2012 Conference Issue: One Tribe: Bringing Washington’s Libraries Together

Inside this Issue:

Sharing the Stories of Tribal Libraries ............................................................... 7
Talk Time for Teens .......................................................................................... 16
WLA’s 2012 Scholarship Winners ..................................................................... 25
Up Front

By Brian Soneda

The tribe came together at the Tulalip Resort, April 18–20, 2012. I can only call the 2012 WLA Conference a great gathering and a great success. One more time, let the accolades rain down upon Conference Chair Kristin Piepho and her fantastic Conference Committee. Well done and thank you.

My personal highlight of the Conference was really and truly feeling like I spoke for everyone attending the Business Meeting/Awards Luncheon, every WLA member, and everyone in the whole Washington library tribe when I presented Sam Reed with the 2012 President’s Award, for his years of service to libraries as Secretary of State, culminating with but not limited to his bringing the State Library into the Secretary of State’s fold. The tribe will lose a strong, effective, and (not unimportantly) high-ranking advocate when Sam retires from office at the end of his third term, but I have a feeling Sam will always be a library user and supporter, and that does and will continue to matter. A toast to a career of service—another well done and thank you.

But there were many other highlights of the 2012 WLA Conference. The three keynote speakers, Nancy Pearl (warm and humorous), Brent Hartinger (understated and humorous) and Dan Savage (angry and humorous—no, not a contradiction) were all eloquent and entertaining. The sessions I attended were informative and thought-provoking. Those of us who attended the tour of the Hibulb Cultural Center humbly found added relevance and grounding to our thematic use of the words tribal and tribe.

The conference site was a good fit for everything WLA needed in an event with some 500 attendees. We’ll be back! The customer service provided by the Tulalip Resort staff was excellent (and, for me, continued after the Conference—I left some things in my room when I checked out; they were found and saved, and I was able to recover them the following weekend when in the area for my daughter’s soccer game).

For many of us, it was the quality of the conversations we had and the quality of the networking we did that we will remember about Tulalip. That is as it should be when many tribes who are really one tribe come together like this. I was thrilled that the Presidents of the Pacific Northwest Library Association (Michael Burris), the Washington Library Media Association (Craig Seasholes), the College Library and Media Specialists (Deborah Moore), the Washington Medical Librarians Association (Betsy Bartholomew) and the Washington Chapter of the Association of College and Research Libraries (Erica Coe) were all able to attend the WLA Conference as my guests. I had already attended the WMLA conference in Kenmore earlier this year, attended the CLAMS conference in Seattle in May, and hope to attend other conferences as part of a kind of presidential reciprocal agreement. This extension of the “Mallory Agenda” so strongly advocated for by Past-President Tim Mallory seems like a perfect fit for the One Tribe theme.

Speaking of other conferences, there are some big ones coming up, including the American Library Association Conference, in Anaheim (June 21–26) and the Pacific Northwest Library Association Conference, in Anchorage (August 1–3). A little further down the road, calendar-wise, not distance-wise, is the Washington Library Employees (WALE) Conference, October 29–31, at Campbell’s Resort on Lake Chelan. As the twenty-first annual WALE Conference, it sports the catchy theme of “Coming of Age: Twenty-One Years as an Interest Group.” I loved the twentieth WALE Conference last year at Spokane’s historic Davenport Hotel and fully expect to love this one, too. The WALE IG has strong roots at Campbell’s Resort, so this is in many ways a homecoming.

Looking into the future, there is much work to do in the library world. Rapid change is the norm. Funding challenges and an economy that is turning around, but oh so slowly, are everyday realities. But together, we are up to the task because, after all, we are One Tribe.
“Alki,” a Native American word meaning “bye and bye,” was suggested by Nancy Pryor, Special Collections at Washington State Library, as the title for the Washington Library Association’s journal. “Alki” is also the state motto, signifying a focus on the future.

Alki (ISSN: 8756-4173) is published three times per year in March, July and December, and mailed to over 700 WLA members and interested parties. Print subscriptions are available at $20 per year, or $7.50 per single issue. Contact the WLA office at the address above.

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

Direct your submission queries to:
Bo Kinney
Email: alkieditor@wla.org

Alki is designed by Tammy M Reniche, Director of Publications for Melby Cameron & Anderson. Cover photo: The Lobby of the Tulalip Resort. Photo by: Tammy M Reniche

Table of Contents

**Up Front**

*By Brian Soneda* .......................................................... 2

**From the Editor** .............................................................. 4

**Who’s on First?**

*By Sarah Lynch*

**Legislative Update**

National Library Legislative Day 2012 .......................................................... 6
*By Rand Simmons and Brian Soneda*

**One Tribe: Bringing Washington’s Libraries Together**

Sharing the Stories of Tribal Libraries................................................................ 7
*By Theresa Kappus*

People and Books: Learning that Leads to a Conference Session ...................... 8
*By Nadean Meyer*

The Discovery Level in Software and Wetware: Implications for Reference and Bibliographic Service .............................................................. 10
*By Tony Wilson*

Crystal ball: MLIS students look to the future through WLA ...................... 11
*By Emily Keller*

Try it, You’ll Like It! Storytimes for Children with Special Needs .................. 13
*By Paula Burton, Patricia Ferrell, Jill Olson, and Kate Patrick*

You Went to Conference, Now What? ......................................................... 14
*By Kate Skinner*

A New Approach to Problem Solving .............................................................. 15
*By Lin Schnell*

**Articles**

Talk Time for Teens ................................................................................. 16
*By Aarene Storms*

Preparing Librarians to Provide Digital Help and Training ............................. 18
*By Samantha Becker*

Returning to Chelan ............................................................................... 20
*By Lynne King*

**Solinus**

The Library After Dark ............................................................................ 22
*By Kirsten Edwards*

**WLA Communiqué**

People and Places .................................................................................. 23

In Memoriam: Marjorie Ann Burns, 1926–2012 .............................................. 24
*By Gail Willis and Kristy Coomes*

WLA’s 2012 Scholarship Winners ............................................................... 25
*By Mary Ross*

WLA’s Award Winners ............................................................................. 28

The Learning Curve .................................................................................. 29
*By Jeanne Fondrie*

**I’d Rather Be Reading**

Sherlock Holmes, Patron Saint of Librarians .................................................. 31
*By David Wright*
From the Editor

by Bo Kinney

For me, WLA’s annual conference is an opportunity to see old friends, meet new ones, and to share knowledge with my colleagues. This year’s conference was a full and interesting one, and the pages of this issue of Alki reflect that.

The conference is also an opportunity for Alki’s editorial committee to meet face to face. The editorial committee works hard to solicit, write, and edit contributions to each issue, and to plan editorial policy and operations. I want to thank all the committee members for their hard work and contributions. I also want to thank Tammy Reniche, Alki’s graphic designer, who reprised her role as conference photographer this year. And I am pleased to welcome Anna Shelton as Alki’s newest intern. Anna is a student at the University of Washington Information School and was one of WLA’s three graduate study scholarship winners this year.

The editorial committee decided to make a small change to Alki’s publication schedule, moving the December issue up to November. Alki will now be published regularly, every four months, in March, July, and November.

A much more important decision regarding Alki was made at the WLA Board’s June planning retreat following the conference. WLA has been running a deficit for the past four years, and the Board chose to create a balanced budget for the 2012–2013 fiscal year. The Board decided, as one of several cuts, to eliminate funds for printing and mailing Alki. The journal will continue in electronic form only.

The Board’s decision is effective immediately, so this is the final printed issue of Alki. Alki has been the printed journal of WLA for over twenty-five years, and the decision to end print publication was abrupt. But I am optimistic that we will be able to continue our high standards and quality coverage of Washington library topics electronically. We have a lot of work to do as we plan the details of this transition, so please contact me at alkieditor@wla.org with comments, concerns, and ideas.

The next issue’s theme will be Overdue for Optimism: Creating a Positive Work Environment. The deadline for submissions will be September 15. As always, I look forward to your contributions.

Bo Kinney is a librarian in the Special Collections department of the Seattle Public Library.
Christian Grey, the main character in E. L. James’s romance trilogy, is a very trendy man. *Fifty Shades of Grey, Fifty Shades Darker,* and *Fifty Shades Freed* are currently holding the top three spots on the New York Times bestseller list. Libraries in three states—Florida, Georgia and Wisconsin—have decided against circulating the books responsible for his fame, despite their soaring popularity.

James originally published these novels online, and they quickly developed a large following, primarily among middle-aged women. They have even been nicknamed “mommy porn.” The premise is not new: a young college student falls for a wealthy businessman, and they embark on a passionate affair. Their bedroom activities are racy and erotic and involve bondage and S&M, hence the controversy.

Is this why the book is being pulled? Are the arguments valid?

According to Cay Hohmeister, director of libraries in Florida’s Leon County, “It has not received good reviews,” and “It doesn’t suit our community standards.”1

I was unable to find professional review articles for the series (from the US), but should that criteria alone prevent a library from selecting a title? Have the Bible or the Koran been written up in *Publishers Weekly* or *Library Journal*? And even if the reviews were unfavorable, is that a legitimate reason to censor? Bodice rippers normally don’t employ the most technical writing devices, yet their popularity among patrons demands their inclusion in most collections.

Ironically, according to the library’s website, “The Board of [Leon] County Commissioners adheres to the principles adopted by the American Library Association (ALA) with respect to access to library materials, services, and resources,” then quotes the ALA Library Bill of Rights.2 Their support of the ALA Library Bill of Rights is contradictory to the removal of these books.

The term “community standards” implies that the entire population adheres to one set of principles and moral compass, which is rarely the case. By removing those items which do not fit the status quo, most of your collection would be unavailable to the public. If this “community standard” justification is applied consistently, their community must condone the behavior in such movies as *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* and *American Pie.* (Both of these movies are owned by the Leon County Libraries.)

