere he went, he sketched. He talked about how, as an artist, he feels a connection with his subjects through drawing. “Drawings convey more meaning than photographs,” he said. His slide show proved his point. Sketches of local children, the plane, the pilot who flew him in and out of remote villages—all of these gave an impressive feeling of immediacy.

Although Balto is the dog who received a hero’s welcome and was honored with a statue of a sled dog in New York’s Central Park, his time as lead dog on the trip (the final fifty-three miles) was much shorter than Togo’s. While much has been written about Balto, Togo received little credit for his crucial contribution. Blake was determined to find out all he could about Togo. He was fortunate to find an archivist in New York who felt as much passion for Togo’s story as Blake did and helped him secure a priceless audio tape of Seppala talking about what Togo meant to him.

Blake proved to be as good a storyteller in person as in his books. His story about an afternoon at the Solomon Roadhouse had all the elements of a first-class ghost story (spooky rooms, a grave marker, a loud thump in an empty building) and left at least some of us with goosebumps. Watching his slides and listening to his story, the audience felt like children must when listening to a picture book—what a joy for a group of librarians!

Blake won the audience over with his high energy and quirky sense of humor. The award-winning author and illustrator showed us some of his own first-grade art, just to prove he was no child prodigy.
And after a few minutes of his goofiness, it was no stretch to imagine him as a precocious second grader who often found himself in trouble for clowning around in school. He credits his second-grade teacher for putting him on the right track by giving him a sketchbook and telling him to “write it down,” meaning his drawings and elaborate stories.

Determination is the theme of Blake’s story about Togo, a small sickly puppy who was never expected to become a sled dog, much less the lead dog. But the dog knew what was inside himself and never gave up his drive to be a part of the team. Furthermore, he was able to accept his place “in the middle,” eschewing the hero’s role. Like Togo’s, Blake’s own story was one of determination as he spent many months getting the story right and honoring the dog who gave his all to fulfill his life’s mission.

As is often the case, the story behind the story is every bit as interesting as the story’s subject. As he was writing it, the author searched for the elusive heart of the story. He could feel it but found he was unable to express it. But on his trip to Alaska he experienced an epiphany: “My story is about the guy in the middle. The guy who does all the work, the guy who does what he’s got to do because he simply knows he has to do it—not for the end result. The being—dog or man or whatever—that is above all that. Not the biggest, not the strongest, but the most determined. The one slugging it out every day. The true hero. Togo. You. Me.”

Blake finished by telling us about the special bond between Seppala and Togo. After Togo was forced to retire to the care of a woman living on the East Coast, Seppala flew out for a visit when he heard Togo was ailing. The dog died the day after Seppala arrived. By the time Blake’s presentation was over there were very few dry eyes in the house. Thank you, Robert Blake, for reminding us of the hard work and dedication that goes into writing a good book, and for giving us the honor of sharing it with those we serve.

CAYAS Visionary Award Winner Sally Grant

One of the first orders of business at the CAYAS Breakfast at the WLA conference was the presentation of the CAYAS Visionary Award to Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) teen librarian Sally Grant. WCLS Director Joan Airoldi, who nominated her, described how Grant volunteered back in 1985 to take on teen programming. Grant’s continued efforts over the years have led to some 600 teens being involved in last year’s summer reading program. Her booktalks are so well-known that some secondary schools actually pay for bus trips to the library. Grant’s professional involvement also sets her apart; she is involved not only in WLA but also in the Washington Young Adult Review Group (WASHYARG) and the Washington Coalition Against Censorship, among others. WLA Awards Committee chair Jan Walsh made the presentation.

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, administrators, 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 organizes 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, or join online at www.wla.org/registration.html.

WLA: Building partnerships in the Washington library community.
CARLA MCLEAN

The Not-So-Odd Couple: Libraries and Unions

Organized at the 2004 WLA conference, the Interest Group for Library Unions (IGLU) sponsored its first-ever conference session, “The Not-So-Odd Couple: Libraries and Unions,” at the 2005 WLA conference. A panel of librarians from three unionized libraries gave an overview of Washington library unions (aka bargaining units or “locals”) and the issues that their own unions address. Also on the panel was an organizer from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which represents most of the organized public library workers in the state of Washington.

IGLU is “a forum to explore the role of both active and developing unions of library workers.” The union organizer on the panel, Bill Keenan, said that Washington has a very progressive public employee collective bargaining statute (in Idaho, for example, workers still don’t have collective bargaining rights and only teachers and firefighters are unionized). Washington’s law was passed in 1966. One weakness in the law, according to Keenan, is that it allows employers in the public sector to use public funds to discourage organizing drives but does not allow union members to use work time to organize. He said that California law forbids both employers and unions from using public funds for such purposes, creating a level playing field for union organizing.

Keenan also said that, contrary to commonly-held conceptions, wages and benefits are not the primary issues brought forward in the vast majority of public employee organizing drives. Employees desiring a union instead want: 1) to gain an effective voice in the workplace, 2) to be treated with dignity and respect and be proud of their work, and 3) to create a better work environment.

Why Belong?

Panelist Cameron Johnson is a library union steward (elected representative) at Everett Public Library. He informed us that Albert Einstein, Time magazine’s “Person of the Century,” was not only a visionary scientist, philosopher, and teacher but also a union member who in 1938 helped found the Princeton Federation of Teachers Local 552.

Johnson argued that the main benefit of unions is that they empower the workforce by giving employees a voice in making policy at work. This comes at a price, however, in that unions demand hard work for the union from a core of committed union members in the workplace, backed by broad support from the rest of those who belong to the union.

How does a union give us a voice? Johnson said that, by establishing and enforcing union procedures based on the doctrines of “just cause” and “due process,” unions protect their members’ ability to speak out at work. In this context, “just cause” means that punishment cannot be imposed arbitrarily but must come as a consequence of demonstrable, work-related actions; and “due process” means that disciplinary actions must be handled uniformly, fairly, and transparently. Unions are important for library workers because, without union protection, they are employed “at will” and have only those rights at work that are bestowed by their employer.

Panelist Cher Ravagni, a long-time union officer at Seattle Public Library (SPL), described our well-being at work in terms of psychologist Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Maslow wrote that human beings are motivated by unsatisfied needs, and that certain lower needs must be satisfied before higher needs can be met. At the top is spiritual need, which is how we feel about our work and our mission. To experience satisfaction at work, said Ravagni, we need to feel we have a voice in our work and in what our library stands for. Ravagni said that unions can contribute to employee well-being by acting as agents of change, action, and communication.

Structural Diversity

Ravagni talked about the diversity of union affiliations at union libraries in Washington and about the diverse arrangements under which libraries are organized. As an example, she enumerated the variety of arrangements in state-supported colleges and universities. Academic librarians may be covered by a faculty union, as they are at Eastern Washington University and at Central Washington University. In academic institutions where they are not considered faculty, librarians usually are not represented by unions. Academic library support staff are most often represented by the Washington Federation of State Employees (WFSE), an AFSCME affiliate. Librarians in nearly all state community colleges are union members represented by either the Washington Federation of Teachers or the Washington Education Association (WEA). Virtually all public school system professional employees statewide (including K-12
librarians) belong to teachers’ associations, which are union locals of the WEA, while nearly all classified staff are covered by a separate union, the Public School Employees of Washington.

The diversity of structures among public library locals is also daunting. Some of the librarians at Kitsap Regional Library belong to a 14,000-member United Food and Commercial Workers’ Union (UFCW) local that includes workers in health care, retail, office, and other service work. In some library jurisdictions, mid-level supervisors have organized their own local. In others, supervisors work within the same local as the people they supervise. Upper-level managers usually are exempt from union membership.

Ravagni reported that the two most common scenarios found at unionized public libraries are the “wall-to-wall” local and the fully-contained library local. Library workers in smaller cities such as Everett are often organized “wall-to-wall” as part of a larger city local that includes members from a wide variety of job classifications across all the city departments: clerical, technical, blue collar, and professional. Ravagni said that library issues can get lost or be invisible in these diverse locals—particularly at budget time—so library workers must work within the union to make library issues visible.

The other public library scenario is the fully-contained library local, where all of the local’s members are library workers. Examples of this structure are SPL and the newly-organized King County Library System (KCLS). In order to fill its offices and do its work, a library local (or any other type of union local) usually requires at least fifty to seventy-five members. The SPL and KCLS locals have 400-500 members each.