“IT’s semi-pornographic,” says Don Walker, a spokesman for Brevard County, Florida, where the library put nineteen copies of the book on the shelves, then pulled the novel after reading reviews about it. Some 200 notices had to go out to people on a waiting list to read it. Walker also stated, “I have not read *Fifty Shades of Grey*...From what I understand, it’s a lot about male dominance and female submissiveness.”3 Shouldn’t one read the book in question before making such a decision? Throughout history, male dominance is a commonplace theme in literature. Think of Aristotle and Shakespeare. Even Bella is obedient and submissive in Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga.

The bestselling trilogy *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* contains rape and incest, behaviors that are violent and illegal. These books remain on the shelves in both libraries cited in this article. However, these libraries have justified banning books dealing with two consenting adults performing S&M in their private lives.

Where do you draw the line on what behavior is acceptable? Are you condoning certain behaviors by reading books about true crime, child abuse or war? Does your selection policy allow for inclusion of controversial material, or does it make it easier to censor? Your policies are only as strong as your ability to uphold them.

Christian Grey isn’t going away anytime soon. Universal has purchased the movie rights, and Hollywood is buzzing about the leading man and, of course, the MPAA rating the film will receive. King County Library System currently has 1,099 holds on *Fifty Shades of Grey,* and I’m patiently waiting as number 737.

Notes


Sarah Lynch is a Teen Services Librarian at the King County Library System.
National Library Legislative Day
by Rand Simmons and Brian Soneda

Each year the Washington Library Association’s Federal Relations Coordinator organizes a delegation to attend National Library Legislative Day (NLLD) on WLA’s behalf. WLA lost its Federal Relations Coordinator in April when Mary Jo Torgeson accepted a position as Director of the Anchorage Public Library.

Torgeson’s departure left Rand Simmons, Acting State Librarian, Washington State Library, feeling lonely and Brian Soneda, WLA President and Director of the Mount Vernon City Library, feeling desperate!

After a few inquiries to find a replacement for Torgeson, Brian decided to be the second member of the Washington state delegation, having been on the trip two times before. Rand had previously served as the WLA Federal Relations Coordinator and has been attending NLLD since 2007. (He’s been around the block a few times.)

The purpose of National Library Legislative Day is to provide a forum for each state to inform its congressional offices on federal legislative issues important to Washington Libraries.

Thanks to support from Marilyn Lindholm, Administrative Assistant to the State Librarian, the trip was well organized.

A typical National Library Legislative Day schedule looks like this:

- **Sunday:** travel; orientation for first time participants;
- **Monday:** the American Library Association Washington Office holds an orientation for NLLD participants and hosts a reception at the end of the day to which senators, representatives and their legislative aides are invited;
- **Tuesday:** visits to congressional offices; and
- **Wednesday:** Senators Murray and Cantwell hold open constituent coffees; participants travel home.

So how do we know what to talk about? The ALA Washington Office prepares material on legislative issues they deem most important to the library community. There are handouts for the senators, representatives and staff. We choose which topics will be presented.

Most visits are around 15 minutes in length so only three to four topics can be discussed. To the packets of ALA material, we add Congressional Fact Sheets prepared by the Washington State Library (see http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/libDev/publications.aspx#congressional). These fact sheets demonstrate how Federal Library Services and Technology Act funding has benefited each congressional district, and the congressional staff love them.

This year we were not able to visit with Senator Cantwell’s office or the office of Representative Jim McDermott. However, we visited staff of all other Washington congressional offices. Here is what we discussed:

- **Funding for FY 2013 Library Services and Technology Act** at the level recommended by President Obama, $184,700,000.
- **Need for funding for school libraries,** particularly reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and restoring level funding for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy program at $28,600,000 for FY 2013. By law, at least half of this money must be allocated to a competitive grant program for underserved school libraries.
- **Cybersecurity and protecting the privacy of individuals who use libraries.** In particular we talked about H.R. 3523, Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act, which since has been passed by the House (April 26, 2012).
- **Finally, we recommended support of the Government Printing Office (GPO)** at the President’s FY2013 request of $216,200,000. The Washington State Library serves as a regional depository library for federal publication. These publications come to us in both print and electronic format from the GPO. Because of the GPO’s federal depository library program the residents of Washington and Alaska have access to the published record of the federal government.

Here is how you can be involved. In the past few years the WLA Board has supported sending two delegates to National Library Legislative Day. This has typically been the Federal Relations Coordinator (vacant at the time of this article) and the State Librarian. Anyone else can join them if they have independent funding. As the economy improves, WLA’s coffers may increase and funding could be available to send more delegates.

But, we need you—many of you—to inform your congressional senators and representatives on federal legislative issues. You can do this by phone, by email, and through ALA’s automated software. Please respond when the Federal Relations Coordinator issues a call to action. You really can make a difference through your participation.

Attending NLLD is fun. You are treated well by the staff of the congressional offices, you learn the major issues, and you develop a cohort of peers from other states. A great way to “train” for visiting congressional offices is to participate in WLA’s Legislative Day. These grassroots activities will help you build leadership skills. And, as we used to say, “it looks good on the résumé.”
Sharing the Stories of Tribal Libraries

by Theresa Kappus

When Valerie McBeth was asked to do a presentation at the 2012 WLA conference on Tribal Libraries, she saw a perfect opportunity for tribal libraries to share their stories. After she contacted colleagues in “Keepers of the Stories,” an informal organization of tribal library staff in Washington State, Faith Hagenhofer came on board as a co-presenter. Conference attendees at their Thursday afternoon session got a good idea of the important role tribal libraries play in their communities. In the audience were librarians from Yakama and Jamestown S’Klallam tribal libraries, who added stories of their own.

The need for creative funding is something all tribal libraries share. Because they serve independent sovereign nations, they are essentially national libraries and, as such, they get no funding from city, county, or state taxes. The respective tribes usually cover administrative costs, including the librarian’s salary, but grants from agencies like the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) are necessary to pay for supplies and acquisitions. When asked what one thing she would like to stress to Alki readers, McBeth said, “Partnerships!” Tribal librarians value opportunities to collaborate with other libraries to improve their ability to serve patrons and provide access to additional resources for all.

Here is a quick look at three tribal libraries:

The Lower Elwha Klallam reservation occupies about 1,000 acres along the river west of Port Angeles. Tribal membership is around 984, with 395 living on the reservation. The library is open nearly 40 hours per week, with over 6,000 items available for its 400 patrons: adults, children, and teachers from Port Angeles and Willapa Bay. There are 326 tribal members. The library is open forty hours per week and has more than 6,000 titles and about 600 patrons, mostly adults. They specialize in Native American materials and have a sizable fiction collection and a computer lab. There is a nice collection of kids’ books, and they are building the YA collection. The library partners with Timberland Regional Library.

Crescent schools. There is a public computer lab and an after-school program for kids. The collection features Native American history and culture, and their LibraryThing account serves as the on-line catalog: http://www.librarything.com/catalog/elwhakkallamlibrary.

Tracey Hosselkus, the tribal Education Director, is in charge of K–12 education, college advising, the GED program, and the Klallam language program—and she supervises the library. Jim Reems is the one paid staff member. Volunteer librarian Miriam Bobkoff puts in 4–8 hours per week and maintains the library blog (http://klallamlibrary.blogspot.com). The library is governed by a very supportive tribal council. Funding comes from IMLS funds first, donations second, and tribal funds third, and they apply for Libri Foundation Grants whenever they are eligible to do so. According to Hosselkus, the best thing the library does is provide space for GED studying and provide reading materials for kids and adults. They are most proud that they are there and that the tribe is funding the part-time library manager. On the wish list: more space, with a children’s area separate from the adults’, and a bigger study area with computers.

The Shoalwater Bay Reservation occupies about one square mile on Willapa Bay. There are 326 tribal members. The library is open forty hours per week and has more than 6,000 titles and about 600 patrons, mostly adults. They specialize in Native American materials and have a sizable fiction collection and a computer lab. There is a nice collection of kids’ books, and they are building the YA collection. The library partners with Timberland Regional Library.

Theresa Kappus is the Distance Services Librarian at Gonzaga University’s Foley Center Library.
As a librarian for decades, I value research, professional development, and personal learning, but nothing prepared me for the odyssey that resulted in a recent WLA conference session, “What’s My Story? Pacific Northwest Native American Youth Resources” (http://research.ewu.edu/resourcelist).

The session was the latest step in a process that began with personal questions and culminated in a list of Northwest Coastal, Inland Plateau, and Pan-Indian and urban youth resources for an American Library Association Carnegie-Whitney Publication grant. Despite having lived in Washington State most of my life and having worked in K–12 schools for many years, there was much I did not understand about treaties, residential schools, tribal sovereignty, and the history of our state and our tribes. So I set out to learn more after I realized these gaps while attending the training workshop for the Washington State tribal sovereignty curriculum Since Time Immemorial two summers ago.

People Are a Masterful Way to Learn
Many people, especially tribal librarians, educators, and museum staff, have contributed to my learning. Lily Gladstone, Blackfoot actress of the Living Voices presentation of Native Vision was a model of how to suggest probing questions as she shared presentations on boarding school experiences through Navajo stories. Denny Hurtado and Joan Banker at the Indian Education Office at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction were patient, knowledgeable, and understanding about my questions. I met more people as my grant partner, Rayette Sterling, and I traveled to regional cultural centers to talk about books in their libraries and shops. One highlight was the spring 2012 IFLA Presidential Program on Indigenous Peoples, with over two hundred participants from around the world as well as the Pacific Northwest. Each person led us to more ideas about the best culturally relevant youth resources. A list of over three hundred items is our result of this work.

Books for Learning—Not Youth Books
While people led me to great books and ideas, ultimately I read a variety of books to expand my knowledge. The list below describes the titles that brought me new ideas about the American Indian experience and my neighbors. Some are scholarly, many are regional, but all are worthy of your time. The American Library Association Carnegie-Whitney Publication grant was an impetus to learn more and share with others. It provided some resources to spend the time traveling and talking with others which proved so valuable. Perhaps the following annotated book list will prompt some discoveries of your own. Enjoy the trip!

Recommended Adult Books
Benes, Rebecca C. Native American Picture Books of Change: The Art of Historic Children’s Editions. Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 2004. While we discovered several regional American Indian readers that have been created over the past decades, this book discusses the first series, published as early as the 1920s. Some non-Native teachers in Indian schools decided to use their students’ art and stories in books to teach English.


Recommneded by a tribal educator, this collection of essays about the powwow, new and old, challenged many of my ideas about Pan-Indianism, and even the word powwow itself.


Having read Campbell’s fiction earlier, this memoir gave me a new understanding about children traveling between family members and different areas of the state. Her stories felt familiar in some ways, but her perspective on racism is disturbing.


As a resident of the Pacific Northwest, I thought I knew something about totem poles, but this book contrasts tribal history and locations with the commercialization of the totem pole for regional promotions and world fairs. It taught me to look with a more critical eye.


This book changed my ideas about how to successfully include diversity in early childhood programs. It covers a range of child-friendly topics while respecting Native culture.


This history of educating American Indian children combines the residential boarding school programs with other often misguided efforts to impose values on American Indians. The mention of democracy in the subtitle is a good reminder of the values we claim to practice.


A friendly book for non-Natives to ask the questions that they may not understand and receive a clear, even simplified answer, with more details about the key issues for further research.

Nadean Meyer is the Learning Resources Librarian at Eastern Washington University. She co-presented “What’s My Story? Pacific Northwest Native American Youth Resources” at the 2012 WLA Conference.

The revival of canoe building, travel, and races is told through individual stories of tribes that work together. Canoes are paddling once again in the waters of the Pacific Northwest.


Having read many books on Chief Joseph, this perspective of a companion chief during the Nez Perce war and flight provided new insight and gave me a historical feel to the geographical areas that I visit regularly.


Partway through the project, I questioned whether it is even worthwhile to present American Indian experience in the print format. This book broadened my understanding of the role of print throughout the history of Native encounters with Europeans.


This memoir tells of the change Oliver made in Indian education in Washington State. Recommended by a tribal educator, this book shared the history of how our tribes strive for a valid education for their children.


Several educators had this adult book on their suggested list for youth. The detailed explanation of the use of the cedar tree allowed me to see the cedar tree as a living provider of materials and essential to the coastal tribes’ life.


The Washington legislature requested a report about Native American children in our schools, and *Where the Sun Rises* gives statistics and suggestions to help our Native students succeed and to teach our non-Native students about their neighbors.


Full of the unexpected, this book expanded my concepts of manga with its blend of Japanese and Haida art styles.

Linda Rose has been the library manager for the past seven years. This year she has a full time apprentice, Kristine Torset. The library is governed by the tribe, which supports and appreciates the library. They acquire materials through IMLS grants and donations. Rose says the best thing her library does is to make everyone feel at home. They bring in great programs for everyone to enjoy and provide information on local events. Rose is most proud of their great community and that everyone enjoys coming to the library.

When asked what was on top of her wish list, she answered that she got her wish: Garth Stein is coming to the library! But she would like a bigger facility in the near future.

The *Lummi Nation* sits on a peninsula northwest of Bellingham. The *Lummi Library* was founded in 1985 to support *Northwest Indian College* and to serve as a public library for the reservation. It is open 61 hours per week and has about 30,000 titles in the collection. The Native collection is particularly strong in Pacific Northwest history and culture and Indian Education, Law and Policy. A highlight of NWIC’s curriculum is the Bachelor of Science in Native Environmental Science program, and the library collection has been strengthened to support that degree. The children’s collection has improved in the last couple of years, too.

Director Valerie McBeth supervises three full time staff, a work-study student, and one part-time grant-funded employee. The library has an advisory board but is governed by the college administration. There is institutional funding and some federal funding for building future capacity. Funds from IMLS Basic Grants support the public part of the library’s mission. An IMLS Enhancement Grant has made it possible to provide early literacy training for the past eighteen months. The best thing the library does, says McBeth, is provide resources, including space, for college and community members to improve their lives. McBeth is most proud that the library has become an open and welcoming institution which has made and strengthened connections with other institutions to the benefit of all patrons. At the top of her wish list is to get the catalog and the collection to match, and she has a “magic” wish to reclassify the collection from LC to Dewey.

**Further Resources**


The Discovery Level in Software and Wetware:
Implications for Reference and Bibliographic Service

by Tony Wilson

Access to library resources is reaching a singularity of sorts: frictionless searching. –Pete Coco, ACRLog

Libraries? Aren’t they going away? Well, we don’t think so, and we have lots of statistics to the contrary. Nevertheless, the perception of our decreased relevance is common and based on some real shifts in what the public needs from us and what we should be prepared to provide. Several sessions seemed promising in their approaches to these challenges. The Readyweb Resources Project from the State Library provides a free, easily edited web page design to be a front end to the local OPAC. It would allow linking out to other sites and social media book activity like Goodreads. The “Multifaceted Public Instruction” presentation from KCLS touched on a topic with great potential but seemed underdeveloped—technology on bookmobiles, online tutorials, volunteers teaching Word and Excel to seniors. “Reimagining Reference” and “The Discovery Decision” were two rich sessions that gave a lot of insight into what is happening, and combining them gives us some hints on what should be happening.

Libraries are not going away, but several things about them, as well as how we think about them, are going away. One is ready reference, something we used to get really good at by building and knowing a reference collection. Between Google for short answers and Wikipedia for a quick orientation to anything, people can do it themselves.

Another thing that is going away is teaching the use of the catalog. (Teaching the catalog never worked anyway. Could you really teach someone from the public to use LCSH? It has been out of control for decades.) Once we got keyword searching, people could just type in whatever they felt like, pick a promising result, and then click the LCSH heading (for “more like this”). Using the catalog was a set series of technical steps: patron language to catalog access point to call number. It was self-serving to make that part of the mystery, sort of a library-patron original sin. It is forthright of us to build technical algorithms that let the user succeed on his own.1

A third thing going away is the sense that a single library is going to have everything you need and in the format in which you need it.

The panel on Reimagining Reference acknowledged the demise of the librarian-staffed reference desk. Someone else will give directions to the restroom and clear the jams in the copier. What’s left for reference are the tougher questions, those on the higher end of the READ scale, which measures qualitative differences among reference questions (http://readscale.org).

These are questions requiring substantial effort, multiple resources,

“The library is free, but harder to use.”

Speaker and Panelists from the “Reimaging Reference” session of the 2012 WLA Conference

consultation appointments and dialogue, and—likely—the evolution of the question. These higher-level questions, of course, cry out for Sno-Isle’s Book-A-Librarian service. Several librarians alluded to very successful sessions, pride in being booked, and satisfaction with the service they were able to provide. Some cited the cost-effectiveness of an in-depth session obviating the need for multiple contacts.2

Book-A-Librarian service presumably means a librarian gets booked, though that might not always be necessary. It does point up a potential ethical issue. We all work with assumptions of privacy, confidentiality, and open access as our daily values.3 I’d like to think it appropriate to follow the precept in medical ethics that the patient (or patron) has the right to know the identity and professional status of individuals providing the service.

OK, so we don’t need ready reference in anything like the way we used to. If I have access to Google, Wikipedia, and Amazon, why do I need the library at all? Well, the library is free, but harder to use. We are likely to claim we provide higher quality information and a lot that is invisible to a private web search. We can also enjoy thinking that the library obtained things that for one reason or another are not a waste of money, adding one more layer of quality assurance. So, how do we bring people into our services? The current buzz is that we do it by providing a “discovery layer.”

I enjoyed the “Discovery Decision” presentation by Jennifer Bielewski from LYRASIS and have since browsed the web on the topic. Some of the technical discussion is quite fascinating, but here is my attempt at plain language. The ideal is to put a single search box at the front end of your OPAC or ILS, backed up by software that pre-harvests to the cloud an index to everything you have or have access to through your index subscriptions, local databases and the like. You can often enable folksonomic tagging and user reviews. Providing a single login for all the library’s resources, the discovery

Continued on page 12

Tony Wilson is retired from Highline Community College where he trained prospective library employees for forty years. He was WLA president 1981–1983. Currently he is president of the Des Moines/Woodmont Library Advisory Board (KCLS) and an emeritus member of WLA.
For students pursuing an MLIS, attending a professional conference is an opportunity to get a taste of their future professional lives. The 2012 WLA annual conference in Tulalip attracted a large contingent of MLIS students from the Information School at the University of Washington. Three students that I work with in reference at UW’s Suzzallo Library were among them, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor who sponsored their attendance. They took time out of their jam-packed academic and work schedules to talk with me about their experiences at the conference. A number of themes emerged in our discussion, from practical insights on how to get the most out of conferences to big-picture reflections on the future of the profession. These students took full advantage of the conference to meet new colleagues and engage with issues in the profession outside of the classroom.

Lessons Learned
On the practical side, they all walked away with insights on how to make conference experiences more meaningful. Networking is seen as a crucial activity at conferences, and all agreed that this smaller, accessible venue was an excellent entry point into professional networking. Alyssa Berger, who will graduate with her MLIS this spring, noted, “Everyone I met was just lovely. There’s just no reason to be intimidated by librarians at WLA. Everyone was so approachable, and with just a brief introduction from a colleague or friend, it was easy to take it from there to have interesting conversations. And that’s really what networking is, having engaging conversations with other professionals.”

Eli Gandour-Rood, a first-year MLIS student, agreed. “Folks were familiar with the Information School and excited to meet us because we were students. It was a great ‘training wheels’ conference!” Their experiences left them wanting even more interaction. Thinking forward to how to make the conference even more engaging, the group thought it would be helpful to match up students or first-time conference attendees with a mentor, a librarian who would be willing to show them the ropes. They could introduce them to the structure of the organization, share their experiences, introduce them to their colleagues, and help them navigate the conference.

They also experienced how tiring conferences can be. Sharde Mills, a first-year MLIS student and the UW Libraries McKinstry Fellow, advised, “It’s important to pace yourself. You’re focusing on conference sessions, then you’re networking between sessions, then off to the next session or meal. It can be exhausting to be ‘on’ the entire time. It’s good idea to carve out a little time to relax in there so that you can keep energized and engaged.” Eli added, “It’s also important to do a little planning and preparation. Scope out the sessions in advance, maybe even learn more about presenters and seek out people who are doing work you’re interested in.”