Panelist Susan Veltfort, a KCLS librarian and union officer who is currently serving as IGLU chair, alerted the audience to the recent formation of the ALA’s Allied Professional Association (ALA-APA, www.ala-apa.org), a nonprofit corporation established apart from ALA to “promote the mutual professional interests of librarians and other library workers.” APA was created to advocate for improving the salaries and status of library workers by supporting national comparable-worth and pay-equity initiatives. These are issues that ALA—with its focus on supporting libraries as institutions—does not address. The APA is not union-affiliated and cannot negotiate contracts, but it does share with unions a desire to improve the pay and status of library workers.

Collective Bargaining and Libraries

Keenan wrapped up the session with an historical overview of the struggles of American workers to establish unions and collective bargaining rights. Public employees were some of the last workers to win such rights, the bulk of them in the 1960s as states passed public employee bargaining statutes (between thirty and forty states have passed such laws). Johnson had pointed out earlier that the labor movement was one of three large social movements of the 20th century (along with the women’s movement and civil rights movement) and that the legislative assault on—and subsequent decline of—labor unions since World War II has contributed to the decline of the middle class over the past half-century.

SPL’s local was formed in 1972 around basic “bread and butter” issues. The local did a well-known comparable-worth study in the 1980s and has suffered its share of tension with SPL administration, but Ravagni reports that the local now has a harmonious relationship with the administration. At SPL, librarians and support staff used to have separate locals, but common interests led them to merge into one.

Veltfort noted that, in the thirteen years of unionization efforts at KCLS, librarians have supplied the organizing impetus. KCLS’s AFSCME local signed its first contract with the library system in fall 2004 and the system is now in a period of adjustment to the change. As evidence, Veltfort showed the audience a memo from her library’s human resources department stating that participation in the IGLU session would be treated as an exception to KCLS’s policy of reimbursement for conference attendance.

The intent of Washington’s public employee collective bargaining statute (Chapter 41.56 RCW) is “the continued improvement of the relationship between public employers and their employees by providing a uniform basis for implementing the right of public employees to join labor organizations of their own choosing and to be represented by such organizations in matters concerning their employment relations with public employers.” The panelists seemed hopeful that this vision could be achieved.
At the recent WLA annual conference in Spokane, Alki interviewed two outgoing library association presidents: Carol Brey-Casiano of the American Library Association (ALA) and John Sheller of the Washington Library Association.

Brey-Casiano began her library career as a bookmobile librarian for the Ozark Regional Library in rural Missouri. She earned her MLS from the University of Illinois, and taught library education programs for Dominican University in Illinois, the University of Texas, and the Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua in Mexico. Following a career of leadership positions in the New Mexico Library Association, the Oklahoma Library Association, and the Illinois Library Association, she became manager of her own consulting firm and director of the El Paso (Texas) Public Library, where she saw the passage of a $26 million bond issue in 2000. Brey-Casiano hosts the El Paso Public Library weekly television show, “Stories and More @ Your Library.” A skilled flautist, she has performed musical selections on her show. Now the outgoing ALA president and an ALA council member, Brey-Casiano gave the conference keynote speech: “Stand Up and Speak Out for Libraries: Turning Passive Support into Educated Action.” Afterward, she kindly agreed to this short interview with Alki.

Sheller, who turned over the presidency of the WLA to Carolynne Myall at the conference, has good reason to reflect with satisfaction upon his just-completed term: WLA membership is up and the association’s finances look good. Sheller majored in journalism, earned his library degree in 1992 at the University of Washington, and worked at the McChord Air Force Base library in Tacoma before joining King County Library System (KCLS). He became a KCLS branch manager in 1997 and has managed the Black Diamond, Sammamish, and Federal Way 320th Street branches. A fan of Hawaiian music, Sheller strummed a ukulele at the podium during the WLA business meeting. Is there a television show on the horizon?

Michael Wood, for Alki: As its president, what do you feel is the first duty of ALA?

Brey-Casiano: ALA is the voice of America’s libraries. That’s how we describe ourselves. ALA is all about our members. From that perspective I think that we see several important roles. One is of course to support libraries and librarians in their efforts to advocate for themselves. Another part of our role is our advocacy efforts at the national level, from the Patriot Act to Internet issues impacting patron privacy and access to information. I think all of that is reflected very well in our upcoming strategic plan. (Our website includes a draft of our strategic plan.) Another goal I haven’t men-

Two Association Presidents
Look Back and Ahead

MICHAEL WOOD

Carol Brey-Casiano and John Sheller at the keynote breakfast.

Michael Wood is an MLIS candidate at the Information School at the University of Washington. Photos by Cameron Johnson.
Alki: Can you speak of something during your tenure that gives you a special feeling of pride?
Brey-Casiano: I would say that one of the things I’m most proud of is our efforts to save two libraries threatened with closure in Texas. And in the case of the Bedford Public Library, ALA was able to come in and partnership with some people from the Texas Library Association and with the Texas State Library to provide support for the community in terms of how to create an advocacy campaign to show that there was a lot of support for the library in Bedford. And that library reopened just a month later. I believe that the library will continue to stay open now because of the awareness that has been raised related to that situation. On a larger scale, I am most proud of the work we’ve done in advocacy nationwide. I’m proud that we’ve really tried hard to spread our message across the nation. We’ve had one very successful advocacy institute and we are getting ready to have another one. I think advocacy is alive and well for libraries in our country now, and that’s a great thing.

Alki: Any regrets?
Brey-Casiano: You never have enough time to do everything that you want to do. [laughs] The good thing for me now is that I will have a year as the immediate past president where I will have an opportunity to continue some of the issues that we began under my presidency. I’m very impressed by ALA’s Executive Director Keith Fiels, and he has promised me that I will continue to have a role in ALA, particularly in advocacy efforts and in my international work that is so important to me. So I’m looking forward to continuing as an ALA member and continuing some of the work that I started as president.

Alki: What do you think of the strategy of advocating for libraries by influencing our library unions’ legislative agendas as they affect libraries and library workers?
Brey-Casiano: I think that that can be very effective; it certainly has proven to be in some situations. Unions have proven to be very effective partners for us in some cases. So certainly, I would say that is something that could be explored.

Alki: Some library workers hesitate to advocate for their employer. What would you say to library staff who say it’s just not their thing to advocate for libraries, or that they are already giving enough to libraries by being employed at one?
Brey-Casiano: Well, I think that the important thing to remember is that advocacy doesn’t have to be a very difficult job. Really, it can be a natural extension of your day. You know, all of us are out in the community—we talk with our families, we talk with our friends, we attend community events, we do our shopping—those can all be opportunities to talk about the library. I just work it into conversations. It doesn’t mean that you have to go out and carry placards and spend hours on the sidewalk shouting support for libraries. It simply means representing your employer in your daily life. The first step toward advocacy, as I’ve said many times, is talking to your neighbor about the library.

Alki: From your perspective, how does the future look for new librarians? As a leader in librarianship, what advice do you have for someone entering the field?
Brey-Casiano: I think that libraries have a bright future and so I believe librarians do too. I know that this is a very difficult time for libraries in some ways. To quote Dickens, it’s “the best of times; the worst of times.” We are seeing new libraries springing up all over the country, we are seeing phenomenal increases in visits to libraries, and yet we are seeing probably more budget cuts reported than we’ve ever had before. So that just tells me that libraries are still incredibly popular in our country and we just need to keep our advocacy efforts strong in order to make sure that our communities understand how important their libraries are for the health of those communities. So in that respect I think that this is a very
exciting time to be a part of the library profession. We are facing some interesting challenges, but we also are facing a time when libraries seem to be more popular than they have ever been before.

In terms of advice I would give to someone new in the field? I would say: Be willing to be flexible and keep an open mind. You know, I came into this profession thinking that I wanted to be a reference librarian and I wanted to work with adults. And my first job was as a bookmobile librarian working primarily with children and I absolutely loved it. [laughs]

You never really know where this profession will take you. I did not ever dream when I got into library work that I would become a library administrator—that I’d become the director of a major urban system—and it’s absolutely the best job I’ve ever had. So I think that it’s important to look at all your options and be flexible, and you’ll find that you can have an incredible career.

Alki: John, as the immediate past president of WLA, what do you feel is the first duty of WLA?
Sheller: Actually, we have twin top priorities: continuing education and advocacy. During my term I benefited—I think our whole state benefited, actually, from having two really strong people. We had Mary Stillwell Power as the library association’s coordinator of continuing education, and our state librarian, Jan Walsh is really strong in marketing and advocacy. By having two people in place looking after our two top priorities, as president I was able to focus on the political side of advocacy and the funding side of continuing education—getting the association to continue to fund our continuing education opportunities for our members. They are actually both top priorities. I wouldn’t be able to pick one over the other.

Alki: What can WLA do to remain vital in the new century?
Sheller: I think keeping our focus on those two top priorities is really important—marketing and continuing education are both never-ending activities. We just need to really keep working on those.