Beyond the Classroom
The group also took away new perspectives on issues they grapple with in their coursework. Each expressed appreciation for hearing how librarians in different settings approach issues they’ve only explored in the abstract in the curriculum.

“Each expressed appreciation for hearing how librarians in different settings approach issues they’ve only explored in the abstract in the curriculum.”
level can enable a user workspace along the lines of “my bookshelf,” and private or public user annotation. Presumably, the possibly overwhelming results from a search of Google-like simplicity will be supplemented by error correction (“did you mean”) and extensive faceting (format, availability, language, date, peer-review, ratings, prizes, and many others).

Bielewski alluded to a plethora of commercial and open-source products that provide a discovery layer. BiblioCommons stood out in the social dimension: crowd-sourced metadata, user reviews, user-to-user communication (and blocking), user links to video, and more. Aside from these personal workspace and social media aspects, note that we used to be the discovery level. We’d take the patron’s interest, orient ourselves if necessary with reference works we’d already touched, prescribe a catalog search, access the more appropriate indexes, and become better librarians in the process. This was the discovery level in the meatspace.

On the one hand, if we can, as professionals, create an automated discovery level that gets patrons better, cleaner, faster results with more privacy, but which leaves us out, don’t we have an obligation to do so? On the other hand, we can certainly appreciate what may be being lost. Mita Williams, the New Jack librarian, plaintively writes, “[T]he librarian makes sense of the collection by interacting with it. With fewer and fewer questions being asked at desks, how are librarians going to make sense of our collections now?”

I think Williams is right, that there is a kind of blood-and-bone-level expertise that is going to be lost. I’ve loved those librarians whose whole personality became a bubbling miscellany of everything. If the new reference climate requires a subject specialist, we are not going to become blood-and-bone experts in the specialties themselves, but more quickly than our patrons, we can become experts in finding the literature of whatever topic is presented to us. It is just book learnin’, but that’s what we do. I can see reference librarians being booked and producing what we used to call path-finders and making sense of the world for themselves and their patrons well beyond the confines of the local collection.

Notes

1. Not that there aren’t some problems now and again. I knew my library had a copy of a book entitled The Information. Not remembering the author, I could not find it in the catalog. Querying a librarian about the problem, I was told that they just search Amazon to get enough detail to search their own catalog.
2. Statistics at my local King County branch still show a preponderance of ebook download and email issues. Could this be the new paper jam of neediness? We should expect the service to evolve.
3. I notice my last ebook overdue—excuse me, loan expiration—notice came from Amazon. Now they must know.

Envisioning the Future

For these soon-to-be librarians, the conference also provided a welcome break from the anxiety of thinking about finding a job in the current job climate. In fact, these three left the conference feeling more confident and inspired about their futures in the profession. Alyssa illustrated, “I met a few recent graduates who were all working in the field, and that made me feel optimistic. It was really encouraging. It helped me see that my skills are going to serve me well and that I will in fact be a professional someday. It was a real confidence booster.”

WLA also gave them a new perspective on the range of activities in all types of libraries across the state. Alyssa explained, “It was eye-opening to get a statewide perspective, to see what libraries are doing in spite of years and years of budget cuts. Librarians are still innovating, they’re still excited, they’re still finding new ways to get people in their libraries. At every session, librarians were passionate about programs and services in their libraries.” Tying the experience to his work in the UW Libraries, Eli shared, “The best part of working in Suzzallo is interacting with the other librarians, getting mentored, seeing models for how we can emerge into the profession. WLA gives us all of that, but diversified. I didn’t even realize everything that was going on at the State Library, for example. That was fascinating to see who’s working there and what they’re doing. It was just inspiring to see all the interesting, important work going on out there.” Indeed, it was inspiring to me to see these up-and-coming library leaders looking into their own futures in libraries.
Try it, You’ll Like It! Storytimes for Children with Special Needs

by Paula Burton, Patricia Ferrell, Jill Olson, and Kate Patrick

An Epidemic?
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently reported that autism prevalence in the U.S. is now one in eighty-eight children (1:54 boys; 1:252 girls). This is a 1000% increase over the last 40 years. Approximately one in fourteen children in school has an identified special need. Parents of preschoolers might know of their child’s challenge from birth, or it might reveal itself as the child grows.

A King County Library System staff committee has been working to identify and create library services for children with special needs, and for the last year we have been providing storytimes for this audience. We don’t consider ourselves experts—just children’s librarians who are learning as we go. Here’s a little of what we’ve learned.

Our Web Guide
One of our first goals was a presence on the KCLS website—a go-to place for information on special needs storytimes, plus resources found in- and outside of the library. KCLS provides many topical web guides, so a layout was already provided. What to include from the abundance of information available was more difficult. Clarity and easy navigation became the objective for our web guide (http://guides.kcls.org/specialneedsfamilies), which includes a committee-updated “spotlight” section.

Preparation
The opportunity to provide special needs storytimes is exciting, but may also be somewhat intimidating. The following preparation may be very useful.

• Books, periodicals, the web, and training sessions offer excellent insights. Librarians throughout the country have detailed postings about their experiences; learn more through direct correspondence or program visits. Websites such as the Association for Library Service to Children blog (http://www.alsc.ala.org/blog/), in which librarians documented the creation of their Special Needs storytimes, were invaluable.

• Interview special education teachers and school librarians and observe classroom circle times. These specialists provide wonderful advice and reassurance. Therapists also offer excellent tips and programming best practices.

• Very important, talk with parents of special needs children and connect with their support groups. Determine their expectations, scheduling preferences, and other recommendations.

• Depending on the needs of individual children, you may receive conflicting advice. But, with minimal adjustments, children’s librarians can adapt traditional storytimes and produce excellent programs for children with special needs.

Reaching our Audience
How do we let parents know about these new storytimes? Targeting the services and community resources used by parents, we distributed flyers in person and via email to pediatric clinics, therapy centers, preschools, Head Start & ECEAP centers, parent support groups, child care centers, and homes. We also chatted with parents in the library, and encouraged patrons to talk with their friends. Future plans include postings on the KCLS Facebook page.

Tips and Techniques
While researching we compiled a list of tips and techniques for connecting with special needs children in storytimes. (This long list is available with our conference materials.) These include the use of visual aids like photographs, Boardmaker cards or clip art, and retelling stories with puppets or Boardmaker cards. It helps to keep the storytime room uncluttered and provide mats to help children define their space. Weighted stuffed animals or small objects to hold might help a child with “fidgeting.” Even armed with these techniques we know we will never be experts on any of the disabilities encompassed by the term “special needs.” As the saying goes, “If you know one person with autism, you know one person with autism.”

After doing special needs storytimes for a few months, we have received feedback from parents that we are on the right track. At the Kirkland Library a mother affirmed the program by sharing that she and her son are so happy to be able to come to a storytime where they feel included and accepted. They had stopped going to traditional storytimes because other parents would glare at her son when he was behaving in a way that was normal for him. Comments like these have convinced us of the value of offering special needs storytimes.

Final Words: Try It, You’ll Like It!
Yes, offering a special needs storytime will add more to your already busy schedule. But if you can carve out a spot for this program, we hope you will give it a try. We urge you to take the leap—the payoff is well worth the effort!

Our conference presentation materials are available at: http://2012conference.wla.org/sessions/.

Paula Burton, Patricia Ferrell, Jill Olson, and Kate Patrick are children’s librarians in the King County Library System. They presented “Programming for Children with Special Needs” at the 2012 WLA conference.
You Went To Conference, Now What?

by Kate Skinner

Going to a conference is a wonderful injection of professional enthusiasm. Old and new connections are forged while we immerse ourselves in thinking about our profession from all angles. We explore other areas of our region. We eat different food, travel different roads, hear about other ways of doing things. We explore.

Then what?

Driving the long road back over the mountains from Tulalip, I pondered this question. So I had been lucky enough to go to the WLA conference, now what? How could I bring the riches of the experience back with me to my library system, my community, and my county, back to those who had supported me in leaving, who had accommodated my absence and made me feel so welcome and missed when I returned?

One of the sessions I attended was a presentation on collaboration between the public, academic, and Northwest Indian College libraries in Whatcom County.

Collaboration is an important part of our community-building role in public libraries. In rural areas it gains even more significance because we have extremely limited resources and a small number of agencies doing the work of supporting the economic, educational, health, cultural, and spiritual life of our communities. It makes sense for us to collaborate and share resources wherever possible, rather than reinventing or duplicating our activities and services in multiple discrete parallel universes. Even if we wanted to create unique separate structures, our communities do not have the resources to support this. Together we are so much stronger, have so much more to offer.

I chewed my lip a bit, where the highway stretches long and straight into infinity on the Waterville Plateau, thinking about how the principle of collaboration between different libraries could be applied in Stevens County. Once I was back at work and had attended to the most urgent of the few hundred emails and “while you were out” notes on my desk, I found time to spend a morning contacting all the school librarians and early learning people in the Chewelah area to propose a monthly get-together to share, meet each other, strengthen professional ties, and see how we can support and enhance each other’s work.

I might not be able to apply the one card, multiple libraries Whatcom County model I had learned about at the conference, but I can start a process of sharing and see where that leads.

The response has been so incredibly positive that I am feeling very excited even though we have not yet sat down together. The enthusiasm coming through in the email responses from the others working in the area is palpable.

My initial point of contact was with the people I had identified as being connected to library services in the organizations, thinking a breakfast meeting outside of working hours would be at individual discretion. From a few of the responses, however, it became clear that in certain situations I needed to be discussing this with someone at a more supervisory level.

After some productive meetings with school principals and superintendents who were also enthusiastically supportive of my proposal, it seems that there is a possibility that these monthly Chewelah area librarian meetings could contribute towards continuing education credits for certain school district staff members. There will thus be even more incentive to attend the meeting. Continuing education credit was not something which had featured on my radar initially. The expansion of horizons has begun! I am discovering hidden wins.

At the time of the deadline for this article, we have not yet met because the end of the school year placed a temporary hold on all activities for the school librarian members of the group. However, I am setting up the structures for these meetings to begin with the new school year.

The inspiration provided by going to the conference pushed me into moving forward on a vision of collaboration amongst library people and library services in the Chewelah area. It is my hope that the investment which sent me to the conference will bear dividends enriching my community.
A New Approach to Problem Solving

by Lin Schnell

Are traditional problem-solving methods not working for you? That was the opening line in the program description for the preconference session on Interest-Based Problem Solving (IBPS) at the 2012 WLA Conference.

What is IBPS? It is defined by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service as “a problem-solving process conducted in a principled way that creates effective solutions.” The IBPS model can be used to address interpersonal, work process, and values-based issues.

When used effectively, the expected outcomes from IBPS are:

- Created solutions that benefit the organization as a whole;
- Durable solutions that everyone is motivated to uphold; and
- A structure for moving through unresolved organizational/unit issues.

The key principles of the IBPS model are:

- Focus on the issue;
- Explore all interests underlying the issue;
- Be open to possibilities and opportunities;
- Satisfy others’ interests as well as your own;
- Use agreed-upon standards to narrow the range of options;
- Use consensus to reach the best possible solution.

Why use IBPS? We know that problem solving is an ongoing process that taps into valuable manager and staff resources. We know that traditional problem-solving methods and approaches do not always work effectively. We also know that problems are solvable when the right structured approach is used to solve them. This is where the interest-based process adds value. It helps organizations move forward on entrenched “positional” issues where workable solutions have not been found. It is an inclusive process that all managers and employees can learn and apply to a full range of issues. It supports organizational change and employee involvement initiatives.

In our western culture, organizations have historically placed a high value on authoritative decision-making. However, we have found that this top-down, decisive model is not consistent with the emerging trend to involve workers more in matters that affect their jobs. Organizations that want to develop more innovative methods to achieve efficiency gains and to make the critical changes to allow them to be more nimble and adjust to changing conditions are taking a close look at how they make decisions.

Part of an interest-based process is developing proficiencies at demonstrating that the problem solver has sufficient knowledge of the issue from various and relevant perspectives to make the right decision, and that (s)he demonstrates respect and acceptance of those who are involved in the issue being addressed. These are important factors in not only reaching the right and sustainable solution, but obtaining necessary employee support for the solution you reach. Everyone in the process needs to feel heard and respected—even if the outcome is acceptable and the process was fair.

At The Seattle Public Library, the interest-based process has been used in collaborative labor-management processes, including contract negotiations, for some time. Our library sent our management and union bargaining team to the Harvard Program on Negotiations (http://www.pon.harvard.edu) to learn the interest-based bargaining process, which we have used in the negotiation of our labor agreements. With this foundation, we launched a new training this year on interest-based problem solving that is available to staff at all levels in our organization. While there are a number of reasons why this training will prove highly beneficial, two anticipated outcomes rise to the top:

- A commonly shared perspective and language on how effective the identification of interests is in problem solving.
- Enhanced decision-making and more effective implementation of decisions from increased support by staff.

Interested in finding out more? Feel free to contact me at (206) 733-9922 or lin.schnell@spl.org.

Lin Schnell is Human Resources Director at The Seattle Public Library. She presented “Interest Based Problem Solving” at the 2012 WLA Conference.
It started out as a reference question: “Why doesn’t the library offer a Talk Time program for teens?”

The middle school near my library branch estimates that students there speak more than twenty-six languages in addition to English. At the local high school, even more “heritage” languages are spoken. Our adult Talk Time group has been active for more than a decade, and the twice-weekly English Language Learning (ELL) classes at the library have been very successful.

With two teenaged English language learners in my own home, the query caught my imagination. I know that school ELL classes focus on reading and writing in order to help students succeed scholastically; however, my kids felt that they didn’t really have enough opportunity at school to practice speaking and listening in English with other teens.

Teen ELL students told me that they wanted to update their Facebook status without sounding stupid; they wanted to shop at the mall without being embarrassed about their accents, they wanted to know how to ask somebody out on a date—and they wanted help from other youth, not from adults!

Why doesn’t the library offer a Talk Time program for teens? Nobody had ever heard of such a thing—and everyone agreed that it was the perfect program for our community—so we invented one.

KCLS’s volunteer coordinator offered great advice about recruiting teen volunteers to lead the program. Our diversity coordinator arranged for training of leaders, and our Study Zone coordinator helped figure out the logistics, such as the schedule for group meetings. My branch manager coordinated funding requests to the Friends of the Library. I contacted the school district and visited each ELL classroom in our area at least once to invite students to join us, and on January 5th, 2011, the very first Teen Talk Time launched at the Richmond Beach Library.

Why doesn’t the library offer a Talk Time program for teens? We do!

How to Start a Teen Talk Time Group at Your Library

Recruit Leaders

Bilingual teens are ideal leaders for this program as long as they are fluent in English as well as their heritage language(s). Ideally, seek out a mixture of leaders: a few who are in college, and some who are in high school. In the best possible circumstances, there will always be an “older” young adult present to work with the group, but if there was an occasion that there was nobody over age 18 on a particular day, as long as there were at least 2 leaders under age 18, it would be fine to have staff members “pop in” periodically to make sure everything is okay. These guidelines are borrowed from our library system’s Study Zone program, and are appropriate for Teen Talk Time groups.

Recruit volunteer leaders from local high schools and colleges in order to get older teens and young adults involved. We found that the local Parks Department’s leadership program was an excellent source of leaders for our program; similar programs are offered by branches of the YMCA and some school districts.

Train Leaders

The Talk Time leadership training given to adults at our library system is a good fit for Teen Talk Time leaders. The trainers for “regular” talk time are adept at teaching to diverse learners, and our teen leaders were very happy with the instruction provided. Talk Time leadership training may also be available through local continuing education programs or church groups.

Find Food

The Friends of the Richmond Beach Library were incredibly supportive of my unusual grant request: “provide money to buy enough pizza to feed whatever number of kids, every week, until the end of time.” You may have to write a more limited grant, but don’t be afraid to ask for lots of support.

Richmond Beach was also lucky to strike a bargain with a local (non-chain) pizza restaurant a few blocks from the library. They give us a price break on pizza and they deliver to the library; we include them in all our publicity pieces and thank them frequently and publicly.

Pizza seems to be the magical teen food. When queried about a change in diet, the teens in our Teen Talk Time voted unanimously to continue eating pizza each week, although they experiment wildly with toppings, and almost always ask for a vegetarian and/or non-pork option.

Schedule the Program

As with “regular” Talk Time programs, Teen Talk Time works best as an every-week program. Occasionally, the leaders will declare a week off, usually during finals or school holidays.

Recruit Participants

KCLS’s Graphics Department made a lovely poster for our program, featuring a full-color photo of a mouthwatering pizza. We learned by trial-and-error to include the bus route numbers and a simple map on the poster so that non-fluent readers (and their parents) will be able to find the program at the library.

Multicultural teen leaders tend to know where to find other multicultural teens, often at church or at specialty restaurants and grocery stores. If possible, get your teen leaders to put up posters advertising your program in places that other teens will see them. Translating our poster into heritage languages is beyond the scope of the KCLS Graphics department, but teen leaders can help do this. They may also be willing and able to speak to organized groups about the program—and nothing sells a teen program like a teen who is enthused about it!

If possible, place posters prominently in international grocery stores, your local food bank office, Hopelink, and the Volunteers of America, which coordinates services for all kinds of people in need in the Puget Sound region, including new immigrants.

Aarene Storms is a librarian at the Richmond Beach branch of the King County Library System.
Continued from page 16

Recently we’ve had two new teens join the group who are not, technically speaking, English language learners:

K. is a 15-year-old autistic teen who struggles with communication, especially in groups. His mother asked if K. could be included in Teen Talk Time, and everyone agreed that he would be welcome.

A. is a 16-year-old profoundly deaf boy who is a residential student at the Washington State School for the Deaf in Vancouver, WA. He asked if he could come and eat pizza and talk when he is home from school during vacations. The other teens always look forward to visits from A., because they trade sign language for words with him.

Get Schools Involved
Contact ELL teachers at schools near your library. Offer to visit classes to talk with students about the program. (Take food with you, if possible.)

Communicate also with the ELL administrators in the school district. They will be able to spread the word about your program to teachers, principals, and (most important) parents district-wide.

Welcome Participants
I write a “welcome message” on the meeting room whiteboard each week, with a few conversation-starting ideas. Usually, the teens ignore my suggestions, but sometimes they grab one and run wildly with it.

I also make a pot of coffee and a pot of hot water for tea and hot chocolate, which is a cheap and “adult” way to welcome teens to your event.

Have a sign-in sheet, where participants can write name, age, school, and pizza preference. You can also collect email addresses or phone numbers on the sign-in sheet, if you think that will be useful.

Our program runs from 4 to 6 pm each week. I allow the teens to chat and get comfortable for the first half-hour, and then around 4:30 I collect the pizza preferences and call for the food, which is usually delivered within 30 minutes. This timing has worked well for us.

Have a Few “Ideas in a Can” for Times When the Conversation Starts to Lag
There may be days when the group just seems to be sitting in the room and staring at each other.

• A library scavenger hunt gets them up on their feet and actively exploring the library and the grounds surrounding it. I divide the group into pairs (preferably with no shared heritage languages, so they have to speak English!) and give prizes (bubble gum, pencils, etc).

• Mad Libs (available free online) are good ice-breakers when new teens join the group.

• Hangman is cheap and easy to explain, and is a good vocabulary-builder.

• Board games like Scrabble, Pictionary and Apples to Apples are good verbal challenges, and Monopoly is always fun. (Teens can play in teams if they want more support from group members.)

Recruit Participants Again
The ELL community is continually in flux—you can visit the same teacher’s ELL classroom 3 or 4 times each year and still see new faces. Depending on your community demographics, ELL students in your area may move around frequently depending on politics, seasonal harvests, or job opportunities for family members.