Alki: Looking back at your term as president, what comes to mind as something you are thankful for?
Sheller: It has to be the support of the board, and also my employer. I was given a lot of latitude both by the board and by the King County Library System to pursue what I felt was important for WLA.

Alki: Can you speak of something during your tenure that gives you a special feeling of pride?
Sheller: Our board passed a measure to increase continuing education funding specifically to benefit smaller rural libraries. We always had a model for putting on workshops that was very fiscally sound: Workshops had to pretty much pay for themselves. It worked great in large venues like Seattle or Spokane or Vancouver. It had the unexpected effect of not giving as much opportunity out in the smaller areas or more remote places. So our board set up a fund to help offset the cost of going to smaller locations and we identified ten sites across the state we are working to bring CE opportunities to, and hopefully in the next two to three years that will really benefit the members who live out there.

Alki: Any regrets?
Sheller: I guess I have one regret. There was one item from our strategic planning retreat in 2003 on diversifying our board to reflect the people we serve—unfortunately it got pushed aside a little bit in that the events with Tim Eyman and I-864 were consuming a lot of my time. Even though that was not a WLA activity it consumed a lot of my time during my first couple of months in office and the result was that I didn’t get around to some of the rest of the strategic plan until near to the end of my term.

Alki: Can you speak of some challenges and opportunities for new librarian WLA members?
Sheller: Well, I think there are definitely both! The challenges that new people face are the challenges that libraries face. It’s an unusual time in that library use is higher than it’s ever been at the same time that public spending is the lowest that it’s ever been. There is constant opportunity to talk about libraries, to be excited about what we do, and there is also the constant challenge of making sure that everybody realizes how important libraries are.

Alki: From your perspective, how does the future look for new librarians?
Sheller: I think the future in Washington looks particularly good. This is a part of the country that really values education and really values libraries.

Alki: As a leader in librarianship, what advice do you have for someone entering the field?
Sheller: This is a really good question, and there are a number of things that could come up. If I had to limit it to one I’d say: Be enthusiastic about what you do, be appreciative of the people you work with and who use libraries. I think we have some of the most intelligent and wonderfully quirky colleagues and patrons. It’s really important to embrace that—to really appreciate their intelligence and their quirkiness. Be willing to tell people what it is you do at work and why you like it—why you think it’s so important. We are smart people and we like what we do. Be proud of what you do, have fun doing it, and tell a friend.
The test drive is over. We’ve discovered the kinks, quirks, and perks of answering questions online, often in real time. With nearly five years of experience behind us—and federal grants running out—now is a good time to review findings from recent literature and research on virtual reference.

Lorri Mon did just that during a Washington Library Association conference session titled “Keeping Current: What’s New in Reference Research.” Mon is a virtual reference administrator and volunteer, and is a doctoral student at the University of Washington’s Information School. She introduced about a dozen recent studies, many of which focused on virtual reference—delivering reference service in real-time chat. The studies turned up as many questions as they did answers.

An assistant to UW researcher Joseph Janes, Mon’s own recent work found that patrons thanked the librarian in about 16 percent of email transactions—often the same day. “What does this ‘thank you’ mean?” Mon wonders. Were the rapid-responders just being polite? The researchers found that patrons were more likely to thank librarians who used more words during the transaction. “Does it mean they thought the librarian did more work? You just don’t know,” says Mon, who plans to continue the research by talking to users of virtual reference services.

The answers are important because libraries are evaluating whether or not virtual reference is worth the potentially sizeable expense. Part of the impetus for introspection is the fact that federal grants to states under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) will soon run out. Virtual reference may soon have to compete with other services for room in skinny library budgets.

Washington’s LSTA funding for these grants expires in September 2006, says Buff Hirko, statewide coordinator for the Virtual Reference Project. Washington’s approach to the virtual reference grants has been different from most states’, who used their funds to start statewide virtual reference services. “From the beginning, we decided to treat Washington as a laboratory,” says Hirko. Libraries submitted proposals for various virtual reference models and products.

Today, about twenty-five Washington libraries and library systems offer virtual reference services. Hirko acknowledges a couple of dropouts, notably Washington State University, but says that others are thinking of initiating services. “Is it growing? Yes.”

Librarians considering the virtues of virtual reference found little encouragement in two recent and controversial articles titled “To Chat or Not to Chat.” (1) Authors Steve Coffman and Linda Arret, both experienced virtual reference practitioners, questioned assumptions at the foundation of virtual reference services. Perhaps most significantly: Do patrons even want to chat with us?

The authors cited a 2003 survey by Janes which found that libraries offering the service answered on average only about six questions a day. “When people are forced to use remote reference, they prefer to pick up the phone, rather than open a chat session,” the authors concluded, referring to virtual reference as “a niche service” and urging librarians not to get sucked in by the hipness hype surrounding the service.

“They brought up some valid points, but they put it all together so negatively,” says Hirko, seated at her desk in a state library cubicle in Olympia. She points to one subhead that reads: “Pulling the Plug.” “It’s OK to talk about pulling the plug,” she says, “but why did they pull the plug?”

Margaret Thomas is a part-time research librarian at the Energy Program Library in Olympia. The library is operated by Washington State University Cooperative Extension Service (WSU/CE).
The Washington State VRef “Lab”

What is the status of virtual reference projects in Washington state? In a session entitled “Tales from the Trenches: Hallmarks and Horrors of Digital Reference,” a panel of Washington state virtual reference librarians gave brief status reports on the state of virtual reference services in their own libraries.

Kristie Kirkpatrick of Whitman County Library reported on providing virtual reference services to a rural, geographically widespread service area served by small branches with limited hours. Patrons in remote communities like Hay, Washington, now have 24/7 library access through virtual reference. Kirkpatrick said that, through the service, the library has reached a lot of kids very comfortable with the technology. She reported that the grant funds have mostly been spent on marketing, as the virtual reference software fees were nominal. Whitman partnered with seven other libraries to provide 24/7 service. Use of virtual reference has caused the library’s online resource usage to explode—up 900 percent the first year, 400 percent the second.

Crystal Lentz reported on Washington State Library’s virtual reference service, which began in February 2004. All reference staff are trained to provide virtual reference service, which is available all open hours of the library. To promote access, there is a link to the service on the “Find-It Washington” site find-it.wa.gov, though there is no link to the service on the main page or under the contact information for the state library. The library is also collaborating with InfoEyes—a project of the Illinois State Library Talking Book and Braille Service—to provide virtual reference services to the visually impaired.

Lorena O’English reported on Washington State University’s (WSU’s) service, which began in fall 2002 but was put on hold in December 2004 because of light usage by students. O’English said she believes this failure to adopt the service was due to WSU’s campus culture: Students go to the library for social reasons as well as for research, and were not willing to give up social interaction for the convenience of virtual reference. Concerns also arose at WSU about how database licensing agreements are affected by use in virtual reference, and about how to provide multi-platform support for the service. It was also felt that virtual reference needed to be more integrated into “regular” reference service. WSU is currently planning to revive the service with a focus on distance education. O’English said that virtual reference needs to be emphasized in every aspect of service, including training and assessment.

Nancy Huling reported on providing virtual reference service to the University of Washington’s (UW) three-campus, 66,000-student community. Huling reported that about twenty-five librarians are trained to provide virtual reference services, and that the UW experience is of moving seamlessly between service modes. She said that use of the service has created opportunities for more cooperation between libraries. The UW partnered with Cornell University to provide service from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Cornell handled the morning hours while UW staffed the afternoon. UW is currently looking for partnering opportunities with other libraries.

The overall feeling of all of those who participated in the panel is that adopting virtual reference service can reach new users and can tear down barriers that libraries erect which keep people from asking questions. They also felt the ability to co-browse was a very helpful feature. Panel members reported that staff did not always know how to deal with teen users, and that more step-by-step instructions and training are needed for virtual reference users.—Rayette Sterling

Mon acknowledges that some chat reference services haven’t caught on. “We don’t know why that is,” she says. “This is really very new. It’s way too new to say that it’s over already.” Several studies may help fill in the blanks. Of particular interest is how young adults seek information, the subject of ongoing research at Drexel University in Philadelphia. The researchers, scheduled to present their findings at a June conference, used audio journals, written logs, group interviews and photographs to record the daily information-seeking activities of urban teens.

Another study looked at interpersonal communication in chat reference. Researchers from New Jersey’s Rutgers University and Maryland’s AskUsNow service presented their findings recently at a Virtual Reference Desk 2004 conference session titled “Yo Dude! YRU Typin So Slow? Interpersonal Communication in Chat Reference Encounters.” The study reported that 39 percent of users signed off abruptly, before the interaction was concluded. “Were they impatient?” wonders Mon. “Did they find an answer elsewhere? Were there technical problems?”

Even proponents acknowledge that typing is one of the hurdles inherent in real-time reference. Coffman and Arret note that the average chat question takes ten to fifteen minutes to answer. While there is no good comparative data for other kinds of reference, the authors say commercial call centers have determined that chat transactions take twice as long as
telephone queries. A study at Canada’s University of Western Ontario found that, perhaps because of time constraints, virtual reference librarians skipped the traditional reference interview 20 percent of the time, and failed to ask follow-up questions in 70 percent of transactions. (2)

Some wonder if teaching librarians to use the informal, acronym-laced language born in Gen-X chat rooms might be part of the solution. “This shorthand saves keystrokes, but moreover is an increasingly essential part of the mores of the environment, as well as a means of acceptance in that environment,” argues the University of Washington’s Janes in a recent article. (3) He advocates “partial, principled adoption of such cultural norms.”

Whatever lingo librarians use, speed isn’t always the most important aspect of virtual reference. Remember, chat reference users have chosen the service in place of a telephone call or a visit to the library, says Nancy Huling, head of the Reference and Research Services Division at the University of Washington’s Suzzallo and Allen libraries. An enthusiastic advocate of virtual reference, Huling spends a couple of hours a week answering patron questions live and online. The long-distance user doesn’t think chat is too slow, she says. Nor does the non-native English speaker, or the person with a speech disability, who is more comfortable writing or keying questions. “We’re reaching people who would never come to the desk,” says Huling. “We need to be there, where they are, at their time of need.”

One of the advantages of virtual reference is that every transaction comes with a transcript, allowing librarians and researchers to analyze reference encounters and follow up or improve techniques. University of Washington libraries share a virtual reference service with Cornell University in New York state, and reviewing such transcripts and sharing notes is routine, says Huling. “You find yourself consulting more with your own colleagues.”

Some see a plug for virtual reference in the fact that many virtual reference users are actually keying questions from within the library building where the reference service is housed. One girl asked a couple of questions online before she told the librarian she was sitting right behind the reference desk, says Huling. This is not uncommon, according to Mon, who cites studies showing that 20 to 30 percent of virtual reference questions come from library computers. “When people are in the library, they’re using computers that they may have stood in line to get,” says Mon. Maybe they’re in the middle of something else online. Maybe they’re shy. “Again, we need to talk to users.”

In the meantime, new technology promises to send researchers scurrying back to their labs. Hirko tosses onto her desk a palm-sized combination cell phone and personal digital assistant. Increasingly, people will use cell phones and BlackBerrys to contact librarians using Short Messaging Service (SMS) technology. “It’s about convenience,” says Hirko. “My place, my time.” For now, drawbacks to SMS include a 160-character limit—about three short sentences—and the fact that those over the age of 40 can’t see the pinhead-sized keys. Within about five years, though, typing won’t be a factor, predicts Hirko. Voice over IP (VOIP), a technology already in use, converts a voice signal to a digital signal that travels over the Internet before it is converted back to voice, allowing computer users to talk to each other without long-distance charges.

Libraries aren’t waiting for new technology, however, to improve virtual reference services. Experience has already shown what works: marketing, collaboration, and a new look at old services. “Google has cornered the market on ready reference,” says Hirko. Libraries should shift resources elsewhere. Coffman and Arret recommend improving websites so patrons can help themselves to more of the information and services they need. When it comes to marketing, Hirko points to Whitman County Library (WCL) as a poster child. Partnering with seven other libraries to offer the service daily around the clock, WCL staff introduced it to teachers and students at local schools, and plastered the “Ask Us 24/7” logo on library cards, overdue notices, posters and newspaper ads. “We saw results,” crows the library’s brochure on promotional strategies, which cites as evidence 200 “Ask Us 24/7” questions answered per month.

The state of Colorado linked its AskColorado logo from the front page of the state government website and saw use of the service jump eight percent, according to a recent article in Library Journal. (4) The success of some statewide collaboratives has Washington considering a similar model as a means for spreading the expense and standardizing practices. But with LSTA funds nearly gone, Washington libraries would have to come up with a plan to pay for a statewide service. “It’s not a done deal,” says Hirko. “But that’s the direction we’re heading in.”

The road ahead is hazy, but it’s not a dead end, say proponents. “To Chat or Not to Chat”? “No, no, no, that’s just silly,” says Hirko, waving one of the Coffman/Arret articles. “It’s not either/or—it’s and.”

References
It was April, springtime in Spokane, and the weather was glorious. Librarians from all around the state of Washington were gathered for the annual Washington Library Association conference. While many beat a hasty retreat on Friday afternoon to get home for the weekend, those who lingered for the banquet on Friday night were in for a treat. The view of Spokane from the ballroom on the top floor of the hotel was lovely, the food was excellent, and the speaker was one of the pioneers of National Public Radio, Susan Stamberg.

We recognize that we are fortunate to have freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and free enterprise. Neither the press nor radio is state-run in our country. Our system has encouraged a proliferation of commercial and noncommercial media. We are privileged to have National Public Radio (NPR), a producer and distributor of noncommercial news, talk, and entertainment programming. Formerly government-funded, NPR is now a privately supported, not-for-profit membership organization that serves a growing audience of 23 million Americans each week in partnership with more than 780 independently operated, noncommercial public radio stations.

Hired by NPR in 1971 when the network began, Stamberg was in 1972 the first woman to anchor a national nightly news program. She has been the cohost of the award-winning “All Things Considered” for fourteen years, won every major award in broadcasting, and been inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame and the Broadcasting Hall of Fame. She has also hosted “Weekend Edition,” “Weekend Edition Saturday,” and “Morning Edition,” has reported on cultural issues for many NPR programs, and is now a special correspondent for NPR. She is one of the most popular broadcasters in public radio, appreciated by listeners for her conversational style, intelligence, knack for finding interesting stories, and engaging talk.

WLA conferees had the honor of listening in-person to Stamberg's engaging talk, but if you missed this memorable event, here for your enjoyment is a summary of Stamberg’s thoughts and ideas as presented at the conference banquet.

Librarians have an affinity for the printed word, whether on paper or in an electronic format. Most of us don’t think quite as much about the spoken word. But radio speech and print do have an affinity, Stamberg said. Both communicate language and both help us to think and to organize experience.

Watching television, on the other hand, disorganizes experience. Television images constantly shift and change as producers try to hold onto an ever-decreasing attention span. We react emotionally to these shifting images, and our visual orientation means that informational content of images is lost to us.

While television watchers passively receive imagery and react emotionally, radio listeners must create images in their minds and change the images based on what they hear. “On radio the pictures are always better,” said Stamberg. You can listen to radio in the car; you can wrap it around your head when you jog. Radio lets you concentrate on the voices and their messages, not the broadcasters’ outfits or hairdos. Air time is an extremely precious commodity because access to the airwaves is access to the minds of listeners.

“Why radio?” Stamberg asked rhetorically, then offered an answer. For her, it is for the voices, for the pictures, and for the opportunity to tell stories properly. To avid NPR listeners, Stamberg’s voice has become as familiar and comfortable as are the faces of our real-life friends. And for years the familiar voice of Bob Edwards has gotten many NPR listeners out of bed and off to work. Luxuriating on a Saturday morning may be lying in bed listening to Scott Simon or Liane Hansen on a Sunday morning. And there are the voices of the foreign correspondents: Julie McCarthy in London, Sylvia Paggioli in Rome, Rob Gifford in Beijing. These are friends in far-away places. They are storytellers of the day’s happenings in exotic places, where a listener once may have been
or may never have been. The right mix of rich sound and descriptive narrative transports listeners to a place hidden deep in one’s imagination. That is the magic of radio. It is what makes the pictures better on radio, Stamberg said. For a broadcaster, the power of radio is the power of the unadorned, primal voice, the same voice by which a newborn first recognizes its mother. Broadcasters project their voices over the airwaves, an evanescent medium that is here now and gone when the broadcast is over. News reporting is NPR’s bread and butter, but news dates quickly. Dessert comes when broadcasters talk about what they do and what they think and dream.

Story-gathering was Stamberg’s joyful habit before it became her career. She said she has always asked questions. “I’m catching stories with my microphone—a magic wand, waved against silence,” she tells us in the introduction of her 1993 book, Talk. Talk always begins with a question, then comes listening for the silences, the cracks between the words, the hesitations, the contradictions, and the glorious expositions. And the way words are said colors the telling. The voice is the story’s most important instrument because it puts the listener in the presence of a person and a life. “It wraps you in the aura of a person, starts pictures in your mind, makes connections to the heart.” (4) The voices on radio become the voiceprint of a time period. History’s first draft is etched in the voices that gave that time period its vitality.