Encourage the members of Teen Talk Time to recruit new members at school and elsewhere. Making posters to advertise the program (in their heritage languages) can also be a good activity for the group.

Take Pictures Frequently
Keep photo permission slips on-hand, and take photos of your TTT participants doing fun stuff like eating pizza and playing games. Print copies of the photos to hand out to the teens—and send electronic versions of the photos to the ELL teachers to share with their classes!

Alert the Media
There are lots of heritage-language and immigrant newspapers and magazines in my area, and they love to promote programs that support ELL students! Pick up the publications in ethnic restaurants and groceries, and write to their editors.

I have a “canned” publicity piece (including photos) that serves as a ready-to-print article for these publications, but they often want to send their own reporters out to talk to Teen Talk Time participants.

Again, keep those photo permission slips handy, and get them signed by parents of your teen participants.

Stay Involved
Although you don’t want to hover over participants as they chat, do check in on them periodically to encourage them not to lapse into heritage language chatting, to answer questions, and to be friendly and supportive. Regular errands like collecting the pizza order and then taking food into the room can provide an “excuse” to check on them.
Introduction
Providing help and training on technology-related tasks to library patrons is an increasingly central part of every librarian’s job duties. In the public library setting, these interactions are often one-on-one with older patrons and at the basic level of digital literacy: how to use a mouse and keyboard, set up an email account, or perform Internet searches. In school or academic libraries, where patrons are now usually digital natives, the training provided is often in group sessions and aims to instill good information literacy skills, or to teach how to perform more sophisticated searches, use digital media tools, or create their own content.

With all this digital help and training happening out in the field, there is surprisingly little research on what makes an effective digital help interaction, and also very little happening in MLIS programs across the country to prepare tomorrow’s librarians to perform this critical role effectively. This article explores the role of digital help, particularly in the context of public libraries, and what previous research suggests are the most important aspects of digital help interactions. In it, I will also suggest how librarians and library schools can help prepare the field for digital help interactions, and how this may strengthen the role of libraries in the public eye for the future.

Help and Training in the Public Library
Research in 2009 for Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries1 and the subsequent report, Opportunity for All: How Library Policies and Practices Impact Public Internet Access, showed the important role that one-on-one help and group training played in the lives of public access technology users. Of the public access technology users surveyed in the study, more than 67 percent received one-on-one help from public library staff or volunteers and nearly 14 percent had attended a library-sponsored training class.

In the survey, these patrons most frequently received one-on-one help with using computer equipment (51 percent of those receiving one-on-one help), using the library website (34 percent), or printing and saving files (32 percent). Patrons receiving help were more likely to be low-income, older, women, and minorities, and were also more likely to speak languages other than English at home, suggesting being recent immigrants or living in immigrant households. There were no statistically significant differences in the level of education of those receiving help. But the survey only told part of the story about the kind of help patrons receive, and how important it is to them in successfully utilizing public access technology resources to accomplish their goals.

In interviews and focus groups, patrons repeatedly recounted stories about critical interactions they had with librarians that helped them, at the time they needed it most, to overcome a difficulty and accomplish something important in their lives. This was particularly true for new users and users with low digital literacy skills who lacked the experience to troubleshoot problems on their own.

Attendance in digital literacy classes were a less popular choice for getting technology help, with just 14 percent of public access technology patrons taking advantage of these services in libraries. This may also be a reflection of the relatively low number of libraries that offer technology classes: according to the 2011 Public Library Funding and Technology Access
Survey, only 38 percent of libraries offer formal technology training classes.1

In the Opportunity for All study, public access technology users over the age of 45 were more likely to attend training programs, as were Latinos, Blacks or African Americans, and people who spoke languages other than English at home. Working people were also more likely to attend training classes than those who were unemployed at the time of the survey, but, interestingly, there were no statistically significant differences in income levels or gender, and only a slight difference in educational levels, with those having less than high school diplomas or GEDs, or having some college but no degree, being the most likely educational groups to attend training classes.

Even Happy Patrons Don’t Always Get Their Needs Met
For the librarian working with public access technology patrons, one-on-one help and training presents some of their most rewarding, as well as most frustrating, interactions. In interviews, library staff reported a great deal of satisfaction with helping patrons with their technology needs, but also reported that the time required to provide help was excessive and that they were unable to spend as much time with patrons as they wished. Overall, 20 minutes seemed to be the outer limits of interactions that weren’t scheduled in advance, though often staff weren’t able to provide any point-of-service interactions because of low staffing levels.

Though patrons rarely expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time librarians were able to spend with them, or with the service they were provided, many librarians reported feeling dissatisfied with having to cut interactions short, as well as frustration with the low level of skills many patrons have coming into these interactions. They report that frequently the patron has an urgent need—filling out a job application, for example—for which they have few, if any, of the skills required to carry out. This puts librarians in a dilemma: they don’t have time to teach all the skills required for the patrons to function independently, they’re not sure they should be doing it for them, and referring the patrons to classes doesn’t meet the immediate need. Librarians also reported feeling ill prepared and ineffective in these interactions. With patrons expressing a clear preference for one-on-one instruction, addressing this dilemma is of critical importance for improving the outcomes of library interactions.

An Opportunity To Increase Effectiveness And Satisfaction
While many of the problems involved in this dilemma are bound up in issues of adequate staffing levels, unreasonable expectations, and patron privacy, part of it also has to do with how librarians are prepared (or, rather frequently, not prepared) to interact with patrons around technology. In this era when half of all public library patrons are using public access technology, including computers and wireless networks, the professional preparation for successfully interacting with patrons has not kept up.

In library schools, for those who have pursued MLIS degrees, the curriculum in most of the major universities is very thin when it comes to digital literacy, and students in those programs would be lucky to find even one course that covers public access technology or digital literacy instruction.2 In professional development, although there are many offerings of curriculum design for digital literacy instruction, few, if any, offer guidance on how to make the most of the limited one-on-one time librarians spend with patrons at the computers.

Working together with Digital Village and the Fiber to the Libraries Coalition, the U.S. IMPACT Study research group has identified key skill areas for librarians whose work involves digital inclusion activities, including helping patrons with their technology needs, teaching digital literacy classes, forming partnerships with other community technology providers, and understanding the broadband landscape.

Under the umbrella of preparing community technology librarians, the agenda of this ongoing project is to identify and create curricula for current library professionals, as well as future librarians, to equip them with a specific skill set relevant to the role of public libraries as community technology providers and the hub of digital inclusion activities in many communities. Such curricula aim to help librarians make the most of their interactions with patrons by arming them with research-based techniques on training and instruction found in adult education pedagogy and other relevant research areas, and taking advantage in particular of new research on how adults successfully acquire digital literacy skills.

The rise of community technology offers public libraries a new arena to show their relevance in a changing world where increasingly the digital divide is less about having technology and more about being able to effectively use it to achieve important personal and professional outcomes. Better interactions with patrons around digital literacy, supported by training, new curricula, and research and evaluation of their effectiveness, will strengthen public libraries and help maintain their central role in communities as providing valuable services when patrons need them most.

Notes
4. The U.S. IMPACT Study research team scanned the course offerings of 17 of the leading Information Schools offering MLIS degrees and found only 6 that offer classes addressing digital literacy instruction.
Returning to Chelan

by Lynne King

“Life changing” is how a colleague described her first WALE conference in Chelan. That first conference was in 1992. The theme was “Career or job, your choice,” and the keynote speaker was Kathleen Weibel from the Chicago Public Library. The conference was an outstanding success, and the Washington library employees returned to Campbell’s in Chelan for their now annual fall conference for the next four years. Everyone loved the speakers, the networking, the workshops, and the friendly little town on the edge of the beautiful lake. Attendees went back to work renewed and revitalized, and their colleagues decided, “next year, I’m going too!” WALE grew, the conference grew, and in 1996 we outgrew the Chelan facility.

A decision was made to follow in the footsteps of the WLA Conferences and move the WALE Conference each year. One year we were on the West side, one year on the East side, another year in the South or the North. We met in Ocean Shores, Bellingham, in Yakima, Spokane, Wenatchee, Sea-Tac, Richland, Olympia, and even back in Chelan. In 2011 the twentieth conference was an elegant “twenties” celebration at the beautiful Davenport Hotel in Spokane.

This twenty-first “coming of age” year, we are returning to Chelan, and hope to once again make it our annual meeting place. Come back to Chelan—come to the twenty-first WALE Conference and participate with your colleagues in meaningful workshops; listen to exciting, inspiring speakers; and return to work with new ideas and new friends in your profession. WALE is a smaller group than it was in 1996, and Campbell’s Resort is a larger facility. But the town is still friendly, Lake Chelan is still beautiful, and the WALE Conference could change your life too.
Featured Speakers

♦ Erica Bauermeister
  ♦ Author of several books, including “Joy for Beginners,” and “The School of Essential Ingredients”
  ♦ www.ericabauermeister.com

♦ Stephanie Gerding
  ♦ www.stephaniegerding.com

♦ Cindy Cunningham
  ♦ Director of Partner Programs, OCLC
  ♦ Former Vice-President and President of WLA
  ♦ Former President of World Corp

Anticipated Programs

♦ Practical Book Mending
  ♦ Beginner and Advanced Sessions!

♦ The Accidental Tech Trainer with Stephanie Gerding

♦ E-Reader Extravaganza!

Networking Opportunities

♦ Dessert Reception

♦ Vendors and Exhibitors!

♦ Local Lake Chelan Activities

Join Your Colleagues and Come Back to Chelan!