As librarians we know that information is not the same as knowledge. Good reporters and broadcasters know this same truth. If you don’t have both, you don’t know much. So who are the unsung heroes of this tale of NPR? If you haven’t already surmise, they are the NPR librarians of course, whom Stamberg described as her heroes and her broadcast colleagues’ heroes too. There are actually six NPR librarians, four full-time and two part-time, according to Stamberg, but the names of only three appear on the NPR website: Kee Malesky, Alphonse Vinh, and Mary Glendenning. They are the people who perform extensive background research; answer fact-checking questions; fact-check stories prior to airing; provide guidance on spelling, grammar, and usage; maintain the library’s book collection, Web resources, and clipping file; and work on special projects for NPR. When Stamberg was on the air during the funeral of Princess Grace of Monaco, during a discussion of the music played during the service, another individual mentioned that Samuel Barber’s “Adagio for Strings” had also been played at the commemorative service of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Stamberg questioned whether that was so, and instantly on the other end of the earpiece was a voice confirming discreetly in her ear that this piece of music had indeed been played at the service for FDR. That voice was one of the NPR librarians coming to the rescue. Such radio stories vitally depend on this quick and accurate research.

Yet Stamberg expressed some concerns about the state of broadcasting. She said that Americans seem to find infinite time for violence and trivia, but that our attention span for serious matters gets shorter and shorter. The best commercial news (according to Stamberg, the NBC Evening News) spends only twenty-two minutes on news, with punchy graphics and commercials filling in the remainder. NPR has been influenced by CNN’s invention of the twenty-four-hour newscast and its live reporting at a moment’s notice. But going immediately live allows mistakes and speculation to get on the air. The practice is antithetical to the honest business of reporting—talking to as many people as possible, checking out what they say against each other, and synthesizing it into a story.

In an age of commercial overkill, when most content is really filler, public radio takes the time to tell the news properly. Listeners send money to support public radio in payment of a debt to community, Stamberg said. What radio can do when it’s in the right hands (and the right voices) makes a difference in what broadcasters have to say. With Stamberg, the radio airtime is in the right hands with the right voice. She has been offering NPR listeners engaging talk for decades.

Early on Friday of the conference, while attendees were still in meetings, Stamberg appeared at KPBX, the NPR affiliate in Spokane, to help out with the station’s pledge drive. That morning, inland Northwest listeners of “Classical Music with Vern Wynd- ham” heard Wyndham greet her on the air, saying, “We’re absolutely twitterpated that you have joined us.” The Washington Library Association is likewise twitterpated that she joined us as the speaker at its annual conference banquet.

References
Mary Wise is a catalog librarian at Central Washington University Library.

MARY WISE

Benicia’s Model ESL Program

A member of the WLA conference audience asked Lynne Price how to start a literacy program when there is interest but no funding. Lynne smiled and said emphatically, “Just do it!”

Price spoke with authority on the subject. Her session, “Adult Literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL),” focused on her work as coordinator for the ambitious adult literacy and ESL program at Benicia Public Library (BPL) in California. (A city of 65,000, Benicia is about forty miles northeast of San Francisco.) BPL’s adult literacy program began in 1987, when the library joined California Library Literacy Services (CLLS), a program initiated in 1984 with LSTA grant money. The CLLS website is literacyworks.org/clls/.

Price took a circuitous route to becoming a literacy coordinator. After earning a Christian education degree, she worked in a school where individualized education programs (IEPs) are prepared for students. Price discovered that parents couldn’t understand the IEP meetings because they couldn’t read. She decided she wanted to help these parents and other adults like them. She pursued this goal at San Francisco Public Library before coming to BPL.

The adults who come to the library for literacy help are not called students but “learners,” because they want to learn. The learners are busy people with full lives—they just need some assistance with one aspect of their lives. Core concepts of the program are:

- Everyone is a reader.
- Detective/discovery process.
- Equal partners.
- Teach to strengths.
- Learner-centered.
- Learners are responsible for their learning.
- Learning is fun!

Learners fill out a “roles and goals” form which asks them, “What do you want to do that you can’t do now? For you, family, job, community.” A learner’s goal is not just to read better but, for example, to read USA Today or to read books to a child. Every learner gets a three-ring binder to track his or her progress.

ESL learners at BPL meet in public areas at the back of the library, out of the building’s general bustle. With the help of about thirty volunteers, one full-time employee, and six part-time employees, the program currently enrolls 130 learners. Elements of the program, which operates Monday through Friday 10:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. (Friday till 5:00 P.M.), includes one-on-one tutoring, a computer learning lab, a monthly tutor exchange, ESL classes, free child care for participants, learner book groups, a learner writing group, a Families for Literacy group, and a monthly newsletter.

One-on-one tutoring is a strength of the program. ESL instructors choose the program’s volunteer tutors, who receive eleven and one-half hours training, including orientation from successful tutor/learner pairs. There is also a monthly tutor exchange, in which volunteer tutors talk about challenges they face during tutoring sessions. These monthly exchanges help connect the tutors with each other and keep them energized and motivated. Volunteers tutor for a minimum of two hours per week. All tutoring is done from a learner-centered perspective. Getting the best match between a tutor and learner is a key to success.

The program’s computer lab consists of five computers on carts, which are wheeled out of a closet during lab times. Learners currently not paired with a tutor can use the lab on their own. The computers are loaded with a small number of good-quality programs from Rosetta Stone which show the learner real images and text with native speakers pronouncing words and sentences, a method similar to that which children use to acquire a first language.

The program’s ESL classes are very popular, but Price found that people had difficulty attending the classes due to lack of available child-care. So the library added to its services free child-care for attending parents. Trained instructors conduct the ESL classes. Learner book groups were organized for those in the ESL classes. Groups are comprised of up to ten learners, who can either read print books or listen to recorded books. The book groups are classified as intermediate or advanced, and stress fluency and language cadence.

Families for Literacy is a program segment for adults that models reading aloud to children under
The most interesting element of David Kingma’s and Kathleen O’Connor’s WLA conference session on “Special Collections at Gonzaga University” was the discussion of the differences between archives and libraries, and their sometimes competing goals of preservation and access. Kingma is an archivist at Gonzaga while O’Connor is assistant dean for library technology. The discussion arose against a backdrop of descriptions of Gonzaga’s Jesuit Oregon Province Archives, the Bing Crosby Collection, and the Hanford Health and Information Archive.

The value of providing access to primary source material is core to both archivists and librarians, but it became clear during the conference session that methods and assumptions used by each differ. Kingma discussed the different cataloging and organization methods of each profession, which led to a discussion with the audience on “what do you do with an item.” Curators want to display and interpret while librarians want to catalog and circulate—each is concerned with content, but archivists are concerned also with context: They want to leave the artifact or document in place because how it came to be there is also revealing. Kingma “preached the gospel of provenance,” which concerns the place of origin or earliest known history of a document or artifact. Provenance is protected, he said, when things “remain where they are.”

This point was well-illustrated by a PowerPoint presentation of materials at Gonzaga about St. Mary’s Mission, a Jesuit-run Roman Catholic mission and boarding school in Omak serving the Colville Confederated Tribes. Images showed boys playing baseball and smiling, and children praying with nuns. What the photos don’t reveal is that the baseball photos were staged and that the praying children had been removed from their native culture.

Retaining provenance can preserve the context of the photos and reveal “who’s got the camera.” This discussion deserved an entire session of its own.

Digitizing History

How provenance is retained in a digital archive is an intriguing—but perhaps unfair—topic to raise in connection with the Washington History digitization project (www.secstate.wa.gov/history), an ambitious, ongoing project of the Washington State Library (WSL) and the Washington State Archives. What is clear, however, is that the project materials are a fabulous resource for genealogist and historians.
In the session “Digital Excursions in Washington Territory,” Judy Pitchford and Marlys Rudeen of the WSL updated WLA conference attendees on highlights of WSL’s digitization project and on some of the technical aspects of digitizing historical records. The Washington History Project collection contains census records, naturalization records, and other datasets available in a searchable database.

The census records include some pre-territorial census material and part of the federal census data for 1860. The site also has the Social Security Death Index, physician licenses (1872-1938), records of Seaco Prison at Bucoda (1877-1888), and other record sets. Volunteers from genealogical societies and local historical societies provide indexing for the project. Anyone interested in volunteering may contact Tracy Workman at tworkman@secstate.wa.gov or (360)704-5258.

The historical maps collection is divided by time period and type of map. The collection covers 1834 to the present and includes agricultural and economic, vegetation, boundary, geological, military, and highway and railroad maps, as well as nautical charts and shoreline and tidal maps (see www.secstate.wa.gov/history/maps.aspx). Historical newspapers and “Classics in Washington History” have also been scanned and made searchable. The collection includes materials covering territorial government, Native Americans, exploration and travel, and regional history resources. The search feature allows researchers to search across titles and express searches with Boolean logic. Some of the titles now available include the Illustrated History of the Big Bend Country, History of Old Walla Walla County by William Denison Lyman, Life of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, Dr. John McLoughlin: the Father of Oregon by Frederick Van Voorhies Holman, and Miners’ and Travelers’ Guide to Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado by John Mullan. Newspapers include The Columbian, the Walla Walla Statesman, and Washington Pioneer.

The materials are scanned in-house using specialized equipment. A Zeutschel 5000 planetary camera is used to create threshold scans in Photoshop software. Document pages are saved separately as archival.tif files with 300-600 dpi resolution. Additional images are created from the source file then run through optical character recognition (OCR) software to create a searchable page. Project members scan newspapers from archival microfilm using a Nikon Super Coolscan 9000. This scanner was designed to scan negatives and individual frames of microfilm. Because the film is not always of good quality, WSL staff must clean up the images to facilitate searching and reading online. OCR doesn’t produce good results from newspapers, so staff must create indexes. The process is both labor- and storage-intensive.

Viewing the images requires a free download of a DJVU plug-in from Lizard Technologies. The plug-in compresses very large image files into a format quickly deliverable over the Web and provides useful features such as the ability to zoom in and out, pan, and adjust colors. The software allows even maps to load quickly and appear crisp even at high zoom.

The data files and tools that the Washington History Project provides are great examples of using technology to access our history. The issue of provenance can wait for another conference.

Wise Continued from page 21

5 years old. Participants receive free books and are building family book collections at home.

To advertise the program, the library puts up a big banner in the park and sets up a booth in the local farmers’ market. Library staff and volunteers deliver publicity cards around the city to locations likely to be visited by people needing the service. Because state money for ESL programs is earmarked for community colleges, BPL must fund its program with a mix of tax revenue and private donations from organizations like Families for Literacy.

BPL’s most popular fundraising event is its annual trivia bee. Three hundred people attended the most recent one in February. A local designer creates a theme each year, with this year’s theme being “Trivia Bee 14: The Orient Express.” As always, the competition was fierce this year for the coveted “Trivia Toad” trophy. The bee invites participation by individuals and teams. Entry fees are $300 for teams and twenty dollars for individuals. This year, about fifteen local businesses entered teams. Participants are assisted by appropriately costumed teens. Donated raffle prizes are also awarded.

The trivia bee is a vital supplement to the program's modest $130,000 budget and is great publicity for the program.

For more information about Benicia Public Library’s ESL program, visit www.ci.benicia.ca.us/literacy/literacy.html.
You are a 30-something juggling work, child-raising, and finishing your bachelor's degree. Or, you are a 20-something looking to get your master's degree. Or, you are just someone who is looking to learn a new skill or to improve your present skills.

“Is e-learning right for you?” asked Elizabeth Iaukea, statewide continuing education coordinator for the Washington State Library, at a WLA conference session of the same name. Learning on the Internet is new, even to library workers, who are otherwise familiar with online materials.

So what is e-learning? According to Iaukea, “E-learning is a general term that refers to any learning done at a computer that is generally connected to a network. It comes in several forms: real-time, which can include chat; white-boarding; two-way voice; and application sharing. Other ways are discussion lists and email (they can be self-guided).” (White-boarding is a form of teleconferencing in which several remote users can serve text, graphics, video, etc. in real time to a common window.)

How do you decide if it’s right for you? Before deciding to try an online course, there are some things to think about. Can you sit in front of a computer for hours on end? Are you comfortable with email, Internet browsers, and word processing? Do you have a place where you can work without being interrupted? Are you independent, self-disciplined, and efficient in time management?

How you learn is another thing to consider when choosing an e-learning format. Are you a visual, auditory, or tactile/kinesthetic learner? Choose a course that fits your style. When choosing a class, Iaukea suggests you ask questions about the class:

- Does the class format include a live instructor, real-time communication, email, or discussion lists?
- How long are you given to complete the class?
- Is the class self-guided?
- Are there self-assessments or instructor evaluations?

If you choose to try some online classes, Iaukea suggested these tips for successful e-learning.

- Set clear and attainable goals.
- Understand why the course is important to you.
- Tell others about your online study goals.
- Understand and prepare yourself for the difficulties involved in learning online.
- Use all the e-learning tools available to you in a course.
- Create a study schedule and stick to it!
- Treat your online study sessions as part of your regular job.
- Learn from your classmates by participating in online communities and discussions.
- Gain the support of your supervisor and coworkers for your online study.

So you’re ready for e-learning, but where do you find classes? Iaukea informed us that grant funds from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, administered through the Washington State Library, have opened up free online training opportunities for public and tribal library staff in support of public access computing. Courses are available from a variety of sources:

- Washington WebJunction offers free class registration and access to its member directory and bulletin boards. Courses are self-guided with interactive elements. Some have quizzes and practice exercises. There are no instructors (see wa.webjunction.org).
- Learning@Amigos.org, a nonprofit based in Dallas, Texas, makes a variety of online courses available about Internet and Web design. Courses are online, instructor-led, or self-guided. Some use Voice over IP (VOIP), have email contact with instructors between sessions, and have quizzes and practice assignments evaluated by the instructor (see www.amigos.org/learning).
- Bibliographical Center for Research (BCR) Online has OCLC, Internet, and Web design courses. Classes are free to public and tribal library staff through a Gates Foundation grant, and all other library staff can register at a member rate. The courses are self-guided, and quizzes and assignments are emailed and reviewed by an instructor (see www.bcr.org/training/workshops/web-based.html).

Library staff can be successful e-learners if they are realistic about their needs, abilities, and learning styles. To get started, take a look at the Washington State Library's website: www.secstate.wa.gov/library/libraries/training/onlinelearning.aspx

Lynn Barnes is manager of the Metalines Community Library, a branch of the Pend Oreille County Library.

Alki • July 2005
Based on audience feedback, the short answer to the title of the 21 April WLA conference session “Collaborative Summer Library Program: How’s It Working for Your Library?” is, “Pretty well, thank you.” The Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP) started out as a good idea on a small scale when ten Minnesota library systems began cooperating on a joint summer reading program in 1987. Since that time, the CSLP has continued to grow, and now has major—usually statewide—participation in thirty-two states.

Participation by Washington libraries began in 2002, when Whitman County Library and Neill Public Library in Pullman partnered with Latah County (Idaho) Library, who allowed the Washington libraries to piggyback on Latah’s own participation in Idaho. Kris tie Kirkpatrick of Whitman County Library wrote an article in the December 2002 issue of Alki about this pioneering effort in Washington state. (1)

While the scale has changed, the intent of CSLP today remains unchanged from 1987. The CSLP website (www.cslpreads.org) describes the program as a grassroots consortium of states working together to provide high-quality summer reading program materials for children at the lowest cost possible for their public libraries. By combining resources and working with a commercial vendor to produce materials designed exclusively for CSLP members, public libraries in participating states or systems can purchase—at significant savings—posters, reading logs, bookmarks, certificates, and a variety of reading incentives.

As any children’s librarian can tell you, coming up with a homegrown summer reading program is a huge undertaking, particularly in a library system or independent library without a graphics department. The session attendees were generally very pleased with CSLP and excited about the 2005 theme “Dragons, Dreams & Daring Deeds.”

Martha Shinners of the Washington State Library, who was Washington’s representative to the CSLP meeting in Bismarck, North Dakota, earlier in April, gave attendees a fascinating look into the CSLP planning process. She described as “growing pains” the struggle by representatives from participating states to sustain the open flow of ideas and creativity (the spirit of 1987) while working to professionalize the management of a now-huge organization. Shinners believes that CSLP has been largely successful in staying true to its roots, stating, “The thing I really like about the collaborative is how responsive it is to suggestions from members.” Shinners also noted that the hiring of a CSLP website manager had resulted in an improved website that will continue to grow richer in content, including material on copyright, market-

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**Examples of the lavish illustrations that come with the CSLP CD-ROM sent to program participants.**

At left is art for the children’s theme. The YA program features the “Joust Read” theme. Copyright restrictions apply after the summer period. © Highsmith, Inc. Reproduced with permission from Highsmith, Inc.

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Brian Soneda is director of Mount Vernon City Library.
The high point of the conference session was the opportunity to view the English and Spanish versions of a thirty-second public service announcement (PSA) that uses professional actors and a tight, entertaining, once-upon-a-time-flavored storyline to bring dragons, dreams, and daring deeds to life. Attendees universally applauded the PSAs.