Questions? Contact:
Brianna Hoffman & Daurice Siller, Conference Co-Chairs
bhoffman@richland.lib.wa.us, dsiller@richland.lib.wa.us
Theresa Barnaby, WALE IG Chair
tbarnaby@richland.lib.wa.us
The Library After Dark

by Kirsten Edwards

(transcript of the all-cable access program Librarians of Tomorrow: Today! fourth season finale)

**Kirsten:** What exciting topic do we have for our audience today?

**Lorraine:** Some libraries are experimenting with shifting hours later into the evening and exploring late night services—

**Kirsten:** Not to mention our fellows in the Alaska State Library Association.

**Lorraine:** Especially them! As a result, new challenges and opportunities have arisen.

**Kirsten:** Not literally.

**Lorraine:** Librarians can choose to struggle with these challenges or proactively embrace—

**Kirsten:** Not literally.

**Lorraine:** *Metaphorically* embrace the opportunities. I’m speaking of course, of the undead.

**Kirsten:** Like vampires?

**Lorraine:** And not just the sparkly ones. Also ghouls, zombies, and werewolves—

**Kirsten:** Don’t those patrons have a pulse?

**Lorraine:** Yes, there are special after-dark issues with serving (some) shape-changers. Most library equipment requires opposable thumbs.

**Kirsten:** Which is why I’d like to invite our audience to tune into the fifth season opener: Dirty Paws, Clean Media: Were-folk and Your Library!

**Lorraine:** Brought to you by the American Humane Society.

**Kirsten:** But back to serving the undead. What challenges stand out?

**Lorraine:** Staff turnover can be an issue. It’s difficult for some library staff to perform their duties well if they’re missing either their brains or most of their blood supply.

**Kirsten:** HR departments need to update Patron Policy and Procedure manuals to address this.

**Lorraine:** Correct: Patrons who snack on library staff—

**Kirsten:** Or other patrons.

**Lorraine:** Or other patrons—will be asked to leave the library.

**Kirsten:** That seems a bit harsh.

**Lorraine:** Not at all. The North Olympic Library system has reported success implementing their “three bites you’re out” policy.

**Kirsten:** Of course, there are benefits as well. Once the Twi-hards find out about the vampire patrons, teen program attendance can increase dramatically. It’s also a great opportunity to build trust within the paranormal community. I’d like to suggest that libraries could partner with WLA and the iSchool to recruit the undead.

**Lorraine:** Indeed: That’s key to meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century library economy.

**Kirsten:** You mean—?

**Lorraine:** Zombie librarians.

**Kirsten:** Just think of the savings!

**Lorraine:** Not to mention keeping live staff current on hazardous materials and blood-borne pathogen materials-handling procedures. Staff will really be prepared to handle emergencies. That’s a good thing.

**Kirsten:** Especially after we recruit the werewolves.

**Lorraine:** Tune in next year when we bring you an in-depth look at managing budget shortfalls—

**Kirsten:** With time travel!

**Lorraine:** Tesser your way to a better library—

**Kirsten:** On librarians of Tomorrow—

**Lorraine:** Today!
People and Places

David Frazier, graphic designer in Kitsap Regional Library’s Public Relations Department, is once again a winner of the Library Leadership and Management Association’s Public Relations Best of Show Award for graphic design of library materials. Frazier won five first place awards in the 2012 competition and one honorable mention. Awards were for materials including KRL’s One Book, One Community celebration of The Big Burn, young adult book lists, Summer Reading Program materials, promotional materials created for the Starvation Heights One-Hundredth Anniversary fundraiser for the KRL Foundation, and a portfolio of materials promoting KRL’s Fall at the Mall program series.

Members of the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of ALA, have selected Shannon Peterson as the association’s next president-elect. Peterson is a Youth Service Librarian at Kitsap Regional Library’s Port Orchard branch, where she specializes in service to teens. Peterson will begin her term as president-elect in June 2012, becoming president of the association for one year in June 2013. Peterson sits on YALSA’s Board of Directors and had previously chaired the Division and Membership Promotion committee and served on the 2009 Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners selection committee.

Pierce County Library System created a website for military personnel and their families (http://military.mypcls.org/). The website makes getting and using information and resources from Pierce County Library System easier and more applicable to soldiers and their families. With approximately 100,000 soldiers and their families living in the Pierce County area, Pierce County Library strives to provide library services for military families. Library staff from and in military families collaborated to determine the library features and services of most value to military families.

Starting April 2, 2012, Pierce County Library System became tobacco free, to increase the Library’s comfortable, accessible, and welcoming environment for all people. “We weighed our decision to become tobacco free with our mission to bring the world of information and imagination to all people of our community,” said Neel Parikh, executive director for the Library System. “Smoking at entrances to some libraries was making some people feel unwelcome. Staff were also taken away from providing services in order to enforce the smoking at entrances to public buildings’ law.” In January 2012 the Library’s Board of Trustees adopted a Smoke and Tobacco Free Campus Policy.

Spokane County Library District’s first year participating in Money Smart Week @ Your Library was a great success! Twenty events were held at three branches during the week of April 21–28. The biggest draw was the Community Shred Day held simultaneously at two branches. Community members were able to shred an unlimited amount for free. Six organizations partnered with SCLD to provide financial literacy programs on many topics. Energy savings sessions helped launch the “Kill-A-Watt” program in which library members can check out an energy meter to test their appliance efficiency and cost.

The Washington State Library is partnering in Race to the Top at the invitation of Dr. Bette Hyde, Director of the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL). DEL was successful in its application for a four-year, $60,000,000 grant, designed to help the state improve early learning and development programs for young children. Thanks to the leadership of Dr. Hyde, Washington was one of only 9 states awarded this competitive grant. WSL is currently exploring ways in which our state’s libraries can participate in this exciting project.
Laura Sherbo, Program Manager for Branch Library Services at the Washington State Library, has been awarded the Professional Achievement Award by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, a division of ALA. Laura’s staff (former and current) nominated her for the award. Neal Van Der Voorn, a former WSL employee, noted, “As long as I have known Laura, she has dedicated her professional career as a leader...demanding that inmates of correctional centers, patients at the two state hospitals, and residents at the residential institutions for the developmentally delayed receive highest quality library services.”

When the Richland Public Library reopened in 2009 after a complete renovation and expansion, the local chapter of the Washington State Music Teachers Association decided to start a fundraising campaign to purchase a piano for the library. The fundraising efforts received a huge boost when longtime Richland teacher Betty Teel offered up her beautiful Schimmel piano at a ridiculously discounted price. The piano made the journey to Washington from Hawaii where the Teels have been living. The library has hosted several recitals and is looking forward to creating a regular concert series.

The Washington Talking Book & Braille Library was honored with the 2012 Mayoral Award for Empowering Individuals with Disabilities. The award was presented by Mayor Mike McGinn at Seattle City Hall and included a proclamation read by the mayor and given to the library in print and braille. Mayor McGinn also proclaimed June 5, 2012 Washington Talking Book & Braille Library Day.
At the same time the HELP project began, many other libraries initiated outreach services supported by the matching funds of the Social Security Act and the State Library. Marge and HELP project director Sharon Hammer were active in WLA and encouraged staff to be involved as well. Strong alliances among outreach departments were formed and were supported by their involvement in the WLA Interest Group HIS (Hospital and Institution Services) a name that was soon overthrown in favor of a less gender-related and more inclusive IG: OPEN (Outreach Programs for Essential Needs). With additional help from the Washington State Library, these groups sponsored many WLA programs, conferences, seminars, and other statewide training sessions to bolster the skills of people working in outreach.

Marge loved sewing. Her personal dedication to helping people was reflected in her annual production of wonderful doll outfits for the Salvation Army’s Toy and Joy Shop. Many friends were cajoled and found themselves happily sewing and donating doll clothes. Retirement gave her several opportunities to follow her Mariners to Arizona spring training. She loved walking beaches and traveling. Indeed, she journeyed to Nova Scotia and also traveled the length of the Mississippi river with friends in her small RV.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and her son Timothy. She is survived by daughters Virginia Burns (Timberland Regional Library) and partner Elaine Holster, Mary Nichols and husband Michael, Nancy Gross and husband Raymond, daughter-in-law Rita Ticen Burns, six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, a brother and sister-in-law, a brother-in-law, and several nieces and nephews.

Graveside services for Marjorie were held in Bellevue March ninth, honoring her spirit with loving and humorous stories from family and friends, including several WLA colleagues. Mary Ross is the chair of the WLA Scholarship Committee.
need to learn about and understand the needs of a community and to “demonstrate the realm of possibility by turning ideas into reality.”

Amy wrote: “Standing up in front of the WLA membership and being named one of the 2012 Scholarship recipients was one of the highlights of my graduate school experience. As MLIS students, we are not sure what to expect when we eventually step out into the working world. In the face of so much growth and change in the profession, what choices do we make while in school to set ourselves up for making a difference as the future stewards of libraries? While the iSchool’s MLIS program gives us the freedom to choose our own paths, it is scholarship criteria which most often help to light our way. The WLA Scholarship in particular emphasizes commitment to libraries and library service, potential for leadership, and involvement in professional associations. While this scholarship lent me valuable financial support and the opportunity to attend the 2012 conference, receiving this award has validated for me that the types of choices I have made while in school have put me on the right track to becoming a real leader in the profession. For this reason, I pledge to continue making MLIS graduate scholarships a priority, wherever my career might take me.”

Also a student at the UW Information School, Anna Shelton will complete her MLIS degree in June, 2013. Previously employed in the non-profit sector, Anna has a strong commitment to public service and to the values of social justice and equal access to information and resources for underserved groups. Her experience in community organizing around issues such as immigration, health care, family literacy, and conflict resolution will provide a foundation for future involvement in the community served by the library where she works.

In gratitude for the scholarship funds, Anna wrote that: “[This money] will allow me to attend two classes this summer in public librarianship that I otherwise would not have been able to afford to take; it will also extend into the fall by helping pay part of the tuition for one of my core classes, Management of Information Organizations. Altogether, WLA will help support me through one-sixth of the total cost of my MLIS studies. This financial assistance is truly remarkable, especially since the cost of the degree program increased significantly in the past twelve months. Beyond the significant financial support this scholarship provides, it also allowed me to attend my first WLA conference, helping me forge invaluable connections in the professional community and also identify meaningful opportunities to get involved with the work of the association. Receiving this scholarship will serve as a reminder throughout my lifetime of my commitment to be a leader in this field. I am so grateful for WLA’s help. Your investment in students means so much.”