Attendees also expressed appreciation for the quality and attractiveness of the “Dragons, Dreams & Daring Deeds” materials and incentives, all of which are available through Upstart, Highsmith’s CSLP vendor. Lisa Anderson, children’s librarian at Bellingham Public Library, called the availability of reasonably priced and attractive CSLP tee-shirts “a godsend to us.” Bonnie Anderson, youth services librarian at Puyallup Public Library, loves the CSLP products because “since nearly all of the libraries are using the same theme and graphics, it allows for joint publicity that otherwise wouldn’t be possible.” Scott Blume, children’s services coordinator at Bellingham Public Library, also applauded the tee-shirts and the variety of Steven Kellogg’s graphics. (Kellogg is the featured artist for “Dragons, Dreams & Daring Deeds” and the creator of the Pinkerton the Great Dane picture books. Doug Keith of Seattle worked on art for the related 2006 young adult theme, “Joust Read.”) Other session attendees noted that the CSLP manual’s craft sections were of great value in planning summer programs and setting up bulletin board displays.

Sue Vanlaanen, communications director at Fort Vancouver Regional Library (FVRL), spoke about her work with Safeway’s Portland office (which administers the business’s groceries in southwestern Washington) to get “Dragons, Dreams & Daring Deeds” artwork onto grocery bags along with information about FVRL’s 2005 summer reading program. Vanlaanen reported that Safeway had agreed to print bags by June 2005 not just in English, but also in Russian, Spanish, and Chinese. This equivalent of a $5,000 donation from Safeway was a prime example of local libraries leveraging the clout of CSLP (and the caliber of featured artists) into a major marketing and partnering success. (Well done, Sue!)

Gov. Gregoire’s contribution to the program—for each participant, a certificate co-signed by State Librarian Jan Walsh and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Terry Bergeson—while less involved than Gov. Locke’s, received applause for being clearer and more supportive of existing local summer reading programs.

Shinners expressed a sincere interest in hearing about past CSLP glitches, as this would give her data to take to future CSLP planning meetings. As our representative to CSLP, Shinners gives us a voice in improving the program. She said that she felt the program had been, and would continue to be, responsive to suggestions for changes or improvements. Session attendees obliged her by bringing up two areas of concern:

- **Better feedback:** One attendee mentioned that last spring she had no idea until after the fact that the order for an item she had placed on the Upstart website had not reached the threshold number for ordering, and was thus not going to be filled. (The site does state that the item will not be ordered from the manufacturer if national demand for an item does not reach the prescribed level.) Attendees agreed that better feedback was needed from Upstart to confirm orders and to inform libraries when a product was not available.

- **Copyright:** Several session attendees noted that copyright issues for CSLP artwork were not clear in either the manual or on the website. While CSLP is very generous in allowing a wide range of graphics usages during the summer, fairly stringent restrictions apply after mid-September. Shinners noted that copyright questions had come up often at the North Dakota meeting, and that the CSLP website now featured more copyright information, and still more would be added in the near future in response to these concerns.

The 2006 CSLP theme is “Paws, Claws, Scales & Tales,” with artwork by David Shannon. Shannon, who has roots in Spokane, wrote and illustrated the acclaimed picture book *How Georgie Radbourn Saved Baseball*. The related young adult theme is “Creature Feature @ Your Library,” with artwork by Russell Walks. Walks is a native of Billings, Montana, and is perhaps best known as a star of sci-fi/fantasy comic book art. Session attendees were already thinking up ways to tie the animal/pet/travel possibilities to exciting programs and setting up bulletin board displays.

**Reference**

The 2005 Workshop in Library Leadership

For the first time since its inception, the biennial Workshop in Library Leadership (WILL) will meet in Olympia at the Red Lion Hotel on 14-16 September. The workshop, designed for policy-making trustees of public libraries, features programs, discussions, and networking opportunities. This year’s event will include tours of the Capitol and the governor’s mansion.

Dr. Clement Price, a Distinguished Service Professor of History at Rutgers University and a trustee for New York Public Library, will be the keynote speaker.

Other guest speakers will include Cindy Cunningham of Corbis on the future of libraries; Jan Sanders, Spokane Public Library director, on advocacy; and Laura Dellinger, Metropolitan Group executive vice president, on marketing in libraries.

Pat Wagner of Pattern Research will lead several hands-on sessions.

In general sessions, trustees will learn what to do when the FBI asks for library records and will learn how to discuss difficult issues with their director, staff, and community. Concurrent sessions will address everything from success for small libraries to planning for the future. There will be sessions for both new and more-experienced trustees.

Library directors and staff who work with trustees are also encouraged to attend.

WILL is sponsored by the Washington State Library with the assistance of an advisory committee of trustees and library staff from across the state.

WILL registration packets will be sent to trustees and library directors in early July. Early-bird registration is $75 for trustees and $85 for library staff. Regular registration is $85 and $95. Continuing education grants to attend the conference are available from the Washington State Library.

For more information, contact Karen Goettling at (306)570-5560 or kgoettling@secstate.wa.gov.

Turning Jewels into Scholarship Dollars

Can we expect an IPO soon from Madden’s Melange?

Retired King County Library System (KCLS) librarian Susan Madden’s WLA conference jewelry business is doing well indeed. Sales this year netted $1,700 for the association’s scholarship fund. Madden’s donated jewelry served as the core of the collection, but now more WLA folks have gotten the donation bug as well: Former Alki editor Louise Saylor has donated beautiful pieces from her own collection and her mother’s estate, as did retired KCLS librarian Jan Freeman. And when Kandy Brandt, a children’s librarian in Spokane County Library District, heard what was happening, she went home and brought some gold jewelry and very special items she’d gotten in Russia. Charlotte Jones, retired librarian from Spokane, has also promised some pieces.

Word of the group’s striking collections (and its generosity) has moved beyond the bounds of the association. Just after the conference, Madden received the following letter:

26 April 2005
Hi Susan...

We met at the Library Assn. conference in Spokane...and I so admired what you’re doing to raise $ for scholarships in Washington state.

Here is some jewelry that belonged to my late and darling mother. I know she would be thrilled to know it was going to such a good cause.

All the best...so nice meeting you.

Susan Stamberg

When Madden got home she found in the mail a batch of pins, bracelets, and necklaces from Stamberg. They will be featured in the Madden’s Melange booth at the Tacoma WLA conference in 2006.

Madden reports that the worth of many of these donated pieces exceeds what our usual conference audience expects, so she and her cohort are exploring ways to maximize the impact of the sales. She said they might try eBay if they can figure out how to do it without jeopardizing WLA’s 501(c)(4) status. An auction is another possibility. The WLA Scholarship Committee needs to come up with a strategy to handle this bounty, she said.

Madden would be happy to keep the donation ball rolling. Please contact her at susanmad@gte.net, or just bring jewelry donations to WLA 2006 in Tacoma.
Cameron Johnson, reference librarian at Everett Public Library, was presented the WLA Merit Award for Outstanding Performance in a Special Area. Over his years as editor of *Alki: The Washington Library Association Journal*, Johnson has consistently sought the best sources for interviews and articles while striving for the most visually appealing format. His efforts continue to benefit Washington librarians and enhance the image of WLA.

Dean Marney, director of North Central Regional Library (NCRL), received a WLA Merit Award for Outstanding Performance in a Special Area. Marney is committed to the North Central Regional Library’s innovative Mail Order Library, the nation’s first mail-order library service and one of the few that remain. NCRL publishes customized library catalogs that are mailed to all rural residents in five counties. Under his tenure, this service continues to flourish as a popular and cost-effective mechanism.

Michael Schuyler, retired deputy director of Kitsap Regional Library, was awarded the WLA Emeritus Award. Schuyler’s many contributions have been remarkable, not only to libraries across the Pacific Northwest but also to the international library community. His dedication to the library community is proven through his leadership in library automation and technology. His accomplishments include: Served as WLA secretary; created the first WLA membership database; received the WLA Merit Award for Advances in Technology, and the National Information Infrastructure Public Access Award. He was also a finalist for the Global Bangemann Award, a prestigious international information technology award presented by the City of Stockholm, Sweden. Those who work with Schuyler know they can always count on him for both good advice and a willingness to contribute his time, energy, and talents.

Regan Robinson, director of Stevens County Rural Library District, received the WLA Advances in Library Services Award. When Robinson began with SCRLD in May 1998, the newly-enabled library district had no libraries. She started by obtaining agreements with three independent public city libraries to provide service to county residents. In less than three years, she had successfully established three independent libraries and five library stations. It has not been easy to bring 21st century service to rural Stevens County. Due to her unceasing efforts, people across Stevens County now have library services.