Announcing the recipients at the Award Lunch is the culmina-
Thank you to WLA’s 2012 scholarship donors:

Jonathan Betz-Zall
Kathy Bullene
Traci Collins
Diane Cowles
Cynthia Cunningham
Jeanne Fondrie
John Fossett
John George
Julie Graham
Betha Gutsche
Cynthia Harrison
Phil Heikkinen
Floyd Hodges
Priscilla Ice
Bo Kinney
Lauren Kreutzer
Susan B. Madden
Ann Parazin
Daniel Pringle
Cher Ravagni
Ann Roseberry
Marion Scichilone
Rand Simmons
Will Stuivenga
Judith Stull
Meredith Wagner
Anonymous
WLA’s Award Winners

WLFFTA Friend/Foundation Award #2
Friends of the Richland Public Library

CAYAS Award for Visionary Library Service to Youth
Jose Garcia | Lake Hills Library, King County Library System

WLA Honorary Lifetime Membership
Mike Wirt | Retired | Former Director, Spokane County Library District

WALE Outstanding Employee of the Year Award
Cindy Wigen | Spokane Public Library

WLA Honorary Lifetime Membership
Bruce Ziegman | Retired | Former Director of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library

WLA President’s Award
Sam Reed | Washington Secretary of State
The WLA 2012 Annual Conference is over. We’ve returned to our libraries with enthusiasm, fresh ideas, and a renewed passion and commitment to libraries and to the profession. For me as Program Chair, the conference was an especially energizing experience because it was the culmination of a year-long planning process and a personal commitment I made to help create an event filled with high-quality programming.

Showtime! Conference week: Seeing so many people listening, talking, laughing, learning, and sharing was definitely the highlight of my experience. It was gratifying to see it all actually come together as planned! All the hard work paid off.

My own professional development has been enriched by this learning opportunity, having gained experience in leadership, teamwork, volunteer coordination, and online meeting participation. My résumé looks better, too! I had the pleasure of working with a fabulous team to meet my commitment. Without our Conference Chair Kristin Piepho, Program Coordinator Kate Laughlin, Interest Group Coordinator Susan Lee, and the WLA office staff, Dana Murphy-Love and Becky Shaddox, my job would have been impossible.

As you may know, the annual conference is one of the largest potential sources of revenue for WLA, outside of membership dues. The only WLA staff involved in conference planning are Kate, Dana, and Becky. Otherwise, our conferences are entirely planned and executed by volunteers from our library communities, pitching in to help on everything from the conference planning committee to the vast majority of our programs. The session presenters volunteer to share their knowledge and experience “for the good of the order.” While there is a small budget for keynote speakers, WLA’s program coordinator, Kate, is a savvy negotiator and was able to make it very affordable for us to hire some big names. Nancy Pearl joined us for breakfast before welcoming everyone with an opening presentation. She also offered a Readers Advisory preconference the previous day, co-sponsored by WLA’s Reference Interest Group. Dan Savage and his partner joined WLA members for dinner before his presentation, and he and his partner attended the President’s Reception later that night to mingle and chat with conference attendees.

When you stop to think that the conference planning committee, the conference session presenters and facilitators, all the room monitors and ticket takers, and most of the pre-conference presenters volunteered their time or were supported by their institutions or both, wow. What an amazing experience to pull off this extensive conference with the work of so many who give so much, in addition to their regular work loads. I am in awe of us and our commitment to our own professional development!

My own professional development has been enriched by this learning opportunity, having gained experience in leadership, teamwork, volunteer coordination, and online meeting participation. My résumé looks better, too! I had the pleasure of working with a fabulous team to meet my commitment. Without our Conference Chair Kristin Piepho, Program Coordinator Kate Laughlin, Interest Group Coordinator Susan Lee, and the WLA office staff, Dana Murphy-Love and Becky Shaddox, my job would have been impossible.

The programs and workshops are proposed by WLA members and nonmembers working in or for a wide variety of libraries or other library-related organizations, from public libraries to academic libraries to library consultants to vendors. The planning committee received the highest number of program submissions in many years, which made our session selection process difficult—so many great ideas to choose from!

To me, that speaks of the desire of library folks not only share what they have done or learned but also to give back to the library community. Even though we had to turn down many of the proposals, we wanted to encourage the sharing by incorporating these ideas in a variety of other ways. We encouraged some to submit their programs as Spotlight on Success displays. Others we asked to facilitate Table Talk roundtable discussions on their topic, such as effective meeting facilitation, programming for parents-to-be, or tribal library resources. Some we encouraged to submit as a pecha kucha-style presentation for the Meet and Greet Reception. We also asked presenters with similar topics to work together, combining their ideas and expertise to make a better program. In a few cases, we solicited presenters for sessions on topics we felt were missing and yet important to the overall conference as a reflection of current library services; using
social media in libraries and trends in reference services are two examples.

Working with a planning team composed of creative library people also means there were many great ideas for additional programs and events, as well as fun and laughter. (It’s amazing how much fun one can have in an online meeting!) We added new events to this year’s conference and were gratified to see via the survey results that conference-goers appreciated these. The tour of the Tulalip Tribes’ Hibulb Cultural Center highlighted the history of our hosts, the Tulalip Tribes, and was a nod to the conference theme, “One Tribe: Bringing Washington’s Libraries Together.” I definitely plan to return to the HCC so I can spend more time appreciating the rich culture of the Tulalip peoples.

Also from the creative minds of this team were the Youth/Family Program Palooza and the Adult Program Palooza, each a showcase packed with engaging performers and presenters and their sample programs—plenty here for libraries needing programming ideas. These were offered as preconferences, and survey results were so enthusiastic that future conference planners will consider repeating these programs. I certainly enjoyed watching the circus-type acts warming up in the hall before their presentations—such energy!

What an amazing experience for me to be part of this planning process. I am thankful to have collaborated with this team, and I am especially thankful for all the hard work of the WLA staff. I couldn’t have managed all the intricacies of Conference Program Chair without the partnership I had with our Program Coordinator. I would have been lost without Kate’s conference planning experience, guidance, and her extensive network of contacts within the WLA community. She was regularly able to suggest additional presenters to help round out a program so that the perspectives of small, rural, or other libraries were included as well as the large public library systems.

What are my take-aways from this conference?

- I will be able to incorporate what I have learned about planning an event like this into the planning and coordination of my library’s All Staff Learning Day this fall.
- I have new ideas for staff workshop topics!
- WLA is made up of committed, passionate people full of creativity and enthusiasm. WLA is me. WLA is you!

“I certainly enjoyed watching the circus-type acts warming up in the hall before their presentations—such energy!”
I’d Rather Be Reading

Sherlock Holmes, Patron Saint of Librarians

by David Wright

Well no, he isn’t actually the patron saint of our profession; that honor falls to Jerome, Catherine of Alexandria, and Lawrence of Rome. The last of these is best known for having quipped to his tormentors as they were grilling him alive, “Turn me over—I think I’m done on this side,” exhibiting a rebellious gallows humor that feels all too relevant to librarians in these times of death by a thousand budget cuts.

“With each new question we harken to that familiar view halloo—‘The game is afoot!’—satisfied to be in harness and on the case, our hearts and minds thrumming with the thrill of the chase.”

But if you think about it, the world’s greatest detective is the true patron saint of librarians, who get to live out our own Sherlock Holmes fantasies daily. With each new question we harken to that familiar view halloo—“The game is afoot!”—satisfied to be in harness and on the case, our hearts and minds thrumming with the thrill of the chase. With rapt attention we tease out our patrons’ secret needs, parse the clues, enlist shadowy networks of secret informants, mark off blind alleys, and brush aside red herrings on our way to nuanced solutions and perceptive reading suggestions that leave such ham-fisted stooges as Google and Amazon lost in blinking incomprehension.

So it is gratifying to see Holmes back in vogue once again, inspiring fresh adaptations on the large and small screen, the vast, worldwide ranks of his admirers swelling with new members, with lively online debates between Cumberbatchians and Downeyites, as diehard Jeremy Brett fans sadly shake their heads at both. For newcomers, there are as many paths to Holmes as there are varied delights to be found on our shelves. There are myriad pastiches, each with its own distinct flavor and flair.

Readers with a limited appetite for clubby Holmes/Watson bromance will enjoy the feminine touch in Laurie R. King’s series featuring an older Holmes and his plucky sidekick/helpmeet Mary Russell, or Carole Nelson Douglas’s books featuring the canonical diva Irene Adler (“To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman” begins A Scandal in Bohemia), who together with her own lady Watson Nell Huxleigh tangles with all kinds of evildoers including Jack the Ripper himself, besting Holmes at his own game. Steve Hockensmith successfully combines the tang of the Old West with Sherlock Holmes-inspired ratiocination in the immensely entertaining deducing escapades of Gus “Old Red” and Otto “Big Red” Amlingmeyer, starring with Holmes on the Range. Striking a very different note, Mitch Cullin’s elegiac A Slight Trick of the Mind brings Holmes into the atomic age, where the nonagenarian Holmes grapples with his most baffling nemesis yet—his own failing mind.

However they come to him, we often have the privilege of introducing readers of all ages who are already familiar with the legend or offspring of Holmes to the true original, via the skilled and irresistibly winning intermediation of John H. Watson, MD. Readers new to Holmes are often surprised to see that most of his adventures are tales to be read at a single sitting. “Is that all there is?” asked one patron, surprised by the mere handful of volumes comprising the entire Holmes canon. “Not to worry,” I replied: “it’s enough.” Many will prefer to start with one of the novels, such as the deliciously moody The Hound of the Baskervilles. However the introduction is made, it seems entirely fitting that a librarian should usher readers into the presence of the World’s Greatest Detective, and into that vast yet select society of Sherlockians. After all, although we may flatter ourselves to say so, he really is one of us.

This month’s column is adapted from remarks prepared for the sixty-sixth annual Edgar Allan Poe Awards Dinner, which had a Sherlock Holmes theme this year.

David Wright is a reader services librarian at the Seattle Public Library’s Central Library, is a regular contributor to many library publications, and teaches readers’ advisory at the University of Washington iSchool.
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