The Whatcom County Library System (WCLS) Board of Trustees was awarded the WLFFTA Distinguished Service Award, Trustee Award #1. This award stems from the board’s valiant and bold reaction after the FBI subpoenaed circulation records for Yosef Bodansky’s book *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America*. The board’s actions are perhaps best placed in context by the words of WCLS director Joan Airoldi in her article about the incident, “One Book, One County, One Subpoena,” which appeared in the December 2004 *Alki*.

“The libraries of the future are in our hands and will be shaped by our action or inaction. I cannot help but think that the WCLS board stands taller after reading the email from a reader in Oregon who stated, ‘I wish more in our society would display the common sense that you folks demonstrate before our freedoms are completely surrendered.’” Amory Peck accepted the award for the trustees.
2005 WLA Awards

Awards Committee:
Jan Walsh, chair
Sharon Hammer
Gail Willis
Katrina Disbennett
Jeannie Steffener

Barbara Baldus (not pictured) of Camas Public Library received the WLFFTA Distinguished Service Award, Trustee Award #2. For ten years Baldus served on the board of trustees at Camas Public Library. Her thoughtfulness, common sense, and journalism background ensured that policies established by the board were clear, concise, and needed. Her good humor and positive attitude are always present and appreciated. If any one individual can be singled out for magnumious duty as a library trustee, Baldus can!

Ken and Phyllis Weber were presented the WLFFTA Distinguished Service Award, Friend/Foundation Award #3 for their work in conducting used book sales in Bellingham for the benefit of Bellingham Public Library. The Webers’ ten years of hard work, dedication, creative ideas, and unfailing good humor have brought in significant funds for the library. In these bleak days of budget cuts for public libraries, we are even more appreciative of the efforts of our Friends who support library services to the community.

Patience Rogge, trustee of Jefferson County Library, was presented the WLA Honorary Award. Rogge’s eleven-year tenure as trustee of the Jefferson County Library is evidence of her deep love of and care for libraries, for whom she has devoted her entire life to preserving and supporting. The most basic of her values is that libraries are for everyone, especially the little guy. Rogge motivates people with her sound ideas and inspires people with her passion, and she can compromise without tainting her core values. She has for many years been a strong voice for trustees within WLA and currently serves on the Washington Library Friends, Foundations, and Trustees Association (WLFFTA) steering committee.

Sally Grant received the CAYAS Visionary Award. See sidebar on page 10 for further details.

Lori Portugal of Mid-Columbia Library (MCL) received the WALE Employee of the Year Award. Portugal’s contributions to her own library and its patrons are outshone only by her dedicated service to the entire population of library employees statewide. Portugal, branch supervisor at MCL’s Keewaydlin Park library, has worked to establish services for the Spanish-speaking population, both within MCL and as a member of Northwest REFORMA, regional chapter of a national association that promotes library service to Spanish speakers. She also organized and planned the very successful 1993 WALE conference, “Choices, Challenges and Change.”
President’s Awards

WLA President John Sheller made two President's Awards this year, to Mike Wirt and to Candace Morgan.

Wirt has served WLA in nearly all possible capacities, most recently as Legislative Planning Committee co-chair and as 2005 WLA Conference coordinator. He has frequently done an outstanding job under difficult circumstances. Last fall Wirt faced a potentially disastrous scenario as the City of Spokane Valley considered pulling out of the Spokane County Library District, which Wirt directs. Had it succeeded, the pullout would have meant huge budget and staff cuts and library closures. Through it all Wirt maintained his composure and met every WLA obligation, making sure that this conference would not be affected. Were it not for Wirt's superhuman efforts, the Spokane conference might have faltered.

Morgan was honored for her lifetime contributions in support of intellectual freedom and the Library Bill of Rights. She has been more than generous with her time and expertise, and has taught countless library staff members, librarians, directors, Friends, trustees, and even would-be censors the finer points of how the First Amendment applies to libraries. Sheller then unveiled the Candace Morgan Intellectual Freedom Award, newly created by the WLA board, and named Morgan as its first recipient.

Sheller also awarded a certificate of appreciation for Jennifer Maydole’s contributions to library legislative efforts. Maydole recently left her post as media trainer at North Central Educational Service District in Wenatchee to establish her own consulting business. As liaison from the Washington Library Media Association (WLMA) to WLA, Maydole has done an outstanding job bringing school library issues to our attention and in supporting public library efforts to work with schools. She has regularly attended ALA’s National Library Legislative Day in Washington D.C. and helped coordinate our visits to members of Congress.
Summer’s here, with its attendant flock of recommended “beach reads.” Here’s a term that has always slightly mystified me: it can mean anything. While these lazy, hazy, crazy days may entice some to sate their latent hunger for Nora Roberts or James Patterson, others indulge with Dickens in a deck chair, or Kafka on the shore. But if beach reading simply means reading what we truly crave, then let’s resolve to keep summer in our hearts all year round. A favorite indulgence of mine is espionage, and this year brings a welcome trend for readers of both sexes (thank you, Jennifer Garner): You’re as likely to find a woman as a man on the other end of that secret identity. Here are some great recent titles featuring women spies.

Stand back, Jason Bourne: it’s time for Eve to get even. That’s the name given to the American woman by a busload of French nuns when they find her lying in a ditch on All Saint’s Day, bruised and bleeding from a single bullet that has traversed her brain and stolen her memory. Taken into the convent, Eve would seem to have escaped from a troubled past into a haven of peace and comfort, but for her violent nightmares. A year later, her dreams become all too real when men with guns sweep down and slaughter her innocent protegés. Armed only with an old ferry ticket to Tangiers, Eve embarks on a journey halfway across the world to find herself before the bad guys can. The agent-with-amnesia device employed by Jenny Siler in Flashback is nothing new, thrilling readers since Robert Ludlum’s The Bourne Identity and all the way back to Manning Coles’s great 1941 thriller, A Toast to Tomorrow. But Siler breathes new life into the old story with strong characters, emotional depth, vivid locales and a rich, somber tone, making it fresh and real. The paperback is due in August.

Greg Rucka’s A Gentleman’s Game is the result of a curious evolution, having been adapted from a graphic novel series, Queen and Country, itself inspired by the Sandbaggers television series. Our library owns some of each—Sandbaggers is excellent, by the way—and no-nonsense lady assassin Tara Chace may have pulled her neatest trick yet in stepping so gracefully into prose. Islamic fanatics have bombed the London underground, killing 372 and terrorizing the city. While her boss at MI-6 wades through an alphabet soup of international agencies, Tara heads for Yemen to deliver a well-placed bullet, but savior becomes scapegoat when the operation goes pear-shaped and collateral damage includes a scion of the House of Saud. Great camera work, a complex and compelling nemesis, and the fictional debut of a seasoned heroine who is both vulnerable and lethal make this a must-read for espionage fans this summer. The paperback is due in late July.

Among the best spy authors have always been former spies, and one factor in the recent spate of fictional female spies has to be the increasing prevalence of their real-world counterparts. Take Stella Rimington, who rose through the ranks of British military intelligence to become the first female director general, and who now combines her inside knowledge of trade craft, counter-terrorism, and bureaucratic gamesmanship with a healthy dash of escapism in At Risk. Here is the debut of Liz Carlyle, a dauntless secret agent with better taste in clothes than men. Carlyle struggles to stay one step ahead of a domestic terrorist cell by getting inside the heads of its members, zealots who aspire to become not just holy warriors but weapons in the hand of God. A sequel is due in August.

The most exciting smuggling sequences in Raelynn Hillhouse’s high-octane international thriller Rift Zone owe much of their heart-stopping vividness to the author’s own background as a rum runner and black marketeer. Its hard to imagine that Hillhouse received the kind of punishment that heroine Faith Whitney takes at the hands of Russian spies, but I bet she’s got a few neat scars and many more tales to tell.

Some other ladies accessorizing stylish cloaks with deadly daggers are Laura Morse in Forrest DeVoe’s Into the Volcano, Margaret Chisholm from Gonzalo Lira’s Counterparts, Liz Sansborough from Gayle Lynds’s Masquerade and The Coil, Carolyn Carmichael from Francine Mathews’s The Cutout and Blown, the mysterious Korean sleeper spy in Gene Riehl’s Sleeper, Jane Nichols from Maureen Tan’s AKA Jane and Run, Jane, Run, and Andrea Aspinall from Robert Wilson’s The Company of Strangers. And on the lighter side, Olivia Joules in Helen Fielding’s Olivia Joules and the Overactive Imagination, and Selena Keller in Claire Berlinski’s Loose Lips.

